CONFLICTS AND REPETITION: THE POLITICS OF POETIC REITERATION IN HEBREW AND ARABIC LITERATURES

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Conflicts and Repetition: The Politics of Poetic Reiteration in Hebrew and Arabic Literatures considers conflict as the basic condition of both politics and literature. In this study, I claim that although there are countless possible ways of conceptualizing conflict, normative perceptions have classified around a dichotomous notion of conflict as a zero-sum game, which I term the logic of judgment. As against this dichotomous logic, I suggest other, more productive logics of conflict by examining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comparative study of Hebrew and Arabic literatures. I focus on poetic devices of repetition—such as quotations, allusions, and metaphors—which multiply meanings and set them in certain conflicted relations to one another through sharp angles of refraction. I analyze works by Haim Hazaz, Emile Habiby, Dahlia Ravikovitch, and Ghassan Kanafani, detecting their specific employment of poetic reiterations, in order to develop three models of conflict: irony, humor, and parody. I argue that the ways in which these poetic models order conflicting meanings are translatable into politics, suggesting different models of ordering differences within society without reverting to the law, with its logic of judgment, as the organizing principle of our being in common.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Liron Mor holds a B.A. in History from Tel Aviv University and an M.A. in Comparative Literature from Cornell University.

To my parents, Ronit and Moshe Mor

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Bibliographical Sketch .... **iii**

Acknowledgments .... **v**

Preface .... **ix**

Introduction **1**

Repetitions and Conflicts: Three Forms of Reiteration and Collectivity in Edmund Burke's Political and Aesthetic Writing **1**

I. The Problem of the Law 6
II. Imitation: The Humor of Politics of Succession 14
III. Ambition: The Tragic Irony of Absolute Innovation 24
IV. Sympathy: The Parodic Selectivity of Well-Managed Darkness 33
V. A Digression: Karl Kraus' Satirical Genius 40

Chapter 1 .... **48**

"There is Simply No Comparison!": Absolute Difference and Disorienting Irony in Haim Hazaz's "The Sermon" **48**

II. For Power has its Limits but Suffering has None: The Socratic Ironic Standpoint 63
III. Moonlight Psychology: Irony as Discrepancy Between two Opposed Meanings 68
IV. "Come and I Shall Not See It": The Tragedy of Irony 74
V. "The End of All This": The Irony of Irony 80

Chapter 2 .... **84**

What's Funny about Occupation?: Humor in Emile Habiby's *Pessoptimist* and His Reappropriations of Voltaire's *Candide* **84**

I. The Pessoptimist 86
II. The Strange Circumstances of Disappearance 91
III. "The Amazing Similarity between Saeed and Candide" 99
IV. Humanitarian Militarism 113
V. Conclusions: Anti-Solutionism 119

Chapter 3 ..... **125**

Nihilism and Repetition: Dahlia Ravikovitch's Reiterations as Critique **125**

I. "After all, he had his orders": Ravikovitch's Critique of the Law 132
II. "The Poetics of Moderate Physical Pressure": Ravikovitch's Quotations 140
III. "I am Not Here": Ravikovitch's Allusions 145
IV. "And Their Cry Went Up Night after Night": Eternal Return as Radical Nihilism 153
V. "Violence is Not Everything": Conclusions 158

Chapter 4 ..... **161**

Returning to Metaphor: Judgment, Conflict and Time in Ghassan Kanafani's "Returning to Haifa" **161**

I. Disasters of Analogy 167
II. Creative Metaphors: "Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open" 174
III. "But How Differently Each Sees it!": Multiplying Worlds and Worldviews 178
IV. Creative Metaphors are Conflicts 182
V. Creative Metaphors Redistribute the Sensible 188
VI. "Man is a ca(u)se": Judgment as Interpretation 195
VII. Reminiscence and the Time of Return 203
VIII. The Empty Case: The Role of Silence in Metaphor 210

Conclusions:

Bab al-Shams, or Returning Meaning to Meaning **223**

References **239**

PREFACE

The main concern of this study is the relationship between literature and conflict, considering conflict as the basic condition of both literature and politics. Focusing on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a comparative study of Hebrew and Arabic literatures, this work resists the tendency to approach literature simply as a documentation of social or political life and turns instead to the poetic in order to extrapolate structures that would serve to transform public perception of this conflict. *Conflicts and Repetition: The Politics of Poetic Reiteration in Hebrew and Arabic Literatures* begins by recognizing that conflict is inherent to any form of collective existence, for no community is ever homogeneous. What matters, I argue, is *what kind* of conflict we sustain. Hence, in examining the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its literatures I construct a political typology of conflicts modeled on different poetic negotiations of conflictual meaning. I analyze Hebrew and Arabic literary works, focusing on poetic devices of repetition where meaning multiplies—such as quotations, allusions, and metaphors—in order to delineate three poetic models of conflict, which I term irony, humor and parody. Constituting alternative forms of political collectivities, these models, I maintain, challenge and expand normative perceptions of conflict, which have calcified around a dichotomist, separatist notion of conflict as a zero-sum game.

I claim that although this "us or them" notion of conflict is only one of countless possible ways of conceptualizing conflict, it has become all but ubiquitous. This seems to be the case, for instance, in Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani's "Returning to Haifa" (*'A'id ila Ḥaifa,* 1968). This novella delineates the story of a Palestinian couple's return, immediately after the 1967 occupation of the Palestinian territories, from Ramallah to their home in Haifa, which they were forced to flee during the 1948 War. Upon arrival, Said and Safiyya learn that the Jewish family

that now occupies their home has also adopted their son, Khaldun, who was left behind in the turmoil of war and is now a soldier in the Israeli army named Dov. The son, like the occupied lands he personifies, is therefore reminiscent of the baby in the biblical story of the Judgment of King Solomon, whose sharing seems outright inconceivable. Kanafani's novella thus reveals our common conception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a zero-sum game in which only one party can satisfy its claims. This view, which I term the logic of judgment, frames conflict as an insoluble dispute between two distinct, equal and opposed parties whose claims are simply incongruent. Rendering the claims of the other party illegible, this logic frustrates any form of recognition or relation, thus leading to violence as the inevitable outcome. Indeed, the novella seems to manifest this Hobbesian logic, as it concludes with Said's realization that his second son, Khalid, who intended to join the armed struggle much against his father's wishes, was in fact right all along.

However, while the narrative in Kanafani's novella presents conflict as a Judgment of Solomon of sorts, the metaphors, as forms of poetic reiteration, introduce an entirely different model of conflict and promote engagement and political transformation. As Dov-Khaldun rejects his Palestinian parents, he nonetheless engages them, as he passionately blames them for being too weak to fight for him and for merely crying for twenty years. These accusations, coming from a post-*Nakba* generation, are remarkably similar to those voiced by the second generation in Israel towards their Holocaust survivor parents, such as Dov-Khaldun's Jewish parents. It is in this moment of reiteration that the son attests to the *de facto* coexistence of the two narratives in one and the same body and land. He thereby annuls the zero-sum game of judgment and paves the way for debate, as conflictual as it may be. This creative metaphor, simultaneously holding together at least two meanings, is still a form of conflict but one where debate is opened up and

no one is vested with the authority to give a conclusive verdict. This reiteration, moreover, produces the very site in which such a discussion is even possible by creating a passageway between the two incompatible narratives. Finally, this debate brings about what Jacques Rancière has termed a "redistribution of the sensible"—a political operation consisting in "making what was unseen visible; in getting what was only audible as noise to be heard as speech; in demonstrating to be a feeling of shared 'good' or 'evil' what had appeared merely as an expression of pleasure or pain" (*Dissensus* 38). This introduction of changes into the determinations of what we can say or see and hence of what we can think or do is, I contend, precisely what this reiteration achieves. Through this metaphor, a hitherto inexpressible phenomenon is delineated and brought to Said and Safiyya's attention (as well as to our own) and without yet being fixed in a proper name of its own, alters our audio-visual regime. It thereby reinvigorates politics, bringing about political awareness and understanding while also opening up new paths for political action and community. This creative metaphor is one of the models of conflict that I depict and analyze in my dissertation.

I claim that the dichotomist "us or them" logic of judgment, which undergirds military policies and actions, is discursively sustained. In Israel, the recent introduction of legislation criminalizing efforts to relate to Palestinian perspectives or blur the boundaries between the two collectives is symptomatic of the perceived importance of policing discourse. The *Nakba* Law (banning the commemoration of the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948), the Prohibition of Calls for Boycott Law, and most recently, a bill banning the use of Holocaust symbols and vocabulary when speaking of any other calamity but the Jewish Holocaust, are all examples of attempts to limit possible comparisons or identification. While not all these bills are consistently enforced, they exert a powerful influence on discursive and performative practices in Israel. The very fact

that they form the subject of parliamentary discussion and are consequently debated in the media renders them a rhetorical apparatus for shaping public opinion and constraining debate, thereby nourishing and perpetuating this conflict. While perception of the conflict is therefore clearly framed by language, including its poetic applications (such as metaphors and comparisons), conflict studies tend to neglect the consideration of poetic language, viewing literature as self-isolating and irrelevant for policy discussions. However, while empirically focused research is indispensible for our understanding of conflicts, it is limited in its capacity to suggest solutions, for it is confined by the normative language it uses. In other words, this dichotomous logic—us or them, this or that—characterizes not only the general view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also much of its investigation, for this logic stands at the base of our very language, even in academia, demanding clear concepts that assign one meaning per word. It is thus precisely to the more ambiguous, supposedly less serious realm of the poetic that I turn in order to scout new ways to perceive this conflict and disrupt this either/or logic. Moreover, moving beyond the referential qualities of literature, I consider poetics as a kind of diagnostic, capable of genuine political intervention. Insisting that literature is not separate from but rather integral to understanding and criticizing conflict, my work brings poetics to bear on global issues of conflict, violence, human rights, and the law as the organizing principle of our being in common.

The Introduction examines the origins of our concepts of conflict and judgment, as well as their relation to reiteration, by turning to writings of eighteenth-century political thinkers. In order to map out the different models of poetic conflict that I discovered in the literature, I then focus specifically on Edmund Burke's treatise on the beautiful and the sublime and his discussion therein of the three social passions—ambition, imitation, and sympathy—which he constructs to better understand both the poetic and the political. Reading these passions alongside

Burke's reflections on innovation, tradition, and sympathy in his political writing—and in relation to his own practice of quotation—I argue that each of these passions embodies a form of poetic and political repetition, and that as such they constitute three types of poetic and political conflicts—irony (or: ambition, the tragedy of the aspiration for utter difference), humor (or: imitation, the comedy of meticulous repetition), and parody (or: sympathy, the satire of selective repetition). Each of the subsequent chapters of my dissertation is structured around one of these models of conflict and addresses well-known works of Hebrew and Arabic literature. This selection of widely read texts is intended to make this project as accessible as possible to readers of one or both of these languages.

Chapter One explores the conflictual model of irony by analyzing pre-State Hebrew prose by Haim Hazaz. I reveal the irony of the Zionist ambition for absolute difference, which eventually justifies itself only by the very Jewish history it rejects. Reading Hazaz alongside theorists of irony such as Friedrich Schlegel, Søren Kierkegaard and Paul de Man, I articulate the ironic conflictual model as characterizing both revolutionary drive and the nation-state. I show how this conflictual form, like that of judgment, sets up clear oppositions and vests its trust in the agency of a hero, for it requires an intending subject, who is fully in control over meaning and chooses between opposing options. However, much like dramatic irony in Greek tragedies, rhetorical irony too exposes this agency as an illusion, for it is, unlike judgment, never entirely conclusive. It is this infinite oscillation that gives irony its sublime and mythic form, both destructive and transformative.

In Chapter Two I explore the model of humor in Palestinian author Emile Habiby's novel from 1974 *The Strange Circumstances of the Disappearance of Saeed the Ill-Fated Pessoptimist.* Since it is, to an extent, an adaptation of Voltaire's *Candide*, I compare the two works' senses of

humor, claiming that while both are still dependent on the very law that they criticize or transgress, they constitute two very different relationships to this law. Voltaire's humor is reformist, holding on to a belief in the power of laws to uphold universal rights and ideals and merely aiming at reforming the content of the law, whereas Habiby's humor targets the law as such and sets out against universal ideals, exposing human rights as not merely of little help to Palestinians but as utterly complicit in their oppression. Finally, I show how, as against Voltaire's cosmopolitanism, Habiby's humor suggests a diasporic community that is open and differential, thus offering an alternative to law and race as the organizing principle of society.

Chapters Three and Four both develop the model of Satire. Chapter Three develops a version of this parodist model that emphasizes affective relations, by examining two forms of nihilistic reiteration and their affective results in the works of the Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch (1936-2005). Analyzing Ravikovitch's political poems from the 1980s I draw on Nietzsche's and Deleuze's works and argue that her insistence on the material nature of quotations on the one hand, and her disruptive allusions that reshape her own tradition on the other, clear up space for sympathy as a critical imaginative practice. I show how these literary interpretative strategies, which foreground their own fiction, undermine the separatist logic of judgment by constituting an ethical relation to others that acknowledges alterity and difference without viewing those as an absolute impasse that prevents relation.

Chapter Four, the final chapter, finds in the stories of the Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani (1936-1972) another version of this parodist model—one that re-uses words and events to reshape the determinations of what we can perceive and therefore of what we can say, think and do. It focuses on Kanafani's aforementioned novella, "Returning to Haifa" (1968), in order to develop a model of creative metaphor as a new, parodist re-use of language and events, which

produces understanding and opens up debate. Analyzing Hobbes' and Kant's views of metaphors and judgment and drawing on contemporary theorists such as Deleuze, Derrida, Lyotard and Rancière, I show how such metaphors radically alter our audio-visual regime, thereby making perceptible what has hitherto gone unnoticed and yielding new ways of thinking, speaking, and acting. In Kanafani's case, it is the creative metaphorization of the occupied land as an adopted child that alters the coordinates of our perception by rendering the Palestinian Nakba visible, thus producing the arena in which the two disasters associated with the establishment of Israel—Sho'a and Nakba—can even be discussed together.

Finally, I would like to add a few words about the transliteration. Terms and phrases in Hebrew and Arabic are generally transliterated here according to the International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies (IJMES) transliteration system, with two minor exceptions. First, in the case of authors who have already been published in English, I have opted for transliterating their names according to the way they appear on the cover of their books in English. Secondly, I have transliterated names of characters and places in the same way as they are transliterated in existing translations, so that the way these names appear in quotations from these translations and from scholarly articles in English are consistent with the way they appear in my own writing throughout each chapter.

INTRODUCTION

REPETITIONS AND CONFLICTS: THREE FORMS OF REITERATION AND COLLECTIVITY IN EDMUND BURKE'S POLITICAL AND AESTHETIC WRITING

> *We develop social feeling only as we become enlightened. Although pity is native to the human heart it would remain eternally quiescent unless it were activated by imagination. How are we moved to pity? By getting outside of ourselves and identifying with a being who suffers. It is not in ourselves, but in him that we suffer. It is clear that such transport supposes a great deal of acquired knowledge. [...] How would I suffer in seeing another suffer, if I know not what he is suffering, if I am ignorant of what he and I have in common? He who has never been reflective is incapable of being merciful or just or pitying [...] He who imagines nothing is aware only of himself; he is isolated in the midst of mankind. Reflection is born of the comparison of ideas, and it is the plurality of ideas that leads to their comparison.*
>
> —Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Language.*

Our existence in common is always conflictual, for any political community is plural—comprised of different wills, desires, and interests. It is therefore no surprise that Jean-Jacques Rousseau's various mythical accounts of the emergence of society, while quite diverse, always begin with the introduction of difference into the state of nature—be it the unequal accumulation of property and the privileges it entails (*Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*) or the rise of linguistic representation, which introduces difference into the way we sense and think ourselves as well as others (*Essay on the Origin of Language*). The state of nature—which Rousseau characterizes as a condition of absolute equality, isolation, and independence—is thus replaced by a world of difference, bringing about conflict with all its avatars: war, vice, poverty, dependency, on so on. Rousseau proposes a twofold solution to this conflictual condition: the social contract, which gives birth to the body politic, and the laws that sustain it. These laws derive their authority from the general will—the total union of all particular wills under the

unified, self-identical will of all—thereby eliminating our sense of dependence and alienation, for the laws we are obeying are nothing other than our own will (Rousseau, *Social Contract* 80–87). However, at this point Rousseau not only encounters the paradoxes of lawgiving,[1] but also treads dangerously close to Hobbes' notion of political collectivity—a notion based on the alienation of one's right of judgment to the sovereign, which then shackles all subjects to his judging word by chains of laws. Although, unlike Rousseau, Hobbes perceived the state of nature as already a state of conflict—the famous war of all against all—his notions of the sovereign and its law arise in order to solve the same exact problem: the problem of difference, of conflict, that is inherent in social and political existence (86–91). In both Hobbes' and Rousseau's solutions then, as in many of their contemporaries', we find political collectivity reduced to two extremes: either the chaotic, utterly heterogeneous conflicting wills of the multitude or the unified will of the people, bound together by contract and law.

However, are there other ways of conceiving political collectivity as neither unified nor completely heterogeneous? Rousseau also tells us a different story about the origins of society—the story of the emergence of pity as the element that ties together the community and leads it out of the state of nature. Although pity is purported to bypass the mediation of representation and reason as it creates this all-encompassing unification, Rousseau is immediately forced to recognize that this binding social affect is nonetheless predicated on some minimal use of reason and is bound up with a certain level of difference. That is, as the quotation in the epigraph illustrates, this form of pity depends on the reflective capacity not only to compare but also to contrast. It further depends on the stock of knowledge that allows us not only to put ourselves in

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[1] The sovereignty needed for lawgiving only comes into being with civil society but the existence of the latter depends on lawgiving. Therefore, Rousseau supposes that the lawgiver needs an authority of a transcendental order but the true nature of his authority is only known after the fact (*Social Contract* II:6).

the place of another but also to recognize when she is suffering, what she may be facing in various situations, and so forth (Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Language* 32–34). This notion of pity as a play of difference and repetition that bind us together resonates throughout Rousseau's writing and is employed, under the title of sympathy, by other eighteenth-century writers such as David Hume, Adam Smith and Edmund Burke. Wrangling these passions out of the hands of liberal thinkers (and out of the context of liberal politics today) I therefore ask: could the affective suggest a communal bond that is created and sustained beyond laws? Could it propose a different form of political collectivity, a different form of organizing communities along with and through their conflicts? May the affective, and specifically sympathy, allow us to conceive of other forms of conflict through which we can think of a collective that is neither unified nor completely heterogeneous or oppositional?

In attempting to answer these questions this chapter examines this notion of sympathy—as well as other poetic affects—as a certain relation between repetition and difference, and as a political passion and organization that is not only imaginative but specifically literary, and even specifically poetic. I arrive at this sympathetic model of conflict after I examine two other conflictual poetic models—imitation (or humor and comedy) and ambition (or irony and tragedy). I contend that the repetition of something of the same is needed not only for our ability to *identify* the sign despite its difference—that is, as that stabilizing element which preconditions Jacques Derrida's general citationality (or *iterability*, both iteration and alterity) (*Limited Inc* 17–18); it is also required for our ability to *identify with* an other, ethically and politically. For this reason, Rousseau, for instance, argues in the section quoted in the epigraph that it is only with the emergence of pity—which depends on our capacity to identify with the other as well as on our ability to compare and contrast—that society is possible (*Essay on the Origin of Language*

32). Within the state of nature, when a man first meets another man, he perceives him as a giant: either as something completely foreign to himself or as a metaphor based entirely on his own self, but blown out of proportion and hence different solely in degree (Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Language* 13). In other words, when one remains within her own text, and does not recognize a similarity and a difference of the other in relation to herself, she is not yet capable of identifying that other as similar to her, just as she is unable to identify with her as another finite being and thereby feel compassion for her—that is, literally, come together with her in a society of passion. I would therefore argue that it is when society is weaved out of pity, compassion, and sympathy, when the similarities and the differences of the other are recognized, that intertextuality—that is, quotation in the broader sense—is possible. And perhaps vice versa?

Although I am not speaking here only of direct quotation, but rather of diverse degrees of "sameness" of fragmented texts imbedded in other texts, I insist on using this term over the word "citation." Whereas "citation" seems to point the reader to another text, sending her on a journey towards a supposed origin, "quotation" connotes a transport of something from another text, materially, into this one. Moreover, speaking of quotation allows a distance from Derrida's all-pervasive citationality, that repetition with a difference that every sign involves (*Limited Inc* 9–11). For, even if everything is indeed a citation, involving a repetition with a difference, as Derrida seems to argue, there is still a need to account for the different ways in which different repetitions work, with their varying degrees of political and ethical efficacy. I will focus here on a specific form in which a repetition of a text is different, the form of quotation, in hope that by the end of this chapter the difference between this understanding of quotation and Derrida's general citationality will become clear.

This study was born out of an attempt to rethink the political and aesthetic implications of

certain kinds of poetic repetition—namely, quotations, metaphors, and allusions. It was only during the work on the literary materials that I realized that what I was actually after is an understanding of the type of relationship that a repetition creates between its two (or more) terms—that is, the type of conflict and relation of meanings that it constitutes. It therefore became a project about models of conflicted political existence. In this chapter, I survey these models from a theoretical perspective, through the works of Edmund Burke, Walter Benjamin and Gilles Deleuze, and ascribe to them the names of poetic affects and dramatic genres—humor (comedy, or Burke's social passion of imitation), irony (tragedy, or Burke's ambition) and parody (satire, or Burke's sympathy). I would like to stress that the following chapters are not applications of this theoretical perspective but have rather contributed to its formulation. In these chapters, these models are drawn from poetic language within a certain historical and cultural context—that of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I do, however, believe that these models may assist in imagining collective existence and action beyond their specific time and place.

In *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze already opposes repetition to generalities and laws,[2] and mentions a certain theatre of repetition: "Theatre is real movement, and it extracts real movement from all the arts it employs. This is what we are told: this movement, the essence and the interiority of movement, is not opposition, not mediation, but repetition" (10). He does not, however, elaborate on the political implications of these abstract forms of repetition and of understanding them as theatrical modes. From Plato's republic, to Arendt's polis and Rousseau's spectators, all the way to Jacques Rancière and Judith Butler, the political has been envisioned as a theatre of acting and speaking agents (or bodies), taking place in space, taking a position, being

[2] "Repetition belongs to humor and irony; it is by nature transgression or exception, always revealing a singularity opposed to the particulars subsumed under laws, a universal opposed to the generalities which give rise to laws" (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 5).

together in a way that creates the political at the same time as it is supported by it. Due to this position taking—taking on a kind of a mask or a role—there is always a doubling, a repetition, in this political theater (a redoubling which was the very reason for Plato's elimination of theatre from his perfect polis). We are thus always doubled in the political theatre, if not by the mask then due to the fact that, in this necessarily shared space, we are also perceived by the other and take position in relation to her. We therefore must pay attention to the ways in which this doubling occurs, to the ways in which we take place in relation to one another—to the conflicts we sustain. Ironically, it is precisely the main instrument we designed to mitigate political conflicts—that is, the law—that narrows down our conception of conflicts and fixes it in the single, all-pervasive form of the zero-sum game.

I. The Problem of the Law

When trying to identify the political implications of a certain concept, and especially its potential for subverting liberal and neoliberal ideas and practices, it seems useful to begin by exploring liberal thinkers (or thinkers that have been taken up by liberals) in their relation to this concept, particularly at the points where they try to limit its power. Both Hobbes and Locke tend to avoid quotations (save for quotations from the Bible, where it is not a matter of another man's words). The proto-liberal, absolutist Hobbes is quite explicitly against quotations, as he overtly commands us to know and read ourselves (*nosce teipsum*)—or, to know, to read by ourselves—instead of relying on previous authors (10).[3] On this matter, Locke is generally in agreement with Hobbes and dismisses the practice of quotation on account of its non-scientific and inaccurate

[3] For Hobbes' own account of his reasons for not quoting the ancients, see *Leviathan* (490).

nature.[4] Moreover, neither of them is particularly interested in compassion as a social feeling. Rousseau, with whom I began, seems to offer a helpful starting point for, quite to the contrary, he relies heavily on the notion of pity, at the same time as he cites, paraphrases, and alludes profusely but rarely directly quotes. Although the notion of pity, of putting oneself in the place of the other, is key to Rousseau's political thought, it seems as though this feeling is too immediate, too pre-rational to allow any difference. This feeling-in-common in Rousseau serves to bypass the mediation of representation and reason and to bring all citizens together under a unified will, thereby precluding any possible differentiation.[5] Thus, it is not surprising that Rousseau's identification with the authors he cites is generally immediate—he puts himself in their place completely, leaving no gap, no distance; he speaks *for* them, from their throats, refusing to mark their otherness, for such an acknowledgment would require him to bring the other text into his own and recognize its difference—that is, to quote.

It is with Edmund Burke that we encounter ample use of quotations (even if they are not always accurate), alongside an aesthetic and political theory based on social passions—sympathy, imitation, and ambition. His use of quotations is mostly limited to his writing on aesthetics in his *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757)*,* although his perception of social passion is mirrored in his famous political

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[4] For Locke's discussion of quotation as an ever-inaccurate transmission of knowledge, see *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (4: xvi, 11).

[5] For example, in the *Essay on the Origin of Language*, Rousseau laments the public discourse in France during his days, when public force takes the place of persuasion and announces itself through "placards on street corners" or by the brute force of soldiers keeping citizens apart (72). In order to restore unity and avoid sheer violence, without having recourse to either the use of reason in a public debate or to representational politics and representation as such, Rousseau promotes a return to passionate, almost pre-linguistic and pre-rational, language, which will be able to "persuade without convincing and… represent without reasoning" (*Essay on the Origin of Language* 15). See also Hegel's criticism of Rousseau's immediate identification of the particular consciousness with the general will in *The Phenomenology of Spirit,* in the chapters titled "The Law of the Heart and the Frenzy of Self-Conceit" and "Absolute Freedom and Terror" (221–228, 355–364).

treatise, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790). Although sympathy is a key category in the writing of quite a few of his contemporaries—most notably, Hume and Adam Smith, with whom Burke had an ongoing discussion—I will focus here on examining the relationships between affect and repetition as it is manifest in Burke's theory as well as in his own practice of quotation.

In his aesthetic writing, Burke chooses the form of an inquiry—a practice of exploration based on examples (which are, in this case, mostly quotations), which constitute norms and general rules as substitutes for rigid laws and rules. In his relatively short *Enquiry*, there are more than fifty direct quotations—from the classics, the Bible, and a few other, more contemporary poets—more than half of which are inaccurate. As part of his belief in practical investigation as the correct form of teaching and learning, Burke claims in the *Enquiry* that one should not presuppose definitions—circumscribed knowledge that criminally confines nature, in his understanding—and should rather, as a reader, *experience* the matter discussed. Merely being told something, instead of experiencing it, is a procedure that only serves us with "a few barren and lifeless truths." Hence, Burke invites the reader to follow him in his path, which "leads to the stock on which [those truths] grew," and thus learn through praxis and experience, through a certain form of imitation (Burke, *Enquiry* 12). As I hope to demonstrate, Burke's turn to practice, and specifically to a practice of quotation—to succession as a (somewhat unfaithful) repetition of tradition—manifests an opposition to the law as the organizing principle of our political collectivity. This opposition may then be taken up quite in contradiction to Burke's project and suggest alternative forms of being-in-common and of relating to others.

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke addresses the French revolutionaries, contending that "All your sophisters"—all the metaphysicians and speculators,

with their reason, their reflections and, especially, their Rights of Man—will never be able to construct a better political system for the preservation of society and for the maintenance of its unity than the path pursued by the English people, "who have chosen [their] nature rather than [their] speculations, [their] breasts rather than [their] inventions, for the great conservatories and magazines of [their] rights and privileges" (*Reflections* 35). In one of his most passionate diatribes against the theorists of the Rights of Man, Burke asserts that whilst they are possessed with this "eager and passionate enthusiasm,"

> […] it is vain to talk to them of the practice of their ancestors, the fundamental laws of their country, the fixed form of a constitution whose merits are confirmed by the solid test of long experience and an increasing public strength and national prosperity. They despise experience as the wisdom of unlettered men; and as for the rest, they have wrought underground a mine that will blow up, at one grand explosion, all examples of antiquity, all precedents, charters, and acts of parliament. They have 'the rights of men.' Against these there can be no prescription; against these no agreement is binding; these admit no temperament, and no compromise […] Against these their rights of men let no government look for security in the length of its continuance, or in the justice and lenity of its administration (Burke, *Reflections* 58).

Burke therefore seems to be aligning this allegedly natural method of following the ancients and imitating the given—this "eternal, immutable law, in which will and reason are the same" (*Reflections* 94) and which is beyond any human laws—with this form of learning and coming together through practice and experience by "our natural constitution" and with no intervention of reason. This set of terms is juxtaposed in the *Reflections* with difference, innovation, change, the use of reason, judgment, metaphysics, speculations, reflections, theory, and the Rights of Man—that is, taking the law into one's own hands, so to speak, and creating new, ever-changing laws by speculating, reflecting, and reasoning. All of these, and their apparent disregard for tradition, standing together as a threatening united front, seem to Burke

like a bomb waiting underground to explode. So disgusted and horrified is he by this unbridled democracy that he counters these manmade laws and theories both by advocating for and by practicing this natural method of following the ancients and creating agreements with them, merely imitating the given and advancing by the use of practice and experience. He does so in an attempt to recover this immutable "fundamental law," which follows rather the nature of our hearts.[6] In other words, Burke counters the human law with *repetition*, both as a political passion and principle *and* as a literary practice that he himself implements—that of quotation. But why does he turn to repetition as an antidote to the law?

This, I believe, has to do with the nature of the law itself. According to Deleuze, Kant's Copernican Revolution is to be found in his *Critique of Practical Reason* and consists in his articulation of a new understanding of the law. For Plato, as for Christianity, the law reflected the higher principle of the Good, and hence sanctioned the righteous man—he who exhibits obedience to the law according to the principle of the Best. Kant, however, has realized that, in modern times, "the law is no longer regarded as dependent on the Good, but on the contrary, the Good itself is made to depend on the law" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 82). That is, he recognized that the law is no longer founded on a higher principle from which it derives its authority, but is rather self-grounded and valid only by virtue of its own form—it is a pure,

[6] For example, Burke portrays the French Revolution as an event which—"by those extravagant and presumptuous speculations which have taught your leaders to despise all their predecessors, and all their contemporaries, and even to despise themselves" (*Reflections* 37)—has only "chang[ed] and pervert[ed] the natural order of things" and "has attacked the fountain of life itself," leaving each and every citizen feeling "disgraced and degraded" (Burke, *Reflections* 49). The "unnatural" event of the revolution—with its speculative reason leading to contempt for tradition—is thus presented as opposed to, and as devastating for, nature, dignity, and life itself. Yet, "The worst of these politics of revolution" is, according to Burke, that "they temper and harden the breast," perverting "all the well-placed sympathies of the human breast" (Burke, *Reflections* 64–65). Thus, it is not only that these theoreticians set themselves against man's very nature, but also that they rob him of his innate affections—first and foremost, those of sympathy. These affections, however, "are required sometimes as supplements, sometimes as correctives, always as aids to law" (Burke, *Reflections* 78)—that is, they are absolutely necessary to uphold Burke's immutable hereditary law.

empty form that can take on any content whatsoever in a rather contingent manner. It becomes tautological: "the law is the law"—it represents the Good because, as the law, it determines the Good. Consequently, it no longer has any recourse to the idea of the Best and hence cannot sanction the righteous man. In fact, no one knows, or can ever know, what the law *is*; "It operates without making itself known. It defines a realm of transgression where one is already guilty and steps the bounds without knowing what they are" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 83–84).

I argue that when Burke published his *Reflections*, two years after the publication of Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*, it was precisely this empty, arbitrary form of the law—the "disgusting" Rights of Man, the manmade laws of the revolutionaries in France—that Burke was targeting and attempting to eliminate through his insistence on succession, on the repetition of tradition. Moreover, I claim that his insistence on this repetition of tradition in the *Enquiry* might indicate that, three decades ahead of Kant, Burke already sensed this empty form of the law, even if he did not yet give it a clear, formal articulation.

To counter the dire situation of arbitrary manmade laws, Burke is seeking a return to some eternal law, which is indeed based on the higher principle of the Good. However, the *Enquiry* is extremely hesitant with regards to God's ability to serve as this stabilizing principle during Burke's time, when He is no longer present to defend His law as He might have been in the past. Burke's own practice of quotation undermines the possibility of God serving as the principle of the Good that determines the law: It is precisely when Burke is discussing God and power in the *Enquiry* that he repeatedly quotes from the Book of Job. However, the story of Job is an exceptional moment in the Bible—a moment in which the divine law is exposed as completely unknowable and as utterly incongruent with the Good. Job, the righteous of all men, has no knowledge of the law according to which he is sentenced to such extreme suffering. He

never knows, and cannot ever know, the content of God's law, and therefore he is always guilty, repeatedly sacrificing burnt offerings to God to atone for any sins that he, or his children, might have inadvertently committed (Job 1:5). Once the punishment is inflicted upon Job, he is indeed unable to decipher the legal logic behind this law, save in the wounds of his flesh.[7] Furthermore, he refuses to recognize the simple logic offered to him by his consoling friends, according to which the law is inevitably eternal, clear, universal, and based on an absolute principle of the Good, and hence if Job is punished then he must have sinned, strayed away from the way of righteousness dictated by the notion of the Best (Job 8, 9).[8] Instead, Job draws attention to the very bodily consequences of the law—to his physical wounds and afflictions—and demands that the law materialize itself in the form of a trial; that it become less abstract and absolute and give itself as something legible.[9] Even when God finally accedes and responds to Job's plea, defending the unknown law that might correlate to the unfathomable pain that the obedient Job is suffering, He does nothing but quote, or cite, His own creation to Job, instancing other exceptional beings and phenomena that do not, and could not, obey or represent any law (Job 38, 40). According to Jonathan Lamb, while the narratives of Job's adversarial friends tautologize

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[7] "Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends; for the hand of God hath touched me. Why do ye persecute me as God, and are not satisfied with my flesh? Oh that my words were now written! Oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock forever! For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And after my skin hath been destroyed, *from my flesh I will see God*" (Job 19. 21-26, emphasis added).

[8] It is interesting to note that in the Book of Job, Satan too realizes this reversal of the relationship between the law and its consequences when he claims that it is not because Job is righteous that he is wealthy and happy, but rather it is because he is wealthy and happy that he is righteous (Job 1.9-11).

[9] For instance, "How then can I dispute with him? How can I find words to argue with him? Though I were innocent, I could not answer him; I could only plead with my Judge for mercy. Even if I summoned him and he responded, I do not believe he would give me a hearing. He would crush me with a storm and multiply my wounds for no reason […] If it is a matter of strength, he is mighty! And if it is a matter of justice, who will summon him? Even if I were innocent, my mouth would condemn me; if I were blameless, it would pronounce me guilty" (Job 9:14-20).

pain—since by a circular logic they equalize it with punishment—God's theophany, his citation of his creation, tautologizes everything, for "Everything is because it is; the unique is instanced as unique, put in parallel with itself as an unparalleled phenomenon" (35). It is precisely "God's quotations," these instances of creation that God tautologically uses to express His power and justify Job's pain, which Burke then quotes in his discussion of the sublimity of power. Burke quotes the descriptions of the warhorse, the wild ass, the leviathan and the unicorn,[10] which he finds to be sublime precisely because they have no use—that is, there is no clear logic that explains the existence of these creatures. They are simply because they are. The story of Job is thus the epitome of God's inability to serve as a clear and knowable Good that anchors the law and Burke's quotations of it merely highlight the tautological nature of the law and the fact that even God's law is simply the law of the strongest.

Hence, Burke seems to base his reliance on a higher Good on the assumption that it was present in the world in some immemorial time, in some imagined time before time, and therefore commands us to repeat tradition as a way of preserving this origin-less higher Good. Repetition itself thus comes to serve as the anchor of the Good. However, in Burke's writing, this repetition

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[10] "[…] in every social useful light, the horse has nothing sublime; but is it thus that we are affected with him, *whose neck is clothed with thunder, the glory of whose nostrils is terrible, who swalloweth the ground with fierceness and rage, neither believeth that it is the sound of the trumpet*? [Job 39:19-24]. In this description, the useful character of the horse entirely disappears, and the terrible and sublime blaze out together" (Burke, *Enquiry* 60). Furthermore, "The description of the wild ass, in Job, is worked up into no small sublimity, merely by insisting on his freedom, and his setting mankind at defiance; otherwise the description of such an animal could have had nothing noble in it. *Who hath loosed* (says he) *the bands of the wild ass? whose house I have made the wilderness and the barren land his dwellings. He scorneth the multitude of the city, neither regardeth he the voice of the driver. The range of the mountains is his pasture* [Job 39:5-8]. The magnificent description of the unicorn and of leviathan, in the same book, is full of the same heightening circumstances: *Will the unicorn be willing to serve thee? canst thou bind the unicorn with his band in the furrow? wilt thou trust him because his strength is great?—Canst thou draw out leviathan with an hook? will he make a covenant with thee? wilt thou take him for a servant forever? shall not one be cast down even at the sight of him?* [Job 39:9-11, 41:1,4,9]. In short, wheresoever we find strength, and in what light soever we look upon power, we shall all along observe the sublime the concomitant of terror, and contempt the attendant on a strength that is subservient and innoxious" (Burke, *Enquiry* 61).

takes on three different forms, which correspond to the three societal passions he introduces in the *Enquiry*—imitation, ambition and sympathy. The first form of repetition that I will discuss is that of imitation—a close, faithful repetition geared towards the past.

II. Imitation: The Humor of Politics of Succession

In the *Reflections*, Burke insists on drawing from tradition, never interrupting it with the new. From the Magna Charta to the Declaration of Rights, it is, Burke asserts, nothing other than succession—specifically, the hereditary succession of the crown, but also "an inheritable peerage, and a House of Commons and a people inheriting privileges, franchises, and liberties from a long line of ancestors," and so on—that secures and entails the liberties of subjects and their rights (*Reflections* 33). Since the mere idea of a revolution, or "the fabrication of a new government," is enough to fill Burke with "disgust and horror" (*Reflections* 31),[11] he endorses "deriv[ing] all we possess as an inheritance from our forefathers," while taking care not to taint it with "any cyon alien to the nature of the original plant," and to "proceed upon the principle of reverence to antiquity." By this faithful adherence to tradition, Burke argues, the English constitution maintained "a unity in so great a diversity of its parts" and furnished conservation and transmission, "without at all excluding a principle of improvement" (*Reflections* 33). Furthermore, this politics of inheritance seems to Burke to be "the result of profound reflection, or rather the happy effect of following nature, which is *wisdom without reflection, and above it*" (*Reflections* 33, my emphasis). Much like Rousseau and Hobbes, Burke mistrusts man's reason, therefore claiming that "individuals would do better to avail themselves of the general bank and

[11] This is one of the many hints that seem to suggest that the revolution stands on the side of the sublime for Burke, since the sublime is predicated on horror and terror (*Enquiry* 36–7). However, as the section on sympathy in this chapter demonstrates, this association is far too simplistic.

capital of nations and of ages" (*Reflections* 87)—that is, we will do better in imitating than in trying to be innovative.

This description of succession seems to be remarkably similar to that of imitation in Burke's *Enquiry*. First, the social passion of imitation, much like this politics of succession, has a power of transmission and it repeats the given. We "enlarge our stock" by repeating and combining the given, just as Burke seems to do in his own practice of quotation (*Enquiry* 17). Reversing the Lockean and Hobbesian hierarchy between the faculty of wit and that of judgment (but still maintaining the dichotomy between them), Burke claims that finding differences between things—the work of judgment—is not only uninteresting, for differences are "the common way" and are therefore to be expected (*Enquiry* 17–18); it also hinders our progress by "throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of the imagination" (*Enquiry* 24), the faculty which is responsible for finding similarities—that is, for imitation. It is therefore not by precept—nor by creating clear definitions for things and thereby nicely differentiating them—that we learn but rather by the practice of imitation, which renders learning far more pleasant and effective. It is thus this imitation that "forms our manners, our opinions, our lives" (Burke, *Enquiry* 45).

Second, like succession in politics, imitation allegedly fosters the preservation of society and its unity. Imitation is said to be "one of the strongest links of society […] a species of mutual compliance, which all men yield to each other, without constraint to themselves, and which is extremely flattering to all" (Burke, *Enquiry* 45). This is precisely because we feel that "our manners, our opinions, our lives"—the general norms in accordance with which we conduct ourselves—are not prescribed from above, but are rather the result of an infinite mirroring of each other, as we repeat and imitate and thereby acquire these manners. Finally, just as hereditary politics emphasizes repeating what is given to us by the ancients, "the canonized

forefathers" (Burke, *Reflections* 34),[12] as a way of securing a higher principle of the Good at the imagined origin, Burke's own practice of imitation—his quotations—relies mostly on the writers of the ages, as though merely repeating and combining the given.

So that while "the judgment is for the greater part employed in throwing stumbling-blocks in the way of the imagination, in dissipating the scenes of its enchantment, and in tying us down to the disagreeable yoke of our reason" (Burke, *Enquiry* 24)—creating clear distinctions and marking differences with definitions—the imagination is not only a preserving faculty but, through imitation, also a unifying one, tying society together by an unwritten social contract of sorts. But does this kind of unwritten social contract really pose no restrictions? Or rather, how does it operate? What is it about imitation that supposedly encourages us to be subordinated and regulated without feeling constricted in any way?

The answer that Burke suggests here is that this form of "mutual compliance"—this method by which our manners, opinions, and lives (no less!) are similarly shaped so that we become unified as a society—is based on flattery. The fact that our norms and codes are not

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[12] It is interesting to note that it is precisely where the blood relation is mentioned in the *Reflections* that the discussion of inheritance begins to resemble a discussion of cultural, and specifically literary, inheritance. First of all, it is not simply our forefathers, but our "canonized forefathers" that are mentioned. Second, on the same page, Burke claims: "By adhering in this manner and on those principles to our forefathers, we are guided not by the superstition of antiquarians, but by the spirit of philosophic analogy" (*Reflections* 34). It is a rhetorical and poetic mechanism—analogy—which drives this successional process onward, not merely blood relations. While it is not entirely clear what this "philosophic analogy" entails, it is evident already at this stage that an adequate repetition of tradition will not be a fully accurate mimesis that might duplicate the superstitions of antiquarians, but rather a repetition with a difference, in which the imitation is an analogical one—a repetition of a relation. This form of "analogical" imitation will be discussed in details later, for it is precisely what I term sympathy—or rather, the sympathetic, poetic sublime. Here, it is interesting to note that, further down on the same page, Burke explains the workings of this analogy by an analogy: "We procure reverence to our civil institutions on the principle upon which nature teaches us to revere individual men: on account of their age and on account of those from whom they are descended" (*Reflections* 34). Thus, it is clear that what is to be respected in politics, in our political tradition, is the same as what Burke reveres in the texts he quotes: their age—that is, the fact that they are of the past, closer to some primordial truth—and their descent, that is, the fact that they are themselves imbedded in a tradition, imitating their own predecessors, following the blood line of repetition.

prescribed from above, but are rather acquired through a practice of mutual imitation, seems to flatter our pride, thus giving us the impression that we are not constrained by a higher commanding will. Yet the notion of flattery is extremely elusive and intricate throughout Burke's *Enquiry*. On the one hand, it is a prerequisite for our enjoyment of the beautiful—that is, our enjoyment of resemblances and imitations themselves, for likeness "flatters the imagination" (Burke, *Enquiry* 18). On the other hand, for this very reason, the beautiful, with its commitment to resemblance, poses an extreme threat to our self-preservation. The reason for this danger is that, unlike the sublime that perceptibly forces us into subordination, the beautiful, because of its imitation, "flatters us into compliance" (Burke, *Enquiry* 103).[13] Thus, we find that this flattery, which according to Burke allows for a voluntary, non-constricting social bond, is in fact tied together with the danger of the deceptive power of the beautiful at large—the danger of being dominated without our awareness and thus assisting in our own subjugation.

Moreover, Burke himself defines flattery as follows: "flattery is no more than what raises in a man's mind an idea of a preference which he has not," and sometimes, when one cannot distinguish herself for something excellent, it is even "a complacency in some singular infirmities, follies, or defects of one kind or other" (*Enquiry* 46). Flattery, then, is not merely concealing the surreptitious power of the beautiful over us, but also driving us to assume that the power, the excellence, is in our own hands when, by Burke's very definition, flattery always indicates the very absence of power, and even the presence of "infirmities, follies, or defects." Thus, the social bond in imitation is not so much a matter of willingly submitting our will to that of others, creating some kind of collective will based on mutual mirroring, as it is a matter of not

[13] Frances Ferguson goes as far as claiming that we fail to recognize that what we term the weaker power, the beautiful, has in fact greater sway over us than the sublime and, unlike the latter, bears no mark announcing its danger (53).

realizing that our will is being subdued and that the pleasure and the pride that we feel in the process are in fact markers of a lack of power as well as of a state of misery.

This description of the social bond that is created through imitation and its flattery can be seen as similar to Michel Foucault's (and his followers') understanding of governance as organized around mechanisms of discipline and control. It echoes that disparaging realization in Foucault's earlier writing, according to which we are always-already given in networks of knowledge and power relations, which interpolate us and which we in turn perpetuate and reproduce, thus participating in our own subjugation while under the illusion that we are in fact free subjects, capable of resistance and choice (*The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* 92–102). It is reminiscent, for instance, of Judith Butler's notion of our repetitive performance that regulates the production of gender, without recourse to an overarching law or a clear origin but simply by constant acts of mirroring.[14]

This kind of perpetual mirroring is also reminiscent of the repetition which Deleuze terms comedy and relates to his first, passive synthesis of time. It is a repetition of the past, whose time is the time of the "Before," as Deleuze argues in *Difference and Repetition* (89). This repetition, which is for Deleuze a "pure past"—where the living present is merely the most intensely contracted instance of this past—is a repetition characterized by the automatic, accurate return of habit. It is a repetition that has failure at its base and where the act is always far too big for the agent (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 72–75). As such, the kind of political collectivity that

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[14] For instance, "As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is *repeated*. This repetition is at once a reenactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimation […] indeed, the performance is effected with the strategic aim of maintaining gender within its binary frame—an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but, rather, must be understood to found and consolidate the subject […] gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*" (Butler 139–141).

this kind if repetition embodies is either this Foucauldian constant self-constitution, which is folded out of the structure and perpetuates it, or that constant repetition of an imagined origin, which Burke suggests and which amounts to a very similar thing.

However, comedy as a kind of repetition has a subversive form—a kind of resistance, which still depends on the law or the structure as it transgresses it. This type of repetition is clearly related to the comic. Deleuze characterizes it as a repetition of-the-law and terms it humor (*Difference and Repetition* 7). It embodies the form of parasitic resistance, which is always already in the structure, always-already dependent on the law. Humor is the exposure of the ritualistic nature of political regulation and ritual and it achieves this through over repetition (i.e., over regulation) itself. This mechanism of resistance and the kinds of collectivity and repetition that it entails will be discussed in detail in Chapter Two. For now, I would just like to take a closer look at what humor as a repetition might suggest.

One aspect of the merely formal empty law, according to Deleuze and Guattari as well as Michel de Certeau, is its tendency to write itself on bodies. De Certeau claims that since the law is abstract, empty, contingent, and therefore cannot be known, each and every law must materialize and become concrete in bodies, in bodily examples. Through this operation of the inscription on the body, living beings are "packed into texts," "intextuated," become distinct from the group, according to the logic of penal justice that demands a body upon which to carry its punishment. On the other hand, this operation forces the law to be "incarnated," so that the flesh demonstrates the law (de Certeau 140). In de Certeau's own words, the aim of this operation is "to produce a 'copy' that makes the norm legible," a material quotation of the law through which we might be able to read its logic and narrative (141). The best possible tactic against this type of law would therefore seem to resort to the very same means that the law

implements: the body, matter, and experience, on the one hand; quotation and "the copy," on the other.

We find similar claims in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, along with a clear link between the Kantian perception of the Law as merely formal and the need for the sentence to materialize (as is the case in Kafka's *Trial*):

> [B]ecause it has no object of knowledge, the law is operative only in being stated and is stated only in the act of punishment: a statement directly inscribed on the real, on the body and the flesh; a practical statement opposed to any sort of speculative proposition (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 45).

The empty law requires materialization, a practical incarnation in the flesh, a copy in the real—a form of material quotation. According to Deleuze and Guattari, instead of criticism, which is still part of the realm of representation, it is better to "connect to the virtual movement that is already real even though it is not yet existence" (*Kafka* 58). In Kafka's case, this is achieved through a method of active dismantling that does not make use of criticism, but rather consists in repeating while prolonging, accelerating, and segmenting. It is not anther theory or critique, but rather a new form of sensation as a catalyst for change, for "this method is much more intense than any critique" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 48).[15]

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[15] Given that practice, or bodily experience, may be considered—as it is indeed considered by Deleuze—to be a way of transgressing the law, exposing its arbitrary, merely formal nature, and recovering the very movement that the law wishes to prevent, it is not surprising that practice, or experience, is so important to Burke. In the *Enquiry*, Burke claims that it is "not uncommon to be wrong in theory, and right in practice: and we are happy that it is so. Men often act right from their feelings, who afterwards reason but ill on them from principle" (49). For the same reason, he claims that an "art can never give the rules that make an art," but is merely acquired through practice—more specifically, through a practice of imitation (Burke, *Enquiry* 49). Against the backdrop of the empty law and abstract theories, Burke thus endorses praxis, a sort of *expérience*—both an experience and an experiment—through a *certain* practice of imitation. Burke's earlier request that we avoid definitions, experiencing the matter by following him in his path instead, is merely an introduction to a whole "practical theory" that resists providing rules or reasoning—or, perhaps, constantly fails in providing rules and reasoning—because, in the final analysis, it is art that concerns him and because it is through this practical art that he himself speaks. And this

By this intensification, imitation could be turned into its subversive form, humor, one of the two bodily textual operations that Deleuze detects in Sade and Masoch. The masochistic operation, which Deleuze terms humor, is a bodily-textual tactic of absolute, literal obedience, a rigorous compliance with the law, an operation of "twisting it with excess of zeal," which strives to expose its absurdity and provoke the very same disorder that the law, by its very nature, is intended to prevent. The masochist refrains from questioning the law's primary or supreme nature, and moves downward, towards its consequences; he or she then behaves as if "the supreme sovereignty of the law conferred upon it the enjoyment of all those pleasures that it denies us" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 88). Thus, the effect that this meticulous obedience yields, an effect completely in contradiction with our expectations (the blows of the whip, far from preventing orgasm, incite and assure it), is humor—the exposure of the punishment for a forbidden pleasure as the precondition for that very pleasure. It is the demonstration of how "the very law which forbids the satisfaction of desire under threat of subsequent punishment is converted into one which demands the punishment first and then orders that the satisfaction of desire should necessarily follow upon punishment" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 88–89). Humor is thus the proof for the absurdity of the law, a reversal of its very function, and a recovering of the movement it is intended to block.

One formal criterion of masochism that Deleuze articulates is the contract, which is not

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imitative art of which and by which the *Enquiry* speaks—this experiential, poetic, ambiguous, sympathetic art—unfolds in a quotational structure and proceeds by actual quotations. However, while this quotational practice thus helps Burke criticize and avoid speculative laws and reasoning, it also undermines his own attempt to establish a transcendental law based on imitation and repetition beyond theories and the rights of man, for this practice always involves a difference, even in his own quotations of the ancients or the masters, and because it exposes the arbitrary nature of any law. Quotations as material imitations are a collection of examples, fragmented and repeated, an *expérience* of the text, instead of a representation that is still liable to be judged according to criteria of truth or justice—that is, doing justice to the law.

necessarily a written one: the masochist is not held by real chains, but merely by his or her own word. Moreover, "the masochistic contract implies not only the necessity of the victim's consent, but his ability to persuade, and his pedagogical and juridical effort to train his torturer" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 75). While it seems as though the masochist is educated and fashioned by the authoritarian torturer, it is the masochist who forms him or her, it is the supposed victim who speaks from the throat of the torturer. The masochist is therefore an educator; he or she needs to search for torturers, and then educate, shape, and conclude an alliance with them in order to realize this strange scheme (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 20–22). This relationship of the masochist to the torturer can be extrapolated and extended to explicate the humorist-masochist's relationship to the law itself—or rather, the relationship of the wounded obeying body, the copy of the law, to the law. Precisely because the law is abstract and universal it must materialize in bodies, which then force the law to become specific, to make itself at least somewhat legible. Moreover, this active materialization of the universal law, by forcing it to become specific, puts the law itself on trial and necessarily changes it too. For, given a particular case, any law claiming universality must be interpreted, elaborated, rewritten to suit that particular case and thus is necessarily changed. This form of education and shaping of the law is only possible as long as we are not abstracting the body back into a universal of some kind.

Imitation, such as the one Burke promotes, when striving for this kind of rigorous obedience, has the capacity to expose the kind of yielding to power that is concealed by flattery. This is because this kind of imitation sets the scene, in advance, precisely as this yielding. Starting from the consequences, from the "punishment," it then secures, and even orders, the pleasure and the freedom of exposing the arbitrary nature of the law, power, and violence, thereby freeing the very movement they are trying to prevent. That is, by submitting to authority

first, following its words with as much obedience as possible, it combats that ever-present guilt that arises from the sense of always necessarily transgressing the law; it suspends the law for a while instead of negating or destroying it, thus opening up new horizons beyond the given; it then changes the law itself, power itself, by making it materialize in a concrete case; finally, it reverses the law by exposing its contingent nature and by demanding the very act that the law is prohibiting, thus gaining some freedom—and all this without representing the law in any way, not even in the form of a critique, but solely by experiencing it.[16]

But the humor of absolute compliance, this faithful imitation of each other and of tradition, has death as its horizon. When describing the disagreements that we might experience with regards to the degrees of faithfulness of an imitation, Burke alludes to a story about a Turkish Sultan who, when presented with a painting depicting the decapitated head of St. John the Baptist, insists that the portrayal is inaccurate, for the skin around the wound of the severed head is not shrunk as it tends to be in reality. However, despite the disagreement, both the Sultan and the painter partake, according to Burke, in "the pleasure arising from a natural object, so far as each perceives it justly imitated" (*Enquiry* 20). Not only is Burke neglecting to cite his source for this Orientalist tale, but he also forgets to mention that, according to the tale, the Sultan then orders a slave to be brought into the room and decapitated in order to prove his point. This seems to encapsulate the self-destruction of imitation: Attempts at strict imitation never achieve their

[16] In order to be humorous, however, an imitation must announce itself to be an imitation, a copy. Burke knew all too well the taste of failed humor; his attempt at a satirical treatise, "A Vindication of Natural Society," was such a failed imitation that it was taken to be sincere—it was considered by William Godwin to be the first instance of anarchist writing (fn. 3). Burke's humorous imitation of Lord Bolingbroke failed not because it obeyed too well—that is, imitated too closely; on the contrary, it failed precisely because it did not imitate well enough, it did not insinuate itself into Lord Bolingbroke's throat by bringing forth his very words, pushing them to the humorous point by an excess of obedience and by reversing the temporal order (submission first, freedom and pleasure later). Instead, Burke merely followed the style or the logic of Bolingbroke's writing, paraphrasing it, never actually taking it on and humorizing it.

ideal—and therefore the execution is always preferable to the tragedy on stage (*Enquiry* 43), which can only aspire towards perfect imitation of the real, towards death. Moreover, the closer we approach that ideal the nearer we are to destruction and utter annihilation. For the same reason, Deleuze and Guattari warn us about the dangers of masochism: the masochist is always on the verge of self-destruction, since he is ceaselessly courting the ever-present danger of over-obedience, of the stagnation of his or her operation modes, which might sap her political power instead of strengthening it (*A Thousand Plateaus* 152)

III. Ambition: The Tragic Irony of Absolute Innovation

While Burke's imitative successional politics allows some room for improvement within society—that is, for difference—the mechanism for introducing change into the system is not made clear in the *Reflections*. It is only in the *Enquiry* that Burke explicitly recognizes that novelty is in itself a source of great aesthetic pleasure (30), and hence concedes that perfect imitation will lead society to stagnation and hinder all progress, for "if men gave themselves up to imitation entirely, and each followed the other […] it is easy to see that there never could be any improvement amongst them" (46). Therefore, to the societal passion of imitation, the one responsible for the preservation of society and its unity, Burke adds that of ambition, the social passion responsible for producing difference and novelty.[17]

Ambition is described in the *Enquiry* as a feeling of "satisfaction arising from the contemplation of [man] excelling his fellows in something deemed valuable amongst them" (46).

[17] For Longinus imitation already contained both a passive repetition of the ancients and an active competition with and against them—a competition which leads to new, sublime inventions and "somehow elevate[s] our minds to the greatness of which we form a mental image" (19). Despite his reliance on Longinus, Burke constructs those as two separate concepts: imitation on the one hand, ambition on the other.

Burke describes this satisfaction as a kind of triumph, or "swelling," of a person; it is a pleasure we take in any distinction, whether real or imagined, whether for "something excellent" or for something base, as being "supreme in misery." Ambition, therefore, seems to encourage men to take pride in their deeds and manners (even when the occasion calls rather for a sense of shame). However, this schema is instantly complicated when Burke cites Longinus after claiming that this swelling that we feel in ambition is "never more perceived, nor operates with more force, than when without danger we are conversant with terrible objects" (*Enquiry* 46)—that is, when, while taking great distance, we encounter the sublime. Burke then immediately adds,

> Hence proceeds what Longinus has observed of that glorying and sense of inward greatness, that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime: it is what every man must have felt in himself upon such occasions (Burke, *Enquiry* 46–7).

Burke is referring here to Longinus' treatise *On Sublimity*, where Longinus claims that it is "our nature to be elevated and exalted by true sublimity. Filled with joy and pride, *we come to believe we have created what we have only heard*" (7, emphasis added).[18] Thus, although it seemed at first as though Burke associates imitation with tradition and ambition with novelty, ambition now appears to abandon the new and circle right back to resemblance and imitation, as we assume the place of the sublime author and produce nothing new—and even nothing at all. The swelling of the ambitious sublime is therefore an incessant effort to seize the power and authority of the author, which at its limit will efface any difference. It is a kind of cannibalistic interiorization of the other whose alterity is, nonetheless, the very condition for this pleasure.

This kind of swelling, the Longinian violent transgression of rules and laws towards the

[18] On the Longinian sublime reversal and its relation to intertextuality see Hertz (*The End of the Line* 5–7).

absolutely new and shocking, is reminiscent of Deleuze's concept of irony, as a bodily-textual operation, which serves to resist the empty law. Deleuze claims that contrary to the masochist's humorous operation, which attacks the law in a downward motion—from the law to its consequences—the Sadist's operation attacks the law in an upwards movement—from the law towards a higher principle—in order to expose the law as nothing other than a secondary, arbitrary rule. This upward movement, which Deleuze terms irony, encapsulates the lesson that Sade teaches us:

> In all its forms—natural, moral and political—the law represents the rule of secondary nature, which is always geared to the demands of conservation […] In every case the law is a mystification; it is not a delegated but a usurped power that depends on the infamous complicity of slaves and masters. It is significant that Sade attacks the regime of laws as being the regime of the tyrannized and of the tyrants (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 86).

The hatred for the tyrant is the core of Sade's thought, hence it is no surprise that his protagonists produce a counter-language to tyranny, which strives to transcend the law towards a higher principle—this time, however, towards the higher principle of Evil. This step is, according to Deleuze, a reversal of Platonism and a subversion of the law itself. It exposes the existence of a chaotic, primary nature, which is completely in opposition to the demands and the rule of the secondary nature. This is an operation that cannot be confused for a moment with tyranny, which still assumes laws (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 87).

The ironic or Sadic operation, which perpetually links up failed transgressive actions, never reaches the ideal of absolute negation itself (the absolute absence of any laws, or the radically new), but rather preserves it in its very impossibility. It thus exposes a whole world of violences, ridiculing the modern effort to position one violence as more legitimate than another,

or one set of laws as superior to the next. Sade is well aware of the fact that this freedom from and beyond the law is only possible as an infinitesimally compressed instance between two sets of laws—the one it overturned and the one it will constitute. Yet, the fact that the *raison d'être* of this ideal negation is to disappear does not prevent "this divine interval, this vanishing instant, from testifying to its fundamental difference from all forms of the law" (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 87). In his attempt to transcend any law towards an imaginary potential of the absence of laws, Sade is the ironic signifier of the lack of necessity of the existing law.

The moment of the absolutely new is thus the ever-fleeting moment of revolution—or, the ever-fleeting moment of the ambitious sublime. It is the moment of the violent usurpation of power, the sublime reversal between reader and author, before authority is re-settled in this or that set of rules, in this or that author. Since this moment is never given in its pure form, it requires constant repetition, a kind of perpetual revolution. It is in this way that the moment of the absolutely new, of absolute difference, becomes itself a form of repetition. If imitation is a repetition geared towards the past, then ambition is an infinite repetition of the present. It is the ironic attempt to surpass any authority, any law—an endeavor which is only possible before the sedimentation of this attempt itself as a new authority. The temporality of the ironic sublime is therefore that of the present moment, infinitely compressed, and of the asymptotic repetition of this present—one present after another, the chain of events—in an ambitious, ironic attempt to transcend the given entirely and expose the law as a base contract between the ruled and their oppressors.

While humor—a repetition of-the-law—echoes Deleuze's first, passive synthesis, (which is characterized as comedy), irony, this type of reversal of the law through a repetition beyond-the-law (*Difference and Repetition* 7), echoes Deleuze's second, active synthesis, or the

repetition he considers to be tragic. Deleuze reverses Karl Marx's famous formula—"first time as tragedy, second time as farce"—and claims that, in fact, while both tragedy and comedy are part of any repetition, the first repetition is that of the comic, which we articulated as the repetition of the "Before," where the act is too big for the agent and the repetition works by means of some defect. The moment of metamorphosis, tragic repetition, in fact follows (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 92). Tragedy is of the time of the "During," of history and memory, and of the conflicting organization of the organism, the subject, signification and the state (including its opposition in the form of the revolution). In an attempt to address the paradox of the present—"to constitute time while passing in time constituted"—the second synthesis, tragedy, introduces the notion of metamorphosis by bringing about a split in the self and rendering it reflexive (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 86). This is due to the fact that each successive present contains within itself "an extra dimension in which it represents the former and also represents itself," so that every present both reflects itself as present and represents the past present moment (Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* 80). Deleuze argues that in this form of time, in this repetition of the present, the agent becomes equal to his act (*Difference and Repetition* 89) and tragedy thus becomes the realm of the construction of subjectivity as such.. Irony seems to be the subversive form of tragic repetition. Therefore, the second model of conflictual meanings that I examine here is the model of irony, which, like the logic of judgment itself, sets up clear oppositions. However, ironic statements, unlike judgments, are never decisive. Irony is the kind of ambitious repetition that refuses to acknowledge the fact that it is a repetition and instead sees itself as completely different, distinct, and new. Being so dependent on intention, irony emphasizes agency; however, as in ironic Greek tragedies, this agency always defeats itself. This model of repetition and its related forms of collectivity—both the State as

organism with its social contract *and* the Sadic revolution—will be discussed in Chapter One.

Interestingly, it is precisely the Burkean perception of the law—attempting to establish an eternal, natural law, a law "geared towards conservation," over and above any other laws—that Sade, his French contemporary, is mimicking and mocking in his ironic operation. Burke seems eager to find a higher principle that will allow him to sanctify one set of laws over others, certain forms of violence over others—sets of laws and violences which will not be empty and arbitrary, but rather necessary and sanctioned by the Good. Indeed, this very ambitious move seems to share a certain understanding with Sade—Burke, too, perceives the revolutionaries' laws as a usurped power, as empty rules of secondary nature, which he aims to transcend towards an eternal Law of primary nature, towards a higher principle. However, Burke lacks the ironic shift of this move. Sade's irony is not only based on imitating a societal passion for an absolute Law, but also on the ironic step of its intensification—which takes place by accelerating this demand in perpetual, ever more aggressive, repetitions—and on its reversal: turning the struggle for supreme Good into the struggle for supreme Evil, or inverting the aspiration for absolute laws into an aspiration for absolute freedom. In this sense the Sadic operation has a double character—on the one hand, it takes the aspiration for absolute rules out of its context and intensifies it; on the other, it reverses (or negates) its very end. Burke's wish to return to a higher principle, unlike that of Sade, is rather sincere: He is still seeking the Good and the absolute Law, and completely shuns the absolutely new or the utopist idea of the absence of any laws. Burke positions conservation of the given, of tradition itself, as the *telos* of his notion of ambition, which is allegedly the passion of and for the new.

This irony, while completely lost on Burke, is present in his text both in his theory of ambition and in his own ambitious practice. With regards to Burke's own practice, we encounter

his transgression of the authors he misquotes—his own usurpation of their place and power—as well as his constant transgression of his own rules for the production of the beautiful and the sublime in writing. In fact, his very attempt to produce a new, all-binding, theory of aesthetics (and of politics), which is based on universal principles such as pleasure and pain, itself transgresses his own notion of the conservation of tradition by avoiding any innovation.

In Burke's theory of ambition, too, there are still some remnants of irony, despite his best efforts. Much like Sade's irony, ambition is a physical phenomenon—a swelling and the act of conquering the place of another—which is confined within a literary text, for ambition finds its ultimate manifestation in our sublime feeling vis-à-vis the masterpiece of the great poet or orator. Furthermore, the Longinian sublime, the apogee of Burke's theory of ambition, is a violent usurpation of power; it is characterized by the sublime reversal of author and reader, the usurpation of the place of the author and her authority, much like the ironic operation that aims at conquering the place of the tyrant and at violently annihilating the other. Moreover, much like Sade's characters and their counter-language to tyranny, the Longinian sublime involves constant transgression of rules, testifying to the futility of any attempt to prescribe laws for writing and to their merely contingent nature.[19]

Furthermore, since Burke claims that ambition is most powerful when we are conversant about terrible things without being in danger ourselves—a definition which is remarkably similar to his definition of the sublime[20]—we may conclude that ambition too, much like the Sadic

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[19] Longinus seems to emphasize the lack of clear rules for writing, claiming that "literary judgment comes only as the final product of a long experience." However, he might be seen as emphasizing the lack of necessity to obey these rules when he writes, "beauty of style, sublimity, and charm all conduce to successful writing, [but] they are also causes and principles not only of success but of failure" (Longinus 7).

[20] "Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a

operation, is associated with terror and depends upon the delight we feel in the other's pain, fear, and ultimately, death (*Enquiry* 36). The Burkean sublime, like the Sadic operation, sets against reason and the enlightenment (*Enquiry* 53) and is always "some modification of power" that is "in some way superior" to us (*Enquiry* 60). Its "artificial" forms strive toward infinite repetition "because the imagination is entertained with the promise of something more, and does not acquiesce in the present object of the sense" (Burke, *Enquiry* 70). Since Burke demands our complete ignorance, a complete surprise, in face of the sublime, it must constantly intensify its repetitions, become ever more shocking and violent with each blow (Ferguson 47). Much like the perpetual intensifying repetition of the Sadic operation, the constant repetition of partial ambitious acts, in its aspiration towards the absolutely new, never reaches its ideal but rather preserve it in its impossibility, which is repeated to infinity. Therefore, ambition becomes not only the moment that exposes and rejects the "infamous complicity of slaves and masters," which is inherent in the beautiful, but also the moment of pure resistance: much like the Sadic operation, the ambitious attempt to transcend and transgress *all* existing laws and norms, both in relation to writing and within society, is the ironic marking of the contingent nature of *any* existing laws. Thus, the time of ambition is the time of repetition infinitesimally compressed within the present, the vanishing instant of revolution, which necessarily haunts Burke's theory.

As a final thought, it is worth asking how sincere Burke is in aspiring to this divine eternal law. Throughout his discussions of succession and imitation it seems at times as though it is tradition itself, repetition itself—without any divine origin—which is the higher principle that he seeks. Viewed in this manner, Burke's writing in fact seems closer to Sade's. It might be understood as an ironic operation that aims to resist and overturn the revolutionary laws by

source of the *sublime*; that is, it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" (Burke, *Enquiry* 36-7).

exposing their arbitrary nature. Indeed, Burke never employs a reversal *per se*; he is not turning the revolutionary lawmakers' aspiration towards the principles of the Good and the Just into an aspiration towards pure Evil and injustice. Yet, his obsession with repetition and his obsessive repetitions bring about the ironic intensification of the Sadic operation and, in a reversal of sorts, seem to suggest the *nihil* as the origin of laws: Burke gives us the ironic form of the law as an obsessive repetition whose principle is precisely the lack of principles that lies at its origin.

Just like the sadistic operation, ambition too can never achieve its ideal without demolishing its other, consequently leading to its own destruction as well. The instance Burke chooses in order to demonstrate the power of the ambitious sublime, our inability to resist it, and its radical superiority over imitation, is the moment of the public execution (*Enquiry* 43). That is to say, in order to enjoy this "delightful horror" that we take in the ambitious sublime we must either completely devour the sublime author, as in the Longinian sublime, or suffer the infliction of great pain on another subject, where the ultimate end of this pain is pure death and utter destruction.[21]

This is where the post-colonial impasse arises: either the other takes over me or I take over the other; either I try to present the other so faithfully as to eliminate myself and any possibility of understanding in light of this radical difference; or, I swallow the other as I take over her place, reducing her to my own language. In both cases, there is no gap that enables negotiation. What allows the challenging of this impasse, and at the same time undermines Burke's attempt to stabilize society by repetition without recourse to manmade laws, is the last societal passion presented in the *Enquiry*—that of sympathy, the very same sympathy that unifies society and fosters its preservation in the *Reflections*. Sympathy shares much in common with

[21] On death as the *telos* of the sublime: Burke, *Enquiry* 36-7.

imitation: it too is a practice, it is derived from our natural constitution, and is naturally pleasant to us; yet, unlike imitation, it seems to be a repetition geared towards the future, towards difference.

IV. Sympathy: The Parodic Selectivity of Well-Managed Darkness

Burke first defines sympathy simply as "a sort of substitution, by which we are put into the place of another man and are affected in many respects as he is affected" (*Enquiry* 41). This definition is remarkably similar to that of Rousseau's absolute and immediate pity, which was discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, the mechanism of sympathy in the *Enquiry* immediately becomes more complex: rather than absolute identification, or even an aspiration towards absolute identification—literally taking over the place of the other as in the ambitious sublime—sympathy requires a certain distance, a certain difference, in order to work both aesthetically (creating the feeling of the sublime and the beautiful)[22] and politically (preserving a functioning society). According to Burke, by keeping us from being under threat ourselves, this distance from the misfortunes of others allows a certain delight in them, so that we will be attracted to these scenes of misery and not simply shun them. On the other hand, sympathy involves some pain as well, a close enough identification with the suffering of others so that we will be prompt to relieve their pain in order to relieve ourselves. Such is "the bond of sympathy" that God and nature have contrived for the preservation of our society (Burke, *Enquiry* 42-3).

In "imitated distresses"—that is, in the arts, and especially in literature—this relative

[22] Although it seems that sympathy is mainly on the side of the sublime, Burke clarifies early on in the section on sympathy that "this passion may either partake of the nature of those [ideas] which regard self-preservation, and turning upon pain may be a source of the sublime," just as it may "turn upon ideas of pleasure; and then whatever has been said of the social affections, whether they regard society in general, or only some particular modes of it, may be applicable here" (*Enquiry* 41). Sympathy therefore cuts across the dichotomous categories of the sublime and the beautiful, ambition and imitation, revolution and continuous tradition, and questions the very distinction between them.

distance which is required for the functioning of sympathy bears a slightly different form: it is achieved through ambiguity and obscurity. In the *Enquiry,* Burke clearly privileges strong, sympathetic expression to strict imitations, which is evident in his privileging of poetry and oratory over painting. This privileging of poetry and rhetoric is precisely due to their ability to obscure, to cast shadows, to transmit the feeling that something inspires in us instead of imitating the thing itself, supposedly as it is: "In reality," says Burke, "poetry and rhetoric do not succeed in exact description so well as painting does; their business is, to affect rather by sympathy than imitation; to display rather the effect of things on the mind of the speaker, or of others, than to present a clear idea of the things themselves" (*Enquiry* 157). Since a "clear idea" is for Burke nothing but "another name for a little idea" (*Enquiry* 58), poetry and oratory should carry their potential to the fullest and produce obscurities—that is, ambiguous non-defined figures—thereby providing the qualified distance that sympathy requires for its smooth functioning. Sympathy thus becomes an alternative model of expression and repetition, utterly different than the mimesis of imitation.

This obscurity that is involved in sympathy is not absolute darkness. Burke seems to insist that the sublime requires total darkness and, alternatively, may also work in cases of extreme light or quick transitions between light and darkness (all these instances, in the final analysis, carry the same effect: the obliteration of sight) (*Enquiry* 73–74). A uniform, soft light that merely illuminates clearly defined objects—what Erich Auerbach has termed a "perpetual foreground" (9)—would not amount to a sublime effect, according to Burke (*Enquiry* 73), and is better suited for the beautiful, as it merely re-presents us with objects as they are.

However, Burke's quotation of Milton, and his analysis of this quotation, complicate this distinction between sublime obliteration of sight and beautiful "perpetual foreground," and

suggests a third possibility, which Burke himself terms a "judicious obscurity" or a "well-managed darkness"—two different expressions that he uses to exalt Milton's sublime style (*Enquiry* 55; 73). According to Burke, Milton presents death, the shapeless itself, in the strongest light possible precisely by obscuring it—a stylistic strategy that renders this description, according to Burke, "admirably studied." Burke then offers an obscure description of his own when attempting to portray Milton in the strongest light: "It is astonishing with what a gloomy pomp, with what a significant and expressive uncertainty of strokes and coloring, he has finished the portrait of the king of terrors" (*Enquiry* 55).

Let us consider Milton's portrait of death as it is quoted in the *Enquiry*—that is, let us take as an example a quotation of an obscure figure of an obscure figure:

> The other shape,
> If shape it might be called that shape had none
> Distinguishable, in member, joint, or limb;
> Or substance might be called that shadow seemed;
> For each seemed either; black he [originally, it] stood as night;
> Fierce as ten furies; terrible as hell;
> And shook a deadly [dreadful] dart. What seemed his head
> The likeness of a kingly crown had on
> (Burke, *Enquiry* 55; Milton II: 666–73).

This ambiguous, confused darkness is in no way the obliteration of sight that defined the sublime earlier and yet it is, according to Burke himself, "sublime to the last degree" (*Enquiry* 55). Against the dark background of death—the shapeless itself—Milton illuminates certain images, resemblances and likenings, which never hold together long enough for us to construct a coherent picture. He only gives us obscure imitations, figurative images, of things—"what shadow *seemed*," "black *as* night," "fierce *as* ten furies," "terrible *as* hell," "what *seemed* his

head," "the *likeness* of a kingly throne," as well as some other half-lit objects in the formless dark mess. I would therefore like to suggest that there are in fact two different types of sublimes in Burke—the ambitious sublime, in which the place of the author is usurped, and the poetic sublime. The poetic sublime is thus characterized not by the obliteration of sight—this might be a feature of the ambitious sublime—but rather by a certain play on light and darkness, a *chiaroscuro* of sorts. Or, as Auerbach describes this effect, it is a kind of "background lighting"—that is, "the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity" (11). Like a Caravaggesque painting, this mechanism of obscurity highlights parts of the scene, bringing certain objects, certain fragments, into light, while leaving the rest to lurk in the dark background. It is this well-managed darkness, a kind of poetic moderate distance, that allows the reader to be active, to interpret, evaluate, and experience the half-given figures—"[f]or each seemed either," and is therefore left up to our interpretation. As such, sympathy—this combination of nearness and distance, of light and darkness—is the literary passion *par excellence*. Burke's writing about, and of, obscurity points to an irresolvable, and rather productive, ambiguity in sympathy, which gives it its literary character and which undermines his every effort to stabilize our interpretations, feelings, and behaviors by basing our aesthetic feelings and our political logic on the faithful repetition of tradition.

This fragmentation and veiling is remarkably similar to the operation of quotations, both in Burke's *Enquiry* and in general. Burke's quotations from *Paradise Lost*, always inaccurate, present before us close imitations of certain fragments of the text, perhaps even the object itself, as his use of the lighting metaphor seems to indicate. At the same time, Burke leaves most of the cited literary work in absolute darkness, veiling the margins of the quotation with obscure

summaries, introductions, and interpretations. This half-lit object is on the one hand close enough to arouse our interest, and on the other, distant and dark enough for us to be able to instill ourselves in the gap between absolute identification with the other and complete disinterest—that is, the gap between the mask and the body, where interpretation as experiencing and experimenting is possible.[23]

One obvious example of this is Burke's attempt to usurp the authoritative power of Horace in the *Enquiry*. When Burke is urging us to follow him in his path by experiencing it ourselves—instead of defining, making use of our reason to create new definitions or differentiations—he misquotes Horace claiming that if we choose to define,

> Circa vilem patulumque morabimur orbem,
> Unde pudor proferre pedem vetat aut operis lex.
>
> [We will be delayed throughout this trodden, vile and circling path
> Where shame or the work's law prevents [us] from stepping forward.
> (Burke, *Enquiry* 12, translation modified)]

In the original, however, Horace addresses his reader in the negative imperative and in the second person, and has slightly more to say:

> publica materies priuati iuris erit, si
> non circa uilem patulumque moraberis orbem,
> nec uerbo uerbum curabis reddere fidus

[23] While Burke indeed defines sympathy initially as a substitution by which we take the place of another, I reject Jonathan Lamb's claim that, as such, sympathy, as well as the sublime, always involves an usurpation of power, a violent struggle between two subject positions over power and the right of judgment (188-9), in the form of the Longinian sublime and Neil Hertz's reading of it (*The End of the Line* 1–21). To be sure, this may be the case with the ambitious sublime; however, Burke also gives us the alternative model of the poetic or sympathetic sublime, in which we never fully take the place of the other and instead use the gap to experience the text, and thus understand it, differently. The other is no longer the sole authority of the text—we too can intervene in interpreting and judging it—but we continue to recognize her alterity while identifying with her, never fully taking her place.

interpres nec desilies imitator in artum,
unde pedem proferre pudor uetet aut operis lex

[Public matters will become your own property, if
you shall not delay about the trodden, vile and circling path
nor, faithful interpreter, render word for word with care,
nor, imitating, leap like the goat into the well,
Where shame or the work's law prevents [us] from stepping forward]
(Horace 130–35, translation modified).[24]

Horace's tutelary bond with a future poet or orator in a highly collegial conversation (despite the use of the imperative) and his endorsement of the introduction of difference into a repetition of tradition as a way of escaping the work's law and other traps, is transformed in Burke's quotation (despite his use of the hospitable "we") into a solemn cautionary omen delivered to an entire audience as if from a podium, precluding the use of reason and judgment to create definitions—that is, to differentiate—and threatening us with the many traps of the work's law, moral shame, trodden path, and the well from the fable of the fox and the goat.[25]

Moreover, it is reasonable to assume that Burke's readership at the time was familiar with the missing verses from Horace (and perhaps also that some contemporary readers would make the effort to look at the footnote for the original verses), which are thus smuggled into Burke's

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[24] I am thankful to Lorenzo Fabri and Bruno Bosteels for their help with this translation.

[25] This quotation sets the scene of entrapment, as well as the scene of escaping the danger of entrapment, as central to the *Enquiry*. There are two possible traps here: one is the possibility of getting stuck in the trodden orbit, in an endless repetition and imitation of past tradition—precisely what Burke is endorsing; the other is the actual trap, that of the well. The fable mentioned, which has a few variations, largely recounts the story of a goat that encounters a fox lying in a well. When the goat inquires what the fox is doing there, he answers that he is preparing for an upcoming drought. The goat rushes to imitate the fox's behavior and jumps into the well, thus allowing the fox the opportunity to climbs over her in order to free himself and leave the goat trapped behind (Eliot 46). Horace thus encourages us to use our reason, and not follow the fox into the well, like the goat that imitates him blindly and falls into his trap. The word for word imitation is therefore a deadly trap, almost a form of punishment for the rejection of difference.

text and undermine his ardent call for faithful imitation of tradition as a way to guard against new and arbitrary laws. Burke's law of nature—nothing other than "follow nature"—is undermined by his quotation of Horace, which gives us its own norms for evaluating it in this case (temporarily and without a verdict) precisely when Burke is ambitiously trying to usurp Horace's authority. This is a clear example of the way sympathy, the very mechanism that was supposed to stabilize the (both aesthetic and ethico-political) system, undermines this effort; Burke's own call for relying on tradition, for repeating sympathetically, opens his own text—and his quotations, his reliance on tradition—to our own sympathetic readings.

This quotation, like quotations in general, suggests the criteria for its own evaluation. It does not give us the law of the work, but rather stands in a metonymic relation to it—a singular case, which can nonetheless serve as an open generalization of sorts. Although it is generalizable, a quotation is still fairly distinct from the law, as its generalization is always a limited one. As long as we evaluate it according to its own criteria, and as long as we allow ourselves and our criteria to be changed by the quotation rather than merely attempting to subsume it under our law, we may be able to conduct ourselves ethically in relation to it. This relation is also a form of relation to the other: this fragment of a foreign text—for only this fragment is currently available—is not turned into an exotic treasure, an artifact subsumed under our own stereotypes, but is rather a hint, a physical part, of a greater entity, to which we can relate by the literary practice of sympathy: identifying with the partly obscured while maintaining a certain gap in which we can conduct our interpretations—always speculative and temporary, a suspended judgment of sorts, generalizable but not universal, and in no way pretending to capture the reality of it, but merely to experience and present it. This selective reiteration will be discussed at length in the last two chapters. Chapter Three will emphasize its

relation to sympathy and to bodies while also exploring its generalizable nature. Chapter Four will focus on the work of this affirmative selection as this play of light and darkness that makes us see anew.

V. A Digression: Karl Kraus' Satirical Genius

In order to identify the specific nature of this third passion as a form of repetition I suggest a short digression through Walter Benjamin's (rather quotational) discussion of the work of Karl Kraus. In his essay on the satirist Karl Kraus, Benjamin explains Kraus' practice of quotation as miming and elucidates the relationship of this practice to ambiguity and the night. Just as sympathetic renditions are a kind of repetition with a difference, so too is what Benjamin terms "Kraus' mimetic genius"—an expression which he elaborates both in the sense of imitating and in the sense miming—the art of acting out the text physically, ironically and humorously, and in silence. To support this claim, Benjamin quotes from Kraus: "I am perhaps the first instance of a writer who simultaneously writes and experiences his writing theatrically" ("Karl Kraus" 442). This is key to understanding the sympathetic quotation practice introduced here and its specific notion of repetition with a difference. When Kraus writes, he is not merely writing—putting his words to paper, giving form to a spiritual element in him, criticizing or engaging in other forms of representation; rather, he experiences the text, physically, sensually, through this miming: a satirical mimesis, performed by the mute body on stage.

At the beginning of Benjamin's essay, Kraus gives us his word:

> In the empire bereft of imagination, where man is dying of spiritual starvation, where pens are dipped in blood and swords in ink, that which is not thought must be done, but that which is only thought is inexpressible. Expect from me no word of my own. Nor should I be capable of saying anything new (Kraus as quoted in Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" 436).

In these hard times, caught in their own tragedy and longing for destruction, “booming with the fearful symphony of deeds that engender reports, and of reports that bear the blame for deeds,” in these “unspeakable times,” Kraus vows to keep silent, or at least not utter any word of his own, “none except this, which just preserves silence from misinterpretation” (435). More importantly, he insists that there will be nothing new in his silent utterance and that no one will be able to take over it as in the case of the ambitious sublime, for his proclamation of the right to silence purportedly defends him from misinterpretation and misquotation. When words are real events and actual bodies—dipped in blood, bearing the blame for deeds—and bodies, events, are, in turn, words—engendered by reports, their violence dipped in ink—there is no longer any use in talking about deeds and criticizing them, for the action to be done is precisely the unthinkable one. For the same reason, there is no use in letting deeds “speak for themselves.” The merely-thought, however, is not yet expressible and therefore he who has nothing to say should “step forward and be silent” (Benjamin, “Karl Kraus” 436). Thus, a silence that showcases the not-yet-thinkable becomes the ultimate political deed.

This miming is precisely that which allows Kraus to keep his silence as he nevertheless engages with and disarticulates the “original” text, in his productive-destructive way, by mimicking it—imitating silently with a satirical difference—thus experiencing it “behavioristically.” Mimicry, according to Benjamin, plays a “decisive role” in Kraus’ polemics: as a satirist, “he imitates his subjects in order to insert the crowbar of his hate into the finest joints of their posture,” unmasking their inauthenticity by experiencing their role, by performing them “behavioristically” (“Karl Kraus” 442). Therefore, Kraus’ style, Benjamin claims, combines advanced unmasking techniques—this uncovering of the inauthenticity of those he quotes precisely by imitating them—and an archaic self-expressive art—the vanity of his

constant self-exposure as he is attempting to articulate himself in public. These two different aspects, imitation and ambition, "merge in [ambiguity, the demon] into *self-unmasking*"—the exposure of "[Karus] himself, his life, and his suffering […] with all its wounds, all its nakedness" (Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" 441). It is, after all, his singular self that carries out this miming: In order for him to perform this sympathetic mimicry, thereby delineating that not-yet-thinkable, he must remain other to himself, take on the personae of his objects of imitation, and experience them physically. However, at the same time he should never be absolutely other, fully identifying with the mask, for the only place he can occupy in this theatre is precisely the one between himself and the role.

It is within this gap, between the body and the mask, that the political power of quotations comes to life; it is within this gap that experiential interpretation becomes possible as a form of suspended judgment. As Michel Foucault writes, it is within this in-between, within the non-place, precisely between body and mask, that the event appears (377-8). And this event is nothing other than the exploitation of the law of the stronger—this empty law, which, far from safeguarding peace, is simply another form of war and violence—and a sublime usurpation of power, "the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it," in order to apply power against power (Foucault 380).

There should be no mistake here: Benjamin understands Kraus' quotations as a theatrical endeavor in which Kraus wears his opponents, taking them on and ironically imitating their logic. Kraus' miming in his quotations is therefore a way of playing interpretation out, trying it on—provisionally, temporarily—in a theatre of sorts. Thus, Benjamin is justified in announcing that "the quotations in *Die Fackel* are more than documentary proof; they are the props with which the quoter unmasks himself mimetically" ("Karl Kraus" 442). Kraus' quotations do not

represent or document anything; they are not a simple copy testifying to some "original" scene, preserving it or its traces. Furthermore, they do not even criticize in the common sense of the term, for they do not re-present and chastise what his opponents are saying or trying to say. They are rather a mechanism by which Kraus practices—mimes humoristically or ironically in his silence—a possibility in the text before him, in the world before him. "Admittedly," says Benjamin, "what emerges in just this connection is how closely the cruelty of the satirist is linked to the ambiguous modesty of the interpreter, which in [Kraus'] public reading is heightened beyond comprehension" ("Karl Kraus" 442).

Kraus also expresses the ever-guilty conscience that the empty law generates.[26] However, according to Benjamin, this guilt always leads to a form of expressionism, in which human figures, like in medieval miniatures, lean backwards and forwards at one and the same time. In their front sides—"as though falling sickness has overtaken them"—they incline towards one another, seeming rather compassionate. Their backsides, however, are burdened with guilt and hence their piled backs are bent backwards. Thus, unfathomable guilt and social sympathy—this inclination towards one another—seem as two sides of one and the same coin, even though they pull us in opposite directions. This is epitomized in Kraus' own words, which Benjamin then quotes: "That obedient masses are led into danger not by an unknown will but by an unknown guilt makes them pitiable" ("Karl Kraus" 445). It is this very guilt, produced by the unknowable empty law, that endangers us; yet, it is this very danger, this very same guilt, that creates this

[26] When discussing Karl Kraus' practice of quotations, his method of imitation, Walter Benjamin claims that it is nothing other than a defensive reaction of a man who is always-already implicated and suffers from an ever-guilty conscience. He locates Kraus' implication and guilt beyond deeds and misdeeds, in the language of his fellow men: "his passion for imitating them is at the same time the expression of and the struggle against this implication, and also the cause and the result of that ever-watchful guilty conscience" (Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" 442). Thus, Kraus' imitation, his attempt to talk from within the throats of his authoritative adversaries, is derived from, and serves as a way to struggle against, this guilt, this constant implication in a crime that is forever unknown.

sympathetic inclination towards one another. Sympathy is thus the flip side of the empty law (even if it is not necessarily entailed by it. We are only rendered piti*able*, worthy of pity, by this unknown guilt; it does not necessarily command that we pity each other).[27]

Furthermore, when Benjamin discusses Kraus' dark background, a primordial world that he terms the world of the demon, he describes it precisely as a world of ambiguity and darkness ("Karl Kraus" 441). Even when Kraus emerges from this dark background by dint of daylight, he appears only in parts, remaining fragmented and ambiguous, despite his every effort to expose, express, and articulate himself. It is this demon that makes Kraus so vain—in constant need for being identified and recognized—while at the same time keeping him forever obscure; it is this very demon that keeps Kraus' name—the peak of his self-expression—a secret and holds him in absolute loneliness. At this point Benjamin compares Kraus' vanity to that of the demon in the fairytale, "who gesticulates wildly on the hidden hill: 'thank God nobody knows my name is Rumpelstiltskin'" (Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" 444). This combination of light and darkness in Kraus' ambiguity is thus quite similar to the combination of distance and nearness required by sympathy.

More importantly, Kraus "puts the legal system itself under accusation" and therefore "accuses the law in its substance" (Benjamin 444). He objects to the practice of accusing the law merely for its effects—as the petty-bourgeois in their revolt against the masochistic

[27] However, as hateful as Kraus may seem, he still sympathizes in light of this unknown guilt—both the one he endures and the one he discerns in others. This is because this guilt that Kraus bears is, according to Benjamin, where "private and historical consciousness vividly meet" (445). Kraus does not criticize from outside the collective, from some Archimedean point that is external to and above the society of his fellow men, but rather "participates in their lot in order to denounce them and denounces them in order to participate" (Benjamin 445). In line with Benjamin, then, not only that this form of expressive or experiential criticism requires being steeped in the community and its time in order to have actual sympathy for it, but practicing this critical self-unmasking from within the community simultaneously writes its very borders and pushes them further.

"enslavement of the 'free individual' by 'dead formulas,'" or even as the Sadistic radicals who "storm the legal code without ever for a moment having thought of justice." Therefore, Kraus' charge is rather "high treason of the law against justice. More exactly, betrayal of the word by the concept, which derives its existence from the word: the premeditated murder of the imagination" (Benjamin 444). Like Job, Kraus, "who has seen through the law like no other" (Benjamin 444), recognizes the arbitrary nature of the law and its betrayal of 'real' justice. More importantly, it is Kraus who connects this betrayal with the betrayal of the word by the concept—the well-defined, clear, fully-illuminated word that has forgotten its origin: the demonic obscurity of the word. According to Benjamin, the word is where language distances itself the most from mind and aspires to the purely erotic. He quotes Kraus' observations that "The more closely you look at a word, the more distantly it looks back" (Benjamin 456), affirming the interweaving of nearness and distance in the word. Moreover, this "primal erotic relationship between nearness and distance is, in [Kraus'] language, given voice as rhyme and name. As rhyme, language rises up from the creaturely world; as name, it draws all creatures up to it" (Benjamin 453). Thus, language, as embodied in the figure of the word, takes the form of the sympathetic tension between nearness and distance, the ambiguity of the non-conceptual. This language is betrayed by the concept just as justice is betrayed by the law—the well-defined, abstract, and universal concept of justice—which, to add insult to injury, thereby kills the imagination.

It is only now that we can understand Kraus' polemic procedure—his practice of quotation. "To quote a word," Benjamin famously proclaimed, "is to call it by its name," that is, bring it out of the dark background—as a creature, a living thing, matter—and shed some light over it, yet not too much light, so that it remains connected to that background and does not

become a concept. It is the *habeas corpus*—not the bringing forth of the concept, the abstract law, that will give meaning and judge in language, but rather the bringing of the body of text to this sympathetic trial, where everything is suspended and we temporarily interpret following our passions. Thus, the quotation, the bringing of the body of text to trial,

> […] both saves and punishes, and in it language proves the matrix of justice. It summons the word by its name, wrenches it destructively from its context, but precisely thereby calls it back to its origin […] in citation [or more precisely, quotation], the two realms—of origin and destruction—justify themselves before language. And conversely, only when they interpenetrate—in citation [or rather, quotation]—is language consummated (Benjamin 454).

Thus, sympathy, again, arises as a literary passion. For the quoter, it is the demonic fragmentation of the text and the selection of its body parts to be illuminated—a process achieved by distancing oneself from the text to a certain degree. The ambiguous imitation of these bodies of text is a re-telling of them, their counter-actualization—their actualization in a different form—weaving together new stories from them, while supposedly remaining silent. Rather than being the interpreter's task of finally saying what the 'original' really means, sympathy testifies to the fact that this finality is an endlessly repeated one, differently repeated, and thereby evokes the plurality of meanings. These relations of nearness and distance, of obscurity and clarity, are doubled in our role as readers—quoters to the second power—who discern new possibilities and new stories from the obscure contours of the highlighted bodies of text.

In his writing on repetition, Deleuze also identifies a third repetition or synthesis, beyond irony and humor, tragedy and comedy. It is the repetition of the kind of the eternal return, which is not pinned down with a name of a poetic affect or of a dramatic genre. Deleuze mentions it in

passing in relation to parody, but this does not become a repeated characterization (*Difference and Repetition* 96). I want to argue here that this third repetition, a repetition geared towards the future and the time of the "To-come," in which the agent is annulled and all that remains is the act itself, is the satirical repetition—the selective repetition with a difference of Kraus' mimicry, whose subversive form could be named parody. As such, the affirmative and creative selection in repetition of sympathy is related to Deleuze's interpretation of Nietzsche's eternal return, announced by the demon in the *Gay Science*. In the eternal return Deleuze detects a double selection, thereby countering the perception of the eternal return as the return of the same: Ontologically, it is only becoming that returns, not being, and in each turn we affirm this becoming. Ethically, whatever we will we must will in such a way that we can will its eternal return, thus eliminating reactive forces and celebrating the active and creative ones. Perhaps sympathy—this form of repetition with a difference, this form of relating to the other as similar and other at the same time—should no longer be perceived as demonic? Or rather, whereas it might indeed be demonic, perhaps it is time we embrace this demon.

CHAPTER 1

"THERE IS SIMPLY NO COMPARISON!": ABSOLUTE DIFFERENCE AND DISORIENTING IRONY IN HAIM HAZAZ'S "THE SERMON"

What gods will be able to save us from all of these ironies?

—Friedrich Schlegel, "On Incomprehensibility"

In Haim Hazaz's "The Sermon," Yudka, the main protagonist, marks the irony of the Zionist ambition for absolute difference, for a completely new state and nation, by exclaiming, "One thing is clear: Zionism is not a continuation, it is no medicine for an ailment. That's nonsense! It is uprooting and destruction, it's the opposite of what had been, it is the end" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 284). Following the spirit of this claim, this chapter explores Zionism's self-construction as an absolutely new society—a construction that was predicated on a sort of dis-Orientation—an attempt to break with both Eastern European Jewish exilic tradition and the Orient itself. This attempt may be seen as a rather paradoxical or ironic attempt, for it is nothing other than this Jewish tradition that preconditions and justifies Zionism's very existence. As such, I claim, this new society is only possible as a result of this negation of the East through which it is affirmed and this ambitious attempt to surpass any existing Jewish or local tradition—perhaps any tradition whatsoever—generates itself, ironically, as a figure of this (dis)orientation. This figure, so I figured, is precisely irony.

The temporal structure of irony has been acknowledged by many, most notably by Paul de Man and his students, and will be discussed here as well. However, given the importance I place here on this disorientation that was involved in the creation of a new Zionist state—this form of negation of, or divorce from, the East—I will focus here on the spatial character of irony as well. This chapter thus ties the structure of irony to the notion of disorientation. To start with,

what I am concerned with here may be considered a disorientation in the spatial sense, since this rejected Judaism that Hazaz is articulating in this story is bound up with East European Judaism (symbolized by Yiddish and Russian, as well as by Exile itself) and with the Sephardic Old Yeshuv—that is, the "Eastern" religious Jews who were already living in Palestine at the time of this ambitious attempt to create an absolutely new state. However, in addition to understanding Hazaz's irony as breaking with the East, I claim that irony takes on an additional and more radical form of disorientation that is related to a certain vertigo, an attempt to transcend the given and the law, that irony embodies. I will examine this spatial character of irony in the Hebrew writer Haim Hazaz's short story "The Sermon" (1942), a stuttering diatribe that rejects Eastern European Judaism as a tradition of glorified suffering and demands its replacement by Zionism.

"The Sermon" is an agitated story, in which Yudka delivers a fragmented, turbulent sermon in front of a committee of sorts—perhaps some kind of a Kibbutz tribunal. This form allowed the author, Hazaz, to express a structural problem inherent in the Zionist project, as well as general doubts about it, as this discussion was rather taboo during the early days of Zionism. The story has two versions. It was first published in 1942 in *Luʾḥ ha-arets* and was then re-edited by Hazaz for publication in the monumental twelve-volume collection of his works, which was published in 1962. In the later version, in addition to introducing some minor linguistic corrections, Hazaz had made some cuts to the story (as he did with many of the other works that were republished in this collection). Almost all of the parts that were left out, however, were taken out of the text of the narrator, therefore rendering Yudka's sermon even more central and autonomous. Moreover, in the second version, the committee before which Yudka speaks is no longer some general, unspecified committee but has been rather transformed into "the Committee of Defense" (or Hagana), thus intensifying the atmosphere of persecution that

envelops the story as well as reflecting a growing concern with issues of security in Israel. It also clearly marks the story as taking place *prior* to the establishment of the State of Israel. I will focus here on the first, fuller version of the story.

The author of this story, Haim Hazaz, was born in 1898 in the small village Sidorovichi in the Jewish Pale of Settlement in Southwestern Russia (Ukraine of today). He studied in Kiev, Kharkiv, and Moscow and in 1921 spent over a year in Constantinople, teaching Hebrew to Zionists preparing to settle in Palestine. Hazaz then moved to Paris for nine years, where he composed—in Hebrew—his first prose works, many of which concerned the Russian Revolution. In 1928 Hazaz moved to Berlin (and witnessed the rise of Nazism), and it was only in 1931 that he migrated to Mandatory Palestine and settled in Jerusalem. He was one of the founders of the Hebrew Language Academy and served as an honorary member of the Academy from 1961 until his death in 1973. Hazaz was a highly acclaimed author: he was awarded the Bialik Prize for Literature (in 1942 and again in 1970) and was the first to receive the Israel Prize for Literature (in 1953). He was further awarded honorary doctorates from the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, Dropsy College in Philadelphia and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. His prominence, however, has declined over the years and his contemporary and rival, the author Shmuel Yosef Agnon, has come to dominate this generation's niche in the Hebrew literary canon, significantly eclipsing Hazaz's literary success.[28]

The literary scholar Dan Miron claims that Hazaz is not only a forgotten author, but also a rejected one. As paradoxical as this may seem, Miron argues, Hazaz was forsaken while at the same time he continued to evoke antagonism and repudiations from scholars and critics (*ha-Sifriyya ha-ʿiṿeret: proza meʿurevet* 64–65). Hazaz's tendency to ignite polemical debates is

[28] For more on Hazaz's biography see, Barzel; Laor, *Ḥayim Hazaz, ha-ish ṿi-yetsirato*.

clearly evident in the way "The Sermon" has been received and treated. The disagreement about "The Sermon" revolved mainly around two questions: first, whether or not the protagonist represented Hazaz's own views and, second, whether one should endorse or refute these ideas.[29] Interestingly, however, scholars were generally in agreement in their perception of "The Sermon" as a Zionist (or proto-Canaanite) manifesto that associated Judaism with Exile and therefore exacted the complete severance of Zionism from both.[30] Michael Keren was the only scholar who claimed (although in passing, in his discussion of the relationship between Hazaz and David Ben-Gurion) that the critique of the story has missed its ironic dimension and its dialectical nature (Keren 138–141; Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler 2). To stress its dialectic character, Keren has even compared Hazaz's form of narrative to Plato's *Pythagoras* (138). It is this ironic and dialectical dimension with which I am concerned here. I will analyze the ironic aspects of this novella by exploring them in relation to different definitions of irony that I will then problematize.

I. "What I mean is…": Irony as the Discrepancy Between Meaning and Saying

The most basic definition of irony—as verbal irony, or irony as a figure of speech—articulates it as a discrepancy, even a contradiction, between a speaker's words and her intention,

[29] Dan Miron and Baruch Kurzweil were the only two to explicitly criticize the simple association of Hazaz with his protagonist. Miron used Hazaz's entire oeuvre to demonstrate his complicated relationship to Zionism, Judaism and Exile (*Ḥayyim Hazaz*). However, I agree with Iris Parush and Brakha Dalmatzky-Fischler, who claim that this complexity can be found in "The Sermon" itself (3).

[30] Canaanism was a political and cultural movement that was established in 1939 amongst the Jewish population of Palestine and peaked in the 1940s. Its ideology centered on the rejection of Judaism, Jewish history and the Jewish diaspora and on the belief in a new or renewed Hebrew people, living in Palestine. Its members celebrated the history and the myth of an ancient Hebrew speaking community in the Middle East and saw it as a model. On the history of this movement and on the great influence of Hazaz's "The Sermon" on it see Dan Laor's article on this topic ("me-'ha-Derasha' le-'ketav el ha-noʿar ha-ʿIvri': heʿarot lemuśag 'shelilat ha-gola'").

and as such perceives it as an opposition between phenomenon and essence. For example, in a chapter titled “Observations for Orientation” in his book on the concept of irony, Kierkegaard distinguishes between “irony as a momentary manifestation” or as “a figure of speech,” and “pure irony” or “irony as a position” (XIII.328). Kierkegaard then claims that irony as a figure of speech has “the characteristic of saying the opposite of what is meant” and further argues that “here we have a quality that permeates all irony—namely, that the phenomenon is not the essence but the opposite of the essence.” In the case of irony as a figure of speech, “when I am speaking, the thought, the meaning, is the essence, and the word is the phenomenon” (Kierkegaard XIII.322). Irony’s dependence on intention thus already manifests the spatial character of irony, for an intention implies a direction and an aim—it literally means “a stretching towards.” With the Hebrew word for intention, *kavana*, this spatial character becomes even more obvious, for *kavana* is clearly related to the word *kivun*, “direction.” In irony, then, the words are in opposition to—if not working directly against—one’s intention, the intended direction, and they dis- or re-orient the meaning (or vice versa).

Given this initial definition it is already clear why early mainstream Zionism is fairly ironic. It says “Judaism”—a Jewish state—to justify its claims for statehood when, as the quotation with which I started suggests, it means something completely different, possibly the exact opposite: a thoroughly non-Jewish state, something new entirely. Or perhaps this goes in the reverse direction: it says “something completely different,” “the end of Judaism,” when Judaism is its only pretext, when it is nothing but a Jewish nationalism.

But let us slow down and look at the story more closely, since there are quite a few levels of irony involved. “The Sermon” begins by asserting that the way Yudka is perceived, his phenomenal existence, had become his nature:

> Yudka was no speaker. He didn't make public addresses […] So he was considered a man whose strength was not in self-expression. And even though he was not just as he was considered to be, his reputation had its effect. It became second nature [in the Hebrew, simply "nature," not second but rather essential] to him, so that he quite forgot how to open his mouth in public and say something in proper form, whether it was important or no more than jest (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 271; "Ha-Derasha" 147).[31]

It is interesting to note that it is the exterior, his phenomenal existence, that determines Yudka's interiority—his essence—and stops him from speaking. This little reversal is already a form of irony. However, on the occasion of the sermon, Yudka steps out of this supposed nature of his and, despite his hesitation, delivers a polemic sermon in public. There suddenly appears to be a contradiction, or at least a gap, between Yudka's essence or nature as a silent type and his actualization in this story as a provocateur, a non-stop chatterer who delivers this long sermon. This discrepancy renders the figure of Yudka himself an ironic figure through and through.

"In fact," says Yudka at the beginning of his sermon, "I should have remained completely silent… Do you comprehend what it means to speak up when one is supposed to be silent?" he asks the committee. "But I must speak!" he concludes (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272, translation modified). In a sense, this statement already encapsulates much of the irony that Yudka manifests in this story: it presents the contradiction between essence and phenomenon, between intention and act; it is something that makes a mockery of the subject's will and intention; it questions the feasibility of comprehension itself; and it manifests irony's most present limit—that of silence and stillness, which can only be countered by endless, forced, repeated speech.

Moreover, irony, in its most common understanding, assumes that intention can be

[31] From here on, references to the original Hebrew will appear (as necessary) after a slash sign following the page number cited from the English translation.

knowable—it assumes the order of signification. It depends on the belief that a signifier has a clear signified from which it can differ and which may be deciphered. *Derasha*—the Hebrew term for sermon and the Hebrew title of this story—is clearly related to *drash* and *midrash*, that is, to the act and to the tradition of interpretation (respectively). It is therefore associated with attempts to comprehend the text, in particular, the sacred text. "The Sermon" is thus related to the belief in decipherability precisely at a moment when the meaning of the text is not obvious, when it becomes ironic. Yudka begins his sermon with the words: "I don't understand anything at all… I no longer understand. It's been years since I've understood […] I just want to know: what are we doing here?" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272, translation modified). The entire sermon is thus posited as an attempt to understand, to know—in particular, to comprehend what stands behind the sign of Zionism, what exactly "are we doing here," in Palestine.

When Yudka finally starts delivering his stuttering sermon in front of the committee, what is this ironic truth that he simply must disclose? Yudka begins by declaring, "I want to state […] that I'm opposed to Jewish history. […] I have no respect for Jewish history! […] 'Respect' is really not the [right] word, but [rather] what I said before, I'm opposed to it!" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 273). After this statement draws laughter form the committee members and once the chairman calls him to order with "gruff, ironical severity," Yudka reiterates: "I'm opposed to it, I don't recognize it. It doesn't exist for me! What's more, I don't respect it, although 'respect' is not the word still I don't respect it… I don't respect it at all! But the main thing is, I'm opposed to it. What I mean is, I don't accept it!" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 274).[32] It is significant that Yudka does not begin simply by making a statement but rather by stating what he wishes or intends to state. Yudka alleges that he intends to absolutely and completely negate Jewish

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[32] His hyperbolic language continues further: "you can't even imagine how I'm opposed to it, how I reject it, and how… how… I don't respect it!" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 274–75).

history; however, in trying to emphasize how absolute this negation is, trying to be as loyal as possible to what he *really* means ("Respect is really not the word," "What I mean is…"), Yudka's intensifying repetition of terms of rejection ("opposed to," "don't respect," "reject," "don't recognize," "don't accept"), which culminates in literal annihilation ("it doesn't exist for me"), in fact serves to rhetorically weaken his grand claim and thus contradicts his intention. First, this repetition betrays his belief in, or suspicion of, his inability to say what he really means, despite his every effort. It exposes his sense of lack of mastery over his own statements and deeds. Second, it pathetically strives, over and over again, to transcend the existing logic, what he perceives as the existing hegemonic ideology, toward a certain negation and destruction as its higher principle (these two aspects of irony will be discussed in details shortly).

Moreover, why does Yudka reject Jewish history so passionately? Because there is "no glory or action, no heroes and conquerors in it, no rulers and masters of their fate." Jewish history is made up entirely of "oppression, defamation, persecution, and martyrdom and again and again and again, without end" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 275). It is boring, according to Yudka, and not simply because it is repetitive but rather because this history was not constituted by the Jewish people; it was instead made for them by the goyim (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 274). While he perceives history (and particularly historical fiction) to be constructed out of "bold deeds, heroes, [and] great fighters," Yudka claims that Jews cannot lay claim to any great deeds, that they have no heroes, and instead they merely resign themselves to suffering (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 275). So far, Yudka seems to be echoing the rather familiar refrain of Zionist ideology and its internalized anti-Semitic perception of Judaism. He sees the Jewish people, a-historically or trans-historically, as weak and effeminate, having "a special talent for corruption and decay" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 275), and as devoid of any agency in the determination of their own fate.

However, precisely when he is trying to underscore the severity of this passivity and lack of agency, Yudka's hyperbolic language seems, again, to overturn his logic in a rather ironic fashion. Yudka asserts that the Jewish people has "nothing but the heroism of despair," the anti-heroism of merely enduring calamities, which involves no choice ("With no way out, anyone can be a hero. Whether he wants to or not, he must be, and there is no credit or honor in that" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 275]). When Yudka is attempting to prove that this heroism of despair is not a form of genuine heroism but rather a great weakness, we learn that Jews not only accept and endure suffering but also love it, desire it, and long for it. This love of suffering is based, according to Yudka, on the pyramid of Exile, whose base is martyrdom and whose peak is the Messiah (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 278). Yudka then zooms in on the fantasy of the Messiah and claims that while it is the craziest fantasy—both in the sense of dream and in the sense of an ideal or a vision—it is "a necessary fantasy," a practical madness, which has a clear end and is absolutely calculated and deliberate. This fantasy frees the people from the need to think or act to better their situation; it reinforces and justifies their passivity. Since the Messiah will bring about their redemption, "they have nothing to do but sit and wait for his coming. In fact, it is forbidden to get involved in the whole matter, to force the end. Forbidden! […] under orders to stay in Exile until in *Heaven* they decide to redeem them. Not by their own will or their own act, but from Heaven" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 279).

In a series of rhetorical questions, Yudka then wonders how these people—"men who are by no means simple, who are no fools at all […] men with more than a touch of skepticism, men who are practical, and maybe even a bit too practical"—how can they believe in such a thing with all their hearts? Not only believe in it, but even pin their entire lives, the fate of their nation, on this fantasy? And this is precisely it, according to Yudka: that they believe with all their

hearts, with “perfect faith,” with “the mad and burning faith of all the heart and all the soul,” but at the same time, “in the secrecy of their hearts […] deep down in some hidden fold […] somewhat they don’t believe.” This slight disbelief in the arrival of the Messiah is, for Yudka, “the core of the matter” that he is struggling to explain (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 280). Yudka argues that there is “a profound kinship, a fundamental bond, between this myth and the spirit of our people […] a perfect harmony, a full and perfect unity […] between it and the people’s will, and the *direction* it desires to go! … There’s not the least doubt: it’s quite clear!” (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 281). Beyond the desire for passivity and the love of Exile, the reason that Yudka cites for this Jewish refusal of redemption is double: on the one hand, they do not wish to be saved because “power has its limits but there is no limit or end to our suffering.” This willingness to suffer allows the Jewish people to negate and mock all power in this world. It is due to this love of suffering that the Jewish people can actually say, according to Yudka, “You shall not conquer us, nor break us, nor destroy us!” (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 277). On the other hand, this fantasy is “the eternal creation of the people of Israel,” for without it “they would finally have to go right back to Palestine or somehow or other pass on out of the world” (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 279). This slight disbelief within the perfect faith, this ironic contradiction, thus allows the perpetuation of Exile—a certain free motion that this Exile permits—and keeps it from stagnating in the form of a nation-state.

This belief and desire to be saved alongside a slight desire not to be saved is, as Yudka insists, not a deception or hypocrisy and is in fact perfectly earnest (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 280). It is rather, I argue, an ironic position. What does perceiving this contradiction as an ironic stance contribute to our understanding of this story? As mentioned, irony assumes first and foremost the existence of an intention. It therefore emphasizes agency, the willful act of an author or a

speaker, the interiority and essence that allows her to mean one thing while saying another, to actively decide what her words mean. The strong subjective component of irony has been noted by many, not least of whom by Kierkegaard, who has essentially perceived Socrates and his ironic standpoint to be a "turning point" in what he calls, following Hegel, "world history." He sees Socratic irony as the invention of subjectivity itself, as the "first and most abstract qualification of subjectivity" (Kierkegaard XIII.337). By painting Judaism as ironic—by the characterization of Judaism as a the heroism of despair, by insisting that the Jewish people choose and love their suffering and secretly do not believe in the Messiah—Yudka immediately restores a sense of Jewish agency, the lack of which he is so harshly criticizing in his sermon. Unexpectedly, the fantasy of the Messiah becomes a choice, fully tied to the will of the people, who are suddenly in control of the direction they are taking. Ironically, this attribution of willfulness and intention ("direction" itself) to the Jewish people turns them into a nation that is just like any other, with its heroic agents and their intentional deeds, and as such completely pulls the grounds out from under Yudka's claim that the Jewish people have no history. Moreover, if Judaism thus has its own form of (ironic) agency and its own history, then it no longer has any need for Zionism.

It is traditionally believed that Judaism—this kind of Eastern European Judaism that is discussed and stereotyped in this story—finds expression in humor: Freud, for instance, identified a special Jewish talent for jokes (111–116) and Deleuze contrasted Plato's irony with Proust's Jewish humor (*Proust and Signs* 101). However, is it humorous, as Yudka claims, that the Messiah is expected to arrive on a donkey? Or could it rather be ironic—at the very least, also ironic? Is not the ass rather that slight disbelief inherent in the Messiah fantasy? Is it not a glorious contradiction between the essence of the Messiah as the salvation of the world and its

appearance as a man on a donkey?

In his celebrated essay, "The Concept of Irony," de Man links irony, "the trope of tropes" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 165), to both the invention of subjectivity and the form of history. First, he does so by claiming that the three ways to "stop irony" are by absorbing it into a theory of aesthetics, reducing it to a dialectic of the self, or embedding it in a dialectic of history (he then proceeds, of course, by putting into question all three possibilities) (de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* 170). More profoundly, however, de Man connects irony with subjectivity and history as he detects in Schlegel's writing on irony the three stages of the dialectic in Fichte ("the philosopher of the self")—self-creation, self-destruction and self-limitation or self-definition (*Aesthetic Ideology* 172). Since, in Fichte, it is language that radically and absolutely posits the self (by a catachrestic naming), while at the same time positing its negation, it is clear that it is also in language that the third moment, the self-limitation of the self, occurs and in which this self begins to differentiate properties within itself. Thus, "[w]hat was originally a mere catachresis now becomes an entity as we know it, a collection of properties, and it becomes possible to compare them with each other and to find between different entities resemblances and differences" (de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* 173–74). De Man claims that from the moment we start comparing, making comparative judgments (which are the very structure of trope itself), "it becomes possible to speak of the self […] and you can think of this self as some kind of super-, transcendental self […] as a self that stands above any of its particular experiences and toward which any particular self is always underway" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 175). This topological system of self-positing, however, also has an existence in time: "the narrative of the interaction between trope on the one hand and the performance as positing on the other hand" (176). This topological narrative is, according to de Man, the structure of irony as well as of the detached self that speaks

in philosophy (for "Philosophy is the true home of irony") (*Aesthetic Ideology* 177). Given this narrative form of irony—its dialectic and reflexive nature—de Man's claim that "irony and history seem to be curiously linked to each other" is no surprise (*Aesthetic Ideology* 184). However, we have yet to figure out the specific way in which irony disrupts and interrupts narrative in general and historical narrative in particular.

Let us return now to the historicization of Judaism and its role in "The Sermon." The Zionist "return to history"—the transformation of the Jewish people into a sovereign nation that is in control of its own fate and can celebrate its heroic deeds—is only achieved, ironically, at the price of the complete rejection of Jewish history and of history as such. Like Yudka, the Zionist myth has strived to do away with Jewish history, except in its biblical, mythic form, which justifies the settlement in Palestine. Zionism has eternalized this myth, taking it out of history and making it trans- or a-historical—the eternal truth of the Jewish people (Raz-Krakotzkin 58–59). The revival of the Jewish language had similar characteristics. The disappearance and transformations of Hebrew in the Middle Ages were completely disregarded and a mythic, monolithic a-historical form was invented, again relying on the authenticity of biblical Hebrew and its attendant interpretations (Ohana 64–65). Interestingly, during the 1940s, when "The Sermon" was written, many efforts were made to unify the Hebrew language and keep it closer to its a-historical ideal and standard, since at that time it was constantly influenced by the mother tongues of newcomers or was frayed in the mouths of young, native speakers.

"The Sermon" problematizes this Zionist ambition to eternalize itself and transcend history and it does so particularly through its use of language. The orality of the story, reflecting a temporary linguistic situation within the historical progression of the revival of Hebrew, is formed in relation and in opposition to the strong purist and decisivist pressures that aimed to

unify the Hebrew language under hegemonic standards according to “a-historical” and “eternal” models. First, Yudka’s language undermines the authority of these hegemonic attempts, as well as this project of national unity, by using words from Russian—such as *zagvozdka* (“the main issue”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 274; “Ha-Derasha” 150), *podlaya* (“malicious”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 279/155) and *kolpakim* (*kolpak* means “hat” in Russian and is also used to mean “stupid”; the suffix *im* is the Hebrew plural ending) (Hazaz, “Ha-Derasha” 151).[33] It achieves this also by incorporating Yiddishisms and Russianisms, which include expressions such as “*efshar le-hishtage*ʿ*a*” (“one could go mad”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 278/154) and rhetorical devices such as tautological repetition that is characteristic of the Yiddish language, which tended to exploit its trilingual structure to create this kind of varied repetition for emphasis and humor (Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler 34). Second, Yudka’s language consists of substandard uses of Hebrew, which work against the authoritative project of standardizing the language. For instance, while the chairperson uses the correct form of negation in the present, *ein* (e.g., “*eineni mevin*” “I don’t understand”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 272/148), Yudka uses both *ein* and *lo* for negation in the present, even though the word *lo* should be used to negate past and future tenses alone (e.g., “*ani lo ba’ati hena li-ne’om*,” “I didn’t come here to make a speech”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 272/148). Alongside his usage of superstandard archaisms, Yudka employs substandard expressions, such as “*hevdel ‘anaḳi*” (roughly, a “hugic difference”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 276/152) and “*nora ḥashuv*” (“terribly important”) (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 280/156), as well as substandard grammatical uses like the inclusion of personal pronouns in past and future tenses (“*ani lo ba’ati*” etc.). Most of these linguistic issues were regularly discussed in newspaper columns about the language in the 1930s and 1940s by authorized members of the Hebrew

[33] This word does not appear in the English translation.

Language Committee, who were fighting for the unified, eternal form of the Hebrew language (Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler 27). Thus Yudka's language challenges Zionist linguistic purity, taking down the barriers between Zionism and traditional, East European Judaism and between popular and aristocratic cultures. At the same time, it clearly showcases a specific historical moment in the development of the language, thus undermining the Zionist efforts to eternalize both language and myth.

Moreover, the Zionist endeavor of "the return to history" is itself thoroughly ironic. As Amnon Raz-Krakotskin explains, the Zionist "return to history" is in effect an acceptance of a (secularized) Christian concept of history, whose origins go back to early Jewish-Christian polemics about Exile and redemption. Early Christians have perceived the Jews' exile as their exit from history, insofar as history is the teleological advancement towards redemption, and attributed that to their refusal to accept Christ as the Messiah and (Raz-Krakotzkin 42). This perception of history was, according to Raz-Krakotskin, secularized during the eighteenth century, when reason replaced grace as the governing principle (42). While we tend to think of the Enlightenment as a moment of change in Christians' relation to Jews—for, theoretically, it allowed for assimilation—the perception of Jews as external to history persisted and was in fact the very reason for the need to integrate them into society. Thus, Zionist acceptance of History is ironically a rejection of the actual historical stance of Judaism in its refusal to accept the Messiah as a telos. Raz-Krakotskin further underscores the Orientalist roots of this perception of history, pointing out to the fact that "Jewish History," as a field, was first invented by Protestants within Orientalist Studies, under the assumption that Jews have some special, authentic knowledge which they themselves are unable to access due to their limited nature (45–46). In Zionism, by accepting a Western idea of history that was imposed upon them as the East, Eastern European

Jews have ironically become dis-Oriented—they have become this West itself (and lost their special knowledge). Even more ironically, they had to leave the West and come to the East in order to become the West. [34]

II. For Power has its Limits but Suffering has None: The Socratic Ironic Standpoint

Judaism is not merely ironic because of this structure of contradiction and its complex relation to history. In fact, in "The Sermon," Judaism's irony culminates in an ironic standpoint towards the world. This is related to the notion of Socratic irony, which follows the literal meaning of the ancient Greek word, *eirōneía*, meaning "dissimulation" or "feigned ignorance." This ironic methods is considered to refer to Socrates' dialectical method by which, through an assumed ignorance and a series of contradictions, he exposes the ignorance of his interlocutor and stimulates critical thinking.[35] Others have understood the Socratic method to refer to the exposure of the divergence between the perfection of ideals, as Plato defines them, and their worldly appearance in phenomena, which are, despite our great efforts to grasp the ideal, all that we can ever truly know (Colebrook 162).

As Iris Parush and Brakha Dalmatzky-Fischler argue, throughout "The Sermon," Yudka exhibits characteristics of a thoroughly Socratic figure (10). Unlike Socrates in Plato's dialogues, however, Yudka is both the one asking the questions by anticipating his opponents' possible

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[34] As Raz-Krakotskin points out, in Israel, "the same arguments that shaped the debate on the Jews in Europe in the eighteenth century were now applied to 'Oriental Jews,' a category that was reshaped within the Israeli framework. They were seen as people who existed 'outside history,' and the aim was to bring them into it. The Zionist attitude toward the Oriental Jews (including the positive images of them) was obviously Orientalist and reflected the meaning the theological had acquired in its change to the national-modern language" (60). A more complete study of the disorienting irony in Hazaz's work will therefore also look closely at his relationship to Yemenite Jews in his so-called "Yemenite stories" and particularly in "Raḥamim."

[35] See, for instance, the Oxford Dictionary definition for Socratic irony: "A pose of ignorance assumed in order to entice others into making statements that can then be challenged."

objections, and the one answering them. While Yudka seems to come before the committee to deliver a clear and coherent sermon—to impart knowledge—his words are consistently accompanied by statements asserting his lack of knowledge and his incomprehension. For instance, he repeatedly admits his ignorance ("I don't understand anything at all" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272], "I don't know how to say it in Hebrew" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 274]); he interrupts himself with expressions of caution and hesitation ("one might say, the creation of its highest genius," "It seems to me […] I once heard" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 280], "if I may say, a *moonlight* psychology" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277]) and concludes his statements often with phrases of qualification and diminution ("But that's nonsense. Let's leave that for now" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272], "But it's not important" [Hazaz, "The Sermon" 273]). These auxiliary devices in fact weaken his words, until he says contradictory things (as, is the case, for instance with Jewish history). As such, Yudka happily exposes his own ignorance in order to expose the ignorance of his interlocutors and in order to reveal Zionism's ignorance—particularly, its ignorance of its own origin and end. He further exposes, in a truly Socratic fashion, the discrepancy between his interlocutors' ideals and the manifestations of those ideals in the form of Zionism—as, for instance, when he laments the rejection of the Yiddish language and of traditional Jewish names (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 286–86).

Kierkegaard understands Socratic irony as going far beyond irony as a figure of speech, as well as beyond a simple feigned ignorance assumed during Socrates' dialogues. He claims that Socrates' ignorance is rather honest and truthful. It is the honest understanding of one's own ignorance and the persistent attempt to expose the other's ignorance of his ignorance by trying to disclose the contradictions in her or his logic (Kierkegaard XIII.135). According to de Man, irony is thus, as Benjamin claims, the critical act as such, which is at the same time a complete

destruction of form (*Aesthetic Ideology* 182). It is a rather nihilistic standpoint, which Kierkegaard defines, following Hegel, as an "infinite absolute negativity" (XIII.121–22). By avoiding a commitment, something that binds and thus positively creates, irony is an entirely negative force. Defined as infinite, irony as a stance is not directed at "this or that particular phenomenon," but rather at each and every aspect of reality, at the entire "historical actuality—that is, the given actuality at a certain time and in a certain situation" (XIII.333). As "absolute," irony undermines the logic of origins, which is at the same time that of limitation, "because that by virtue of which it negates is a higher something that still is not." Irony thus "establishes nothing, because that which is to be established lies behind it" (Kierkegaard XIII.335). In this absolute, the ironist guarantees her limitless power of negation while keeping the essence from which it derives this power "hidden."

This is precisely what Yudka argues with regards to Judaism's love of suffering. As mentioned above, the consequences of this love of suffering are that no one can triumph over the Jewish people or destroy it because every might has a limit but suffering has none. As Yudka states, "The more we are oppressed, the greater we grow; the more we are degraded, the greater we think is our honor—the more we are made to suffer—the stronger we become" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277). This stance is negative, since it is founded on the negation of redemption and of Zion, of anything constructive or positive, of taking any action; it is infinite since, unlike might, it is unlimited; and it is absolute because it, too, is not directed at this or that aspect of reality, at this or that power, but rather rejects and negates everything of this world. Moreover, it is this passive wait for the Messiah—accompanied by a non-belief in his arrival, by a desire that he will not come so that the suffering remains forever unbound—that ensures the negation of the need to act, to actualize something positively. Irony is thus the pure virtual—it contains the endless

possibilities of Kierkegaard's negative freedom. These endless possibilities of this (non)-messianic exile, however, are predicated on the fact that few (if any) understand the irony, for its comprehension would turn it into ordinary, binding speech. The less it is understood, the greater the pleasure and the freedom that irony produces. It is irony's very failure that supposedly guaranties it freedom and superiority.

In "The Sermon," Exile seems to line up with an important principle in Hazaz's writing as a whole—a new narrative principle that Hazaz has generated, according to Miron—the principle of total and vigorous perpetual movement (which is related to another principle, that of penetration that brings opposites together) (*ha-Sifriyya ha-ʿiyeret: proza meʿurevet* 53). Miron contends that through this *perpetuum mobile*, which is the main thematic principle of Hazaz writing and the central axis of his poetic system, he produces a great movement of displacement, which is the movement of redemption itself—bringing together the different geographical parts of the Jewish diaspora as well as different moments in its history (*ha-Sifriyya ha-ʿiyeret: proza meʿurevet* 57–58). As Miron argues, only Exile allows, and even necessitates, this constant movement in time and space; only the brink of destruction or the threshold of redemption justifies this inappeasable circulation. A people who settles in a land, Miron asserts, produces circular or static poetics and loses its ability to think of others and otherness. This bestows Hazaz's writing with what Miron calls its tragic character and what I consider to be its irony—Hazaz prepares and hastens the redemptive condition, Zionism, in which his writing, with its principle of perpetual motion, will no longer have any audience or even legitimacy (*ha-Sifriyya ha-ʿiyeret: proza meʿurevet* 64).

Yudka clearly recognizes the dangers in limiting this ironic standpoint by stopping it with the work of the understanding it—that is, by making a final decision in favor of one, clear

meaning. In the case before us, this clear, concluding choice is the establishment of the State of Israel, of which Yudka says:

> But what if they [diaspora Jews] really have something to fear? What if it's true that Judaism can manage to survive in Exile, but here, in the Land of Israel, it's doubtful?… What if this country is fated to take the place of religion, if it's a grave danger to the survival of the people, if it replaces an enduring center with a transient one, a solid foundation with a vain and empty foundation? And what if the Land of Israel is a stumbling block and a catastrophe, if it's the end and finish of everything? (282).

Israel will be the end of this ironic standpoint because it will force this state of endless potentialities, the absolute or the virtual, to actualize itself in a certain form. Yudka voices his Zionist ideas from the orientation of a place and against the orientation of time and yet, at the same time, he understands the danger of being redeemed from Exile—"the fall from the sublimity of time to the lowliness of the place" (Miron, *ha-Sifriyya ha-ʿiẓeret: proza meʿurevet* 64, my translation).

However, at the moment of the sermon, before Zionism completes its redemptive process, the irony of Judaism still points to it as a this kind of absolute about which at the moment no one can say anything—an ineffable absolute which, according to Kierkegaard, characterizes the ironic standpoint. As Yukde claims, "of course, I'm not the one to say what Zionism is. I'm not the man for it […] that is… about Zionism. Yes! In a word, no one has yet said the right… the… the hidden, the deepest… no one has revealed, or explained, fully… just talk, elementary things, banalities, you know, empty, meaningless phrases…" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 284). Zionism is therefore, in a sense, that absolute that this ironic standpoint assumes is yet-to-come (and which it refuses), but once incarnated becomes a decision, a specific actuality that stops the endless motion of infinite possibilities. If irony is in this sense, as we will

shortly see, that infinitesimally small, ever-fleeting moment of revolution—before a new regime and a new set of rules is established—then Zionism, as a final specific decision, is the establishment of a new set of rules that puts an end to this state of freedom. In this case, Yudka's refusal to say anything (positively) about Zionism aligns his form of irony with that of traditional, exilic Judaism.

III. Moonlight Psychology: Irony as Discrepancy Between two Opposed Meanings

Yudka then goes on to claim that the triad of Exile, martyrdom, and Messiah ("three which are one") is so cherished, loved and sanctified, that "the world grows narrow, cramped, [and] upside down" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 276). This reversal is part of a greater problem: Judaism has developed, according to Yudka, what he calls a "moonlight psychology," which is "altogether different in every way from other people's [psychology]" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277). It is not "the psychology of a man in the night […] but rather the psychology of night itself" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 276)—a special, inverted, fantastic psychology, "a world of darkness, perversion [also, negation], and contradiction." In this world, "sorrow is priced higher than joy, pain easier to understand than happiness, destruction [also, contradiction] better than creation [also, construction], slavery preferred to redemption, dream before reality, hope more than the future, faith before common sense, and so on until the end of antonyms" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 276, translation modified). Like the heroism of despair, this supposed radically different psychology is an example of ironic reversal. More interestingly, however, moonlight psychology is the psychology of the sublime night as the place where opposites meet. Indeed, Exile, for example, is according to Yudka so intimate, so close to the heart, that it becomes "nearer and dearer than Jerusalem itself, more *Jewish* than Jerusalem, deeper and purer. Far more, there's simply no comparison! Is this a paradox?" he rhetorically asks his audience and

then insists: “But that’s how it is!” (Hazaz, “The Sermon” 277).

This contradictory, paradoxical structure embodies the next definition of irony. Against the Kierkegaardian definition of irony as a gap between words and meaning, Schlegel offers a slightly different view and defines irony as the place of the simultaneous presence of two opposing and mutually exclusive meanings, existing in a warlike state, for they cannot be brought together except in the ironic statement that connects them.[36] It is therefore what Schlegel calls “the form of the paradox”—an exclusive disjunction: an either/or relation of terms that are nonetheless present in one (Fragment 48, 6). Since it exacts a choice between them while this very choice is impossible, irony, the place of interpretation, becomes the place of eternal incomprehension through infinite attempts to understand.

Schlegel’s irony, like Kierkegaard’s, is tied to the infinite: It is an infinite back-and-forth motion between the two opposed terms that leads, according to him, to a sense of dizziness, a vertigo (*Schwindel*)—a disorientation (15; de Man, *Blindness and Insight* 215). This dizziness is due to the lack of a stable footing, the absence of anything to hold on to in order to orient oneself and decide on the right direction, the correct meaning. This is precisely what irony refuses to allow us. In fact, and contrary to the first definition presented here, there is never a clear, final interpretation to be deciphered in irony. One can never be sure that she reads it correctly, that the ironic statement is not going to turn on itself again. For this reason, de Man maintains that irony is always the irony of understanding, of the fact that there is always an infinite doubt, an endless incomprehensibility, and that one cannot decide once and for all whether something is ironic or not, whether this is or is not the meaning (*Aesthetic Ideology* 166). In this sense, irony resembles

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[36] In Fragment 121, Schlegel writes: “An idea is a concept perfected to the point of irony, an absolute synthesis of absolute antitheses, the continual self-creating interchange of two conflicting thoughts” (53).

the traditional perception of conflict in the form of the logic of judgment discussed earlier. It is a place where mutually exclusive terms and options are held together and compared in a warlike state that exacts a choice. Despite this similarity, however, irony differs from this logic of judgment in its structural frustration of the moment of decision through the endlessness of incomprehension.

In "The Sermon," Zionism and Judaism are clearly presented as "two things directly opposite to each other": "When a man can no longer be a Jew he becomes a Zionist," Yudka claims. Moreover, "Zionism begins with the wreckage of Judaism" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 283). While Yudka believes that he cannot say anything about Zionism, he nonetheless insists: "One thing is clear: Zionism is not a continuation, it is no medicine for an ailment. That's nonsense! It is uprooting and destruction, it's the opposite of what had been, it's the end…" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 284). This ironic tension is further emphasized by the contradiction between Yudka's Zionist rejection of Judaism and his own stereotypical Jewish character, particularly when contrasted with the characterization of the committee members. At first glance, it seems as though we are presented here with a confrontation between the Zionist Yudka and the leaders of the collective who are criticized for refusing to let go of exilic Judaism. However, already Yudka's name—which means "a little Jew"—marks him as clearly on the side of Judaism in this opposition. Similarly, the fact that he delivers a sermon (*derasha*)—and not, for instance, a speech (*neʾum*)—positions him again on the side of Judaism, for a sermon is clearly a traditional Jewish term and form.

Furthermore, the committee members, not Yudka, are the ones who are consistently described as manly and healthy, as anti-intellectualist and uncomplicated, "all clean-cut and positive, like captains and heroes in council" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 271). This description is

congruent with the Zionist stereotypes of those who have managed to shed their Jewishness. These stereotypes often involve issues of gender and ability, portraying the exilic Jew as effeminate and weak, as an intellectual who is incapable of practical, healthy action, and constructing the "new Jew," the "muscle Jew" of Israel, as an alternative and a solution.[37] In line with these stereotypes, Yudka is described as restless and terrified. He delivers his sermon under conditions of mental fragmentation and deterioration—his physical and mental responses become harsher and harsher as the story advances, thus affirming the idea that confusion and doubt are an essential part of his position and existence. Additionally, within the atmosphere of derision with which his sermon is met, we learn that one of the committee members has also taken Yudka's wife from him (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 273) and thus the sense of his "effeminate" character is further strengthened. And as though this was not already enough, Yudka is also portrayed as an intellectual—he quotes the Jewish scriptures and uses their language, as well as raises doubts and quarries as a skeptic. This intellectualism makes him even more of a stereotypical Jew and is met with derision on the part of the committee members, who ridicule him for "philosophizing" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 273–74), tell him that this type of speech belongs at the University, with the intellectuals of Brit Shalom (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 284), and

[37] For instance, as Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini claim in the introduction to their book on the Jewish question and queerness, "antisemitic representations of Jewish difference, as well as Jewish responses to these depictions, were, in essence, arguing over norms of manliness. Thus, although the two 'sides' disagreed—and profoundly—as to whether or not Jews fulfilled these norms, it yet seems significant that both antisemitism and those discourses counter to it (e.g., *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (the science of Judaism), Zionism, and even much contemporary Jewish studies) could agree on at least this point: androcentrism" (3). They further mention that later Zionist developments—such as Herzl's Zionism, for example, with its idealized "muscle Jew"—suggest an overturning, and thus an implicit acceptance of the same exact logic (Boyarin, Itzkovitz, and Pellegrini 2). Similarly, according to Sherene Seikaly and Max Ajl, "Zionism erased a history of learning, reading, and intellectualism. Zionism's reclamation of Jewish pride and honour was premised on understanding the Jewish past just as Europeans did, deformed and oriental. In this discourse, becoming European depended on leaving Europe and the history of penury, supposed effeminacy, intellectualism, and all else that was linked with exile. This historical erasure was nearly total" (128).

ask him to do without it (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 287). Throughout the story, the interaction between Yudka and the committee members becomes more and more similar to the common Eastern European description of the relationship between Jews and *goyim*. The committee members' treatment of Yudka, who suffers their laughter and humiliation, is described as evil and boorish and their actions portray them as heartless. Yudka even uses the same specific words for suffering and agonies (*pora'nut, yisurim*) to describe the committee's treatment of him as he uses to describe the Jewish experience and mentality in Exile (Hazaz, "Ha-Derasha" 149, 151–152).[38] The tension between Yudka's Jewish character and his anti-Jewish statements is another instance of irony in the story and exposes its dialectic character. It further contributes to the construction of the relationship between Judaism and Zionism as an ironic one.

Whereas Yudka constructs these two terms in a completely mutually exclusive war-like structure, this structure is precisely the ironic figure that is able to present them both at once while claiming their paradoxical relation and ensuring the infinite movement between them. In that sense, neither Yudka nor his audience or readers will ever be able to comprehend "what we are doing here"—that is, what Zionism really is—and whether or not it conforms with Judaism. They will never even know whether or not Judaism really believes in this Messiah as a condition for its transformation. Yudka will forever remain disoriented. The irony of the story thus destabilizes the logic of signification, the possibility of interpretation, on which Yudka's sermon relies and with it the story itself.

This structure indeed makes Yudka lose his senses, and particularly his sense of direction. He begins by looking "hurried and confused" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272). When he starts speaking about the absence of Jewish history, "the storm within him [makes] him shake

[38] For more on Yudka's stereotypical Jewish character see Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler (7–9).

from side to side […] he [swings] his hands about" and he is "so swept along in his speech that he can no longer halt" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 274). When he introduces the idea of a Jewish moonlight psychology, he "[fumbles] wide-eyed, his earnestness written on his face, his mind obviously entangled" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 276). When he addresses the fantasy of the Messiah, he whispers and stands there "as though in a trance," "speaking out of a daze," until the chairman asks him to sit down (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 278). When he discusses the Jewish refusal of redemption, he "really look[s] lost. He seem[s] for a moment to have forgotten himself completely, and not know where he [is]" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 281). Then, "half-paralyzed" he looks "from one to another in a sort of driven frenzy." Finally, realizing that the return to Israel means the end of the Jewish people, Yudka is completely stunned and disoriented: "all at once his words ran together and his voice broke and sputtered with feeling, his eyes flickered to and fro like one who doesn't know which way to go […] He noisily pulled back a chair […] and set there all in a turmoil" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 286).

At the end of his sermon, we finally learn that Yudka in fact laments the loss of the Jewish people. He expresses this when he mentions Israeli society's rejection of, and repulsion towards, the Yiddish language as well as its fashion of Hebraizing traditional Jewish names—both as metonymic for the rejection of Exile.[39] In this shame in the Yiddish he sees a symptom of the fact that Zionism isn't and could not be a popular national movement or a movement that is connected to the history of the Jewish people and further widens the gap between the two terms. However, since he immediately rejects his own statement about the Yiddish language and

[39] "Well, then, it's well known that we're all ashamed to speak Yiddish, as though it were some sort of disgrace […] But Hebrew, and none other than Sephardic Hebrew, strange and foreign as it is, we speak boldly, with a kind of pride and vanity, even though it is not as easy and natural as Yiddish, and even thought it hasn't the vitality, the sharp edge and healthy vigor of our folk language. […] In the same way, we are ashamed to be called by the ordinary, customary Jewish names, but we are proud to name ourselves, say, Arzieli or Avnieli" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 285)

Hebrew names as unimportant (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 286), the struggle between them—at least in the story—continues.

IV. "Come and I Shall Not See It": The Tragedy of Irony

This constant attempt to understand and to try and posit Zionism as completely different and new, as somehow above both Judaism and the paradox, seems to repeat the ironic attempt to find a transcendental position, not conditioned by the structure in which it is nonetheless given, from which to judge the ironic phrase, as well as language itself. Schlegel, for instance, claims that irony is "the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations, even above its own art, virtue, or genius" (Fragment 42, *Philosophical Fragments* 5). However, this rising above all that is defined, limited, conditioned, does not guarantee that the ironist herself has recourse to a subject position that is somehow unlimited or unconditioned. And if the attempt to understand irony is, as de Man argues, that which tries to stop its infinite regress (*Aesthetic Ideology* 166), then even this desire for understanding thus becomes regressive—a kind of paradoxical regress, aware of its own status as regress. Irony in this sense is the self-reflexive and eternally failed attempt to produce an external meta-discursive point where one may finally decide whether something is earnest or ironic, this meaning or that. As such, the "understanding" of irony becomes its own irony—the irony of irony, or its tragic nature.

This notion of irony is thus related to the definition of dramatic irony—the discrepancy between what is known to the characters and what is known to the distant, external observer. Moreover, it comes closer to the particular significance of tragic irony—a special category within dramatic irony. In tragic irony, the words and actions of the characters contradict the real situation, which the spectators fully realize. The Oxford English Dictionary defines tragic irony as "the incongruity created when the (tragic) significance of a character's speech or actions is

revealed to the audience but unknown to the character concerned, the literary device so used." Think, for instance, of the tragic results of Oedipus' or Antigone's assumption that they "know" the correct path and its effects on the unconditioned, external reader or viewer.

Schlegel's definition of irony as an infinite parabasis can be understood in the same vein. Parabasis is interruption of the discourse (such as the interruption of the narrative by the chorus in the old attic comedy, as it is making a self-referential speech), which thus breaks the fictive illusion of the play or novel and blurs the line between fiction and reality—the very line that it nonetheless constantly strives to establish (de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* 179–81). Schlegel's perpetual parabasis can thus be understood as the author's infinitely regressive (and ultimately failed) attempt to establish a place outside of the narrative and the order of signification, outside of the eternal incomprehension of irony, in order to make the authoritative decision about the ironic statement. This is quite similar to Yudka's recurrent insistence on conveying what he means—*exactly* what he means—and on deciphering what is the main thing. As mentioned above, he interrupts himself repeatedly with clauses of hesitation and qualifications, as well as with self-reflexive professions of his own incompetency and ignorance, as well as with descriptions of where his discourse is going and in what ways it is failing.

This perpetual attempt to find a transcendental point or principle and its spatial positioning as *above* discourse is frequent in discussions of irony. Kierkegaard, for instance, claims that the ironic figure of speech is characterized by "a certain superiority, deriving from its not wanting to be understood immediately, even though it wants to be understood" (Kierkegaard XIII.323). As we have seen, in Fragment 42, Schlegel understands irony as "the mood that surveys everything and rises infinitely above all limitations" (5). De Man further reads irony in Schlegel's writing as "a dialectic of the self, as a reflexive structure," and claims that irony

"clearly is the same distance within a self, duplication of a self, specular structures within the self, within which the self looks at itself from a certain distance" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 169). He describes this self as "some kind of super-, transcendental self which man approaches, as something that is infinitely agile […], as a self that stands above any of its particular experiences and toward which any particular self is always underway" (de Man, *Aesthetic Ideology* 175). Finally, as mentioned in the Introduction, Deleuze, too, gives irony a clear spatial direction, expressing it as the Socratic ascent toward principles, which in modern times, with Sade, becomes a perpetual asymptotic ascent toward the principle of absolute Evil in an effort to transcend all laws. In this sense, Schlegel's infinite parabasis comes close to Deleuze's perception of irony as a form of perpetual revolution in a forever failed attempt to transcend the system of signification and the law toward an absolutely free, transcendental point of view from which to look at the world.

Similarly, in "The Sermon," the establishment of a Jewish state is that absolute principle toward which the Zionist movement is striving as it overturns Judaism, believing that it "knows" the correct meaning of the ironic phrase—for instance, in the case of the belief in the Messiah. Zionism is thus an attempt to say, once and for all, what Judaism really is and what it is not, transcending any ironic doubt and going beyond any difference. And, indeed, this is achieved first and foremost by an introduction of a split or a gap into the self, by the specular, dialectic structure of the reflexive self, that becomes different from itself in the doubly ironic phrase. If the irony of Judaism was the split between belief and disbelief in Messianism, sustained in its indeterminacy, then Zionism is its sublation by the self-determining decision in favor of secular Messianism and the "return to history." If Eastern European Jewish irony involved a sense of humor in its maintaining of failure—the Messiah's non-arrival, the act that is never taken and is

beyond the capacities of the self—then Zionism becomes "equal to its act," and introduces the moment of metamorphosis and history. Zionism takes on the task of introducing a change that the self brings about by itself, by becoming different from itself—that is, a Westernized East, a secular-Christian Jewish nation. It thus resembles the third moment in the Hegelian dialectics (or the third moment of the Fichtean structure of the self that de Man associates with irony)—the sublation of Judaism after and through its negation. If Judaism is a belief in the Messiah that conceals a slight disbelief in the Messiah and his arrival then Zionism is a disbelief in the Messiah that conceals a slight belief—a belief that the self can bring the Messiah by itself or even that the self itself has taken the place of the Messiah.

Moreover, Zionism, according to Yudka, "has almost nothing to do with the people": unlike Judaism, it is rather "a thoroughly non-popular movement," which "turns away from the people, is opposed to it, goes against its will and its spirit, undermines it, subverts it, and turns off in a different direction, to a certain distant goal." Disorienting the people and its will, giving it a new direction, Zionism, "with a small group at its head, is the nucleus of a different people… Please note that: not new or restored, but *different*" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 284–85). As such, Zionism begins to resemble the vantguardist form of revolution, the Jacobin attempt to start from zero, completely anew and differently. As such, it further resembles Deleuze's perception of irony as an endless attempt to accumulate infinite acts of ascendance to the point of absolute freedom.

In the discussion of ambition in the Introduction, we have noted the relationship between irony, tragedy and the sublime (which is even clearer now, given the discussion of irony's ascending nature). In a rather ambitious manner, Yudka's practice of allusions and citations seems to exemplify the ambitious sublime's usurpation of the place of the author and its relation

to irony. Again and again, Yudka takes recourse to the words of the Jewish sages and interpreters of the ages to ground and sanction his assertions. However, his framing of these references consistently undermines their very power precisely as he assumes it. For instance, Yudka's use of the Bible and the Talmud*,* while related to the main content of the sermon—Exile and redemption—repeatedly voids the authority of both, adding to them expressions of derision and attenuation. In the case of the Bible, for instance, Yudka envelopes the verse with a double derision: He turns to the verse in order to bolster the link he draws between martyrdom, Exile and the Messiah, saying "Doesn't it say somewhere? 'The threefold cord'?" One of the committee members then contributes the correct citation: "And the threefold cord is not quickly broken" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277) (Ecc. 4:12). Therefore, first, Yudka belittles the original source by pretending to not recognize it ("Doesn't it say somewhere?"—in the original, "*eich ne'emar sham be-eize maḳom?*" "How did they say somewhere?"); second, he misquotes it, opening with "*ḥut ha-meshulash*" (roughly "cord of the three") instead of "*ṿeha-ḥut ha-meshulash*" ("*and the* threefold cord") (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277/153). In the case of the saying from the Talmud, "Let him [The Messiah] come, but may I not see him" (Bavli [Babylonian Talmud], Sanhedrin 98b), which Yudka mentions in order to emphasize the Jewish desire to not be saved, he adds no less than five derisions: "[1] It seems to me […] [2] I once heard [3] there was a sage or a pious man, [4] I forget which, who said it already: 'Let him come, and may I not see it,' [5] or something like that…" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 281). Yudka thus rejects the authority (and the specific authors) that he cites; at the same time, however, this divergence from the norm only highlights the significance of citations from authoritative sources for the sermon and for him. It actually emphasizes his belief in this type of authority and the importance of its role. What Yudka questions is rather the specific figures and tradition that take this role. Even

Yudka's literary practices thus support the understanding that in this ironic method, the transcendent principle is maintained; what is replaced is its content. That is, the Messiah is replaced with the national movement, just as Yudka is trying to take over the place of the authors he cites.

Moreover, discussing the fantasy of the Messiah, Yudka relies on the language of prayer itself, thus perverting and inverting it to create a "tight ironic net" (Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler 12). He does so in two ways: First, Yudka changes the context of the statement, thus secularizing the prayer and parodizing the events. For instance, he claims that the Jewish people suffers "without limit, willingly, lovingly," ("*be-ratson uve-ahava*") (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 277/153), where the will and the love allude to the Shabbat prayer ("*be-ahava uve-ratson hinḥiltanu*"). Therefore, in this case, the wait for miraculous intervention in order to settle the land ("*hinḥiltanu*") is secularized and parodized. Second, Yudka uses negation in order to turn belief into a provocation—asking why wouldn't the Messiah come, then? Why wouldn't he come out of joy? The prayers are thus inverted into a constant state of agonies and presented as an unfulfilled and empty promise. In this Yudka follows the Zionist model—taking the form and authority of Judaism, annihilating the author from which it is derived, and attempting to take its place.[40]

This change of context and this negation are also the double motion of Zionism. On the one hand, Zionism uproots Judaism from Europe (at the same time as it uproots it from its contextualization as the East of Europe and turns it into the West), secularize and parodize it. On the other hand, Zionism is the negation of Judaism. As Yudka claims repeatedly, while it is impossible to say anything positive about Zionism, it is clear that it is not Judaism .

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[40] This is quite similar to the working of the Nietzschean concept of reactive nihilism, which will be discussed in Chapter Three.

Like the Bible and the Talmud, the entire form of the *derasha* serves Yudka as a source of authority, which he nonetheless undermines and empties out of authoritative power. For instance, the ending of the story clearly diverges from the customs of the *derasha*, on which the sermon relies. Instead of transitioning from words of reproach to words of comfort and calling for awakening and atonement, Yudka uses the ending to discuss Zionism without any reassuring words, or any mention of reconciliation or redemption. Precisely where the Zionist rhetoric was supposed to allow Yudka an abundance of readymade words to describe the "new Jew," Yudka's verbosity disappears and he remains speechless, missing the right words to say what Zionism is. Without affirmative words he has no choice but to speak of Zionism only in the negative—that is, to focus on what it is not, what it differs from, what it contradicts and inverts (Parush and Dalmatzky-Fischler 23).

V. "The End of All This": The Irony of Irony

At the beginning of "The Sermon," when Yudka announces his inability to understand it all, the chairman responds by saying, "Now *I* don't understand." However, Yudka clearly recognizes a difference between their proclamations of ignorance and cries out: "That's a different way of not understanding […] That's probably your way of mocking me" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 272–73) And, indeed, some of the committee members than grin and laugh at his expense. By the end of the story, however, no one laughs anymore. The committee's confidence in Yudke's ignorance and their knowledge is completely undermined and they are now silent, sitting erect in their chairs and waiting to hear what else he has to say. They begin to suspect that the ironic joke is actually at their expense.

A similar thing happens to Yudka, as what he really wants to say constantly eludes him and he keeps on stuttering about. He concludes his sermon with great certainty, making

absolutely clear that this is indeed the end: "With this I had said a great deal, the whole thing… everything I had on my mind… and now I don't want to say anything more. I have nothing more to add. … Enough!" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 286). However, after a short silence and once the chairman asks him whether he is done, Yudka "[springs] to his feet with a jerk" and says in a panicked voice:

> I've said much too much… That's not how I meant it, not the way I thought it. It came out by itself. The devil knows how…. Such nonsense! Trifles, side issues […] It was ridiculous, quite unnecessary […] What I mean, I really just wanted to explain… I no longer know how to tell you… the main thing, what I'm after It's not just… yes! Well, now. Now to the main thing. I bag you a few more minutes of patience… (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 286–87).

At the end of "The Sermon" we therefore discover that this was never it, that the sermon we read was not really the sermon we were meant to read, that the main thing is still ahead of us. We learn that this is not what Yudka meant, that the words escaped his intention or vice versa, that it is too much and too little all at once. We understand that, ironically, he has no control over his own irony, over the way things may be understood and even said. That his attempt *Lidrosh*—that is, to deliver a sermon but also, literally, to interpret—has completely failed and that Zionism is still a concept beyond his grasp. We also now understand, without being presented with the rest of the sermon, that it will forever escape him. The irony of irony is finally that even though it is the very temporal linguistic structure that "qualifies the subject" it is at the same time the linguistic element whose direction always escapes the subject, the very form of the paradox that creates either an infinite (philosophical) parabasis or brings about silence and stasis. It disorients, in fact, destabilizes, the entire system of signification, and with it the subject.

Ironically, Zionism, when settled and decided, when separated from Judaism, stops the

perpetual motion and the warlike structure in ironies. However, since irony can never be fully decided, those who believe that they are in the know, that they know that the statement was (or was not) ironic, always still suspect that in fact the joke is on them and therefore their pleasure (or freedom) could never be full. Moreover, irony can always turn on the speaker herself—for, that tragic irony that "qualifies" the subject, her act and her agency, is precisely the thing that exceeds and escapes the subject. Because irony can always turn on the speaker or on those who think they understand its message, it requires endless repetition of the same for its stabilization. That is what Yudka is trying to do, by the repetitive structure of his sermon and never getting to the main point. Similarly, Zionism might have been meant as the end of Judaism only to end up with Judaism and the East constantly haunting it as its ironic double. As mentioned, the height of the irony is that this negation of Judaism is not even a Jewish negation of Judaism; it is rather a Christian one and as such reaffirms the lack of Jewish agency and history. Moreover, this constant need to stabilize the difference by repetition is also related to the next level of this ironic dialectic, in which the relation towards Judaism as the East is now projected upon Zionism's own Easts—both its "internal" East, Mizrahi Jews, and its "external" East in the form of the Palestinians.

And yet, the story ends with one more ironic turn: "say what you want," the chairperson tells Yudka, "and let's see if we can't do without the philosophy" (Hazaz, "The Sermon" 287). Against the ascension of irony to the status of a universal and unavoidable principle, we can think beyond this modern logic of irony, beyond signification, the subject, and the law, by turning instead to humor and satire, which are in every way opposed to irony. As Claire Colbrook argues, "Instead of thinking in terms of the concept as a law that governs what we say, humour and satire focus on the bodies, particularities, noises and disruptions that are in excess of

the system and the law of speech" (132). In the following chapter, we will therefore explore the possibilities that the practice of humor allows as a mechanism for resisting the law and as a positive principle of organizing a community. In Chapters Three and Four, we will consider the power of satire, of selective repetition, to produce alternative relations within a collective—ones that differ from the either/or logic of judgment and its iteration in irony in the form of inconclusive conflict.

CHAPTER 2

WHAT'S FUNNY ABOUT OCCUPATION?: HUMOR IN EMILE HABIBY'S *PESSOPTIMIST* AND HIS REAPPROPRIATIONS OF VOLTAIRE'S *CANDIDE*

> *Laugh! For Laughter unleashes the tongue and cures muteness*
> *Oh, you generations of silence, it is time for you to laugh.*
> *Speak! And if you do not speak, laugh! [...]*
> *If they stifle your moans then explode with laughter.*
> *Laughter is an awfully sharp single-edged weapon.*
> *Had all of the prisoners laughed at the same instant, and continued to laugh, would the jailer be able to laugh?*
>
> —Emile Habiby, *Luka' bin Luka'*.

The Pessoptimist is a very funny novel. Written in 1974 by the Palestinian author and politician Emile Habiby and fully titled *The Strange Circumstances of the Disappearance of Saeed the Ill-fated Pessoptimist*,[41] it is one of very few novels that are capable of eliciting true laughter. Not just a half-smile of pleased irony but genuine laughter. Out loud. Yet scholars have been treating this humor, if at all, as merely one of the many stylistic devices that Habiby employs or as one half of the term "tragicomic," with which they tend to characterize the tone of this major Palestinian work. I argue, however, that humor is the very mechanism that makes this novel operative, both politically and creatively, and that it relies on a particular practice of quotation and the disappearance that it entails. Moreover, far from being one half of a dichotomous pair, humor is the very means by which Habiby undermines dichotomy itself.

Another, more abstract aspect of this chapter concerns the relation of Habiby's humor, as well as humor more broadly, to the law. From Sigmund Freud to Gilles Deleuze, the operation of

[41] In Arabic: *al-Waqa'i' al-ghariba fi ikhtifa' Sa'id abi 'l-Naḥs al-mutasha'il*. The English translation is titled *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*.

humor has been theorized as premised on transgressing a law.[42] As such, humor seems to be a parasitic effect of the law, dependent on the very law it ridicules, criticizes, or even transgresses.[43] I therefore examine what kind of resistance humor suggests in relation to the law and what type of a political community it may constitute. More specifically, this chapter examines the relationship of this humor to international law and to its role as the guarantor of human rights. In order to elucidate these points I compare Habiby's novel to Voltaire's famous *conte*, *Candide: ou l'opsimisme*, to which it pays a self-proclaimed homage. This comparison, which explores Habiby's quotations and re-occupations of Voltaire's text, foregrounds the dissimilarities between the two modes of humor and between their related concepts of human rights, international law, and community. I claim that while both authors' humor depends on the law, their relation to it is quite different. Voltaire's humor advances reform, a change in the current content of the law, thus betraying a belief in the law's power to uphold universal ideals and rights. Habiby's humor, on the other hand, attacks the very form of the law, exposing universal ideals and rights as not only useless for the Palestinian struggle but also as an integral part of their oppression. Habiby's humor offers an alternative to the law as the organizing

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[42] According to Freud, jokes—or, verbal humor—are a mechanism for coping with prohibitions by circumventing societal norms and regulations. According to his theory, smut jokes, for instance, are a method for expressing and experiencing sexual pleasures that are forbidden and tamed by laws and moral norms (Freud 94–102). As mentioned in the introduction, Deleuze articulates humor as the operation of the masochist who is frustrated with a law that he cannot ever truly know and which renders him forever guilty. The masochist humorist therefore overly obeys the law in order to expose its absurdity and to release the very movement that the law was meant to prevent (Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty" 81–90). In this regard it is also interesting to mention Alenka Zupančič's understanding of the term "mechanical" in the Bergsonian formula for comedy—"something mechanical encrusted upon the living"—for she reads "mechanical" precisely as "lawful." That is to say, comedy is nothing other than the failed attempts of the law to tame life, the organic, and the concrete (Zupančič 114).

[43] It thus reminds us of the notion of resistance in the earlier writing of Foucault, according to which we are nothing but foldings of power/knowledge and therefore our resistance is always-already written into the structure of power relations (*The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1* 92–102). There is no denying, however, that there is indeed something quite funny about the fact that resistance is already written into the structures of power.

principle of our collective existence in the form of a nuanced and open community of all those who "get" the joke. Since understanding the joke is premised on familiarity with the specificity of the cultures involved, the community thus created is a differential community in which each reader understands the joke to a different degree. The reader is thus also tempted to familiarize herself with the relevant cultures more closely in order to increase the pleasure she derives from the humor.

I. The Pessoptimist

Unlike *Candide*, *The Pessoptimist* does not present the reader with a clear linear narrative and instead consists of a host of episodes and anecdotes weaved together in the style of *maqāmāt*,[44] making it difficult to begin this chapter by introducing the narrative as is customary in writing of this kind. In broad terms one may say that the general topic uniting the different episodes in this novel is the absurd lives of Palestinians under Israeli rule and that the recurring protagonist in those episodes is Saeed, a satirical anti-hero and a Palestinian citizen of Israel, who ends up disappearing—or rather, starts up by disappearing, depending on one's perspective. Like *Candide*, this novel too consists of three parts. In the first—titled "Yuaad," meaning "will be returned"—we are introduced to the Palestinian disaster of 1948, the *nakba*, and to Saeed's life as a collaborator in the nascent State of Israel. Also introduced is his first love, the eponymous Yuaad, who has been exiled during the 1948 War. The middle part is titled "Baqiyya"—after Saeed's wife, whose name means "she who remains"—and describes Saeed's

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[44] *Maqāma* is a literary genre of mediaeval Arabic rhymed prose characterized by rhetorical extravagance and splendor. It is considered the invention of tenth-century author al-Hamadhani and was greatly developed by al-Ḥariri in the eleventh century. *Maqāmāt* are collections of independent short narratives that integrate intervals of poetry and are often rather amusing. Most of the stories revolve around a figure of a trickster who, with a virtuoso's rhetoric and smoothness of tongue, dupes the fool-narrator over and over again. These recurring figures are the main element that binds the different episodes together. This genre was also taken up in the early thirteenth century by Hebrew writers in Muslim Spain. For more on this genre see, for example Drori; Hämeen-Anttila.

marriage and family life under the military rule in Israel (1949-1966). The last part, “The Second Yuaad,” conveys Saeed’s suffering as cracks begin to appear in his faith in the State. This part, which follows the death of his wife and son, portrays Saeed’s experience in Israeli prison, as well as his difficult interactions with Israeli powers after the 1967 occupation. It also portrays Yuaad’s return, in the form of her daughter—a visit that ends much like the visit of the first Yuaad, for the second Yuaad too is deported. Despite this clear tripartite structure, the narrative remains generally fragmented in space and time. The lack of a clear linear narrative not only complicates its introduction here but has also led scholars to believe that the novel is to be read as a metaphor rather than as a story of development or *Bildung* (such as that of *Candide*).[45] This metaphorical reading, not problematic in itself, tends to further contribute to the interpretation of the novel in dichotomous terms.

It is indeed very tempting to read *The Pessoptimist* within a dichotomous framework. The name of its protagonist, Saeed abi ‘l-Naḥs al-mutasha’il—which features in the title and merges together pessimism and optimism, bad luck and felicity[46]—already elicits such reading. Moreover, this novel tells the story of an Israeli Palestinian—two terms that have long been considered mutually exclusive and entirely opposed (as we have seen in previous chapters). Saeed is portrayed as a naïve fool who is working for the Jewish “big man with small stature” in

[45] Ahmad Harb, for example, presents *Candide* as a novel of development or realization while viewing the heterogeneity of the narrative in *The Pessoptimist* as inviting a metaphorical reading (99).

[46] Habiby’s coinage, pessoptimist—in Arabic, *mutashā’il*—is a combination of the word “pessimist,” *mutashā’im*, and “optimist,” *mutafā’il*. Saeed’s first two names, Sa‘id abi ‘l-Naḥs, create a similar pairing, meaning roughly “the luckless felicitous person.” Moreover, adding pessimism into Voltaire’s optimism also introduces the Levant into this Eurocentric tale. The Arabic word for “pessimist" (*mutashā’im*) and the Arabic name for the Levant, or Greater Syria (*al-Shām*), share the same root (*sh-’-m*), so that *mutashā’im* may also be loosely understood as “Levantizer.” The reason for the shared root is the relation of both to the idea of left-handedness, for *shām* simply means “left.” Pessimism is related to left-handedness as a symbol of haplessness; the Levant, being in the north of the Arab world, is named “left” for it is to the left of someone in the Hejaz facing east (just as the name of Yemen, a land which would be to her south, means “right”). See Bosworth and Lammens 261.

the Palestine Workers Union. While he waits for some miraculous intervention Saeed's job consists in frustrating any communist activity and spying on other Palestinians to the benefit of the state. Whereas Saeed appears as aspiring to be as loyal as possible to the state and as a believer in collaborating and negotiating with it to better his life, the other Palestinian characters in the novel—his loves, his son, the other Saeed—all seem to be suggesting the opposite course of action, that of resistance and armed struggle.[47] Since the story ends with Saeed sitting alone on a stake—stuck in the air, having to decide between joining the others on the ground and clinging to his hope for divine intervention—the story can be read, and has been read, as not only staging an opposition between loyalty and resistance, between diplomatic negotiation and armed struggle, but also as exacting a choice between them. The fact that Saeed eventually disappears with miraculous space creatures has led many to argue that Habiby is promoting a choice of armed resistance, for the alternative is marked as leading to disappearance and hence to annihilation. At best, the story has been read as portraying the absurd lives of those who are stuck between these two opposed positions.[48]

However, these reductive dichotomous readings of the novel leave too many details unexplained. First, Saeed does not disappear entirely. In fact, *The Pessoptimist* is an epistolary

[47] The second Saeed, whom Saeed meets in prison, is clearly an armed fighter (Habiby 132–33). Both Yuaads insist on fighting, even in exile (Habiby 63–66; 149–52). And Saeed's wife and son take up arms and fight the Israeli army (Habiby 112–13).

[48] According to Trevor Le Gassick, for example, Saeed's disappearance, along with his character flaws, represents a much better future for both Israelis and Palestinians (219). Similarly, Faruq Wadi does not accept any positive reading of the extraterrestrial creature and sees him, along with Saeed's disappearance, as the refuge of the passive, which is being criticized in the novel (100–11). However, both interpretations do not account for Saeed's writing *after* the disappearance. A different view is presented by Hashim Yaghi, who believes that the extra-terrestrials signify an actual army, awaited for by the Palestinians (55). It is, again, a reading that reinforces the sense that the novel promotes armed struggle as one possibility that is opposed to another. Yet, this reading does not explain why the creature is angered when Saeed turns to him for salvation. For a discussion of these different interpretations see Coffin 36–37.

novel consisting of three long letters that Saeed writes *after* his disappearance. These letters are addressed to an unidentified communist journalist, which seems to be Habiby's own alter-ego (for he was himself a writer and editor in the newspaper *al-Ittiḥad* and a member of the communist party). In contrast with the assumption that the novel condemns Saeed's choice and marks this disapproval by making him disappear, Saeed clarifies at the start of his first letter,

> I've disappeared. But I'm not dead. I wasn't killed at the border, as some of you imagined. Nor did I join the guerrilla movement, as those who knew my virtue feared. Nor am I rotting long-forgotten in some jail, as your friends may suppose […] [T]he miracle did occur, fine sir, and I did indeed meet with creatures from outer space. I'm in their company right now. As I write to you of my fantastic mystery, I am soaring with them high above you (Habiby 3–4).

Saeed's story, then, does not end with his disappearance. Rather, the disappearance inaugurates the telling of his story—a telling which, as the main extra-terrestrial creature himself suggests, is a political act of resistance and a possible way out.[49] It is from within his disappearance, as we shall see, that Saeed produces this story, its humor and its political effects. It is thus impossible to read Saeed's disappearance as a simple condemnation of collaboration or passivity.

Second, armed freedom fighters in *The Pessoptimist* do not seem to represent the desired solution either.[50] When his wife Baqiyya and his son Walaa take on armed struggle they both disappear into the sea as a result, if not simply die (Habiby 113). Similarly, the novel seems to

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[49] "Continue writing to your friend"—that is the solution that the extraterrestrial creature offers Saeed, who proclaims his feelings of suffocation and muteness. The creature then gives Saeed the example of Abu Rukwah—who, when facing a tyrant, did not despair and did not wait for a more fitting time to react. Rather, he realized that if the tyrant can title himself "Governor by Right of God" then he too can make use of the same language to his advantage by subverting it, titling himself "Rebel by the Right of God." With the many who joined him, Abu Rukwah then "conquered power with power" (Habiby 77).

[50] This is already indicated by the near homonymy between the Arabic word *fidāʾī*, meaning freedom fighter (literally, a martyr) and *faḍāʾī*, an extra-terrestrial creature. With this phonic link Habiby seems to draw a connection between the creatures from outer space and self-destructive armed struggle.

ridicule the second Saeed, a freedom fighter who is Yuaad's son and whom Saeed meets in prison. The young Saeed—imagined by the older Saeed to be wearing a royal crimson cloak, which in reality is nothing but his own shed blood—merely comforts Saeed and, as we are told, masks the prison walls with imaginary hanging gardens (Habiby 132–33). His majestic utopias are thus of little help in reality; they amount to nothing more and nothing less than bloodshed. Given the novel's criticism of this path, it makes little sense to view it as promoting this kind of resistance.

Third, the novel does not simply stage a conflict between two opposed courses of actions but rather seems to run the entire gamut of possible political reactions to the Israeli occupation of Palestine: from defeatism, to cooperation, to *ṣumūd* ("steadfastness"), to binational communism and its newspaper-carrying youth, to armed struggle, to poetry and Arabic cultural heritage, to willful and blissful ignorance, and so on. All of these tactics are profoundly criticized, some more than others, in an ingenious satirical way in *The Pessoptimist*.

Finally, the dichotomous framework—or the resulting conclusion that one must choose resistance—is incongruent with Habiby's own political work. Habiby clearly negotiated with the Israeli state and believed in influencing it from within, at least to some extent. He was an active member of a bi-national communist party—the first *Maki* (Israeli Communist Party) and later *Rakaḥ* (New Communist List)—and represented it in the Israeli parliament. He even accepted, to the dismay of many, the Israel Prize for Arabic Literature. Habiby's response to his critics on this occasion seems to suggest that while he does see the prize as affirming Israeli rule over Palestinians, he also views it as affirming coexistence, as he insists that in accepting it he is "cling[ing] to [his] position without resigning [his] place."[51] That is, he insists on his dissenting

[51] "I am holding the glory on both ends. I cling to my position without resigning my place. There is a difference between those who are subjected to the whip and those who count the blows from afar. We in

position as a Palestinian in Israel but does not disengage from the place and its society simply because it is under Israeli rule; he does not leave Haifa.[52] In his literature too, Habiby seems to negotiate the representation of Palestinians in the place they are—meaning, in relation to Israeli society and history. Instead of entirely rejecting the state of Israel he claims for the Palestinians a political status that is more than the marginalized position of a conquered people or an ethnic minority.

II. The Strange Circumstances of Disappearance

Even this description, however, which suggests that Habiby aspired to bridge the two opposing sides, is still within this dichotomous framework. By focusing on the humorous aspect of the novel—which is intimately bound with Habiby's practice of quotation, as I hope to demonstrate below—I therefore wish to step outside of the dichotomy between fidelity and freedom. This dichotomy characterizes not only the readings of *The Pessoptimist* but also our common perception of the structure of intertextuality as such. Questions of translation and quotation have been cast in terms of fidelity and freedom for over two millennia now.[53] In the

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Israel have found our own way, the way of consistency and patience" (Habiby as quoted in Brenner 97). This statement also reflects Habiby's frustration with the kind of judgments made by "Palestinians of the outside"—meaning, exiled Palestinians—and Arab supporters in their criticism of Israeli-Palestinians.

[52] The inscription on Habiby tombstone in Haifa, in accordance with his wishes, reads "Emile Habiby, Stayed in Haifa" (Scott 127). This inscription was a clear poke at Ghassan Kanafani, an exiled Palestinian author who is famous for his novella "Returning to Haifa," and who, among others, have criticized Habiby for staying in Israel and not rejecting the Israeli state (for more on Kanafani and his politics of return, see Chapter Four).

[53] For a historical survey of the negotiations between faithfulness and freedom in theories of translation, see, for instance, Bassnett; Bassnett and Lefevere. Moreover, as early as Longinus' treatise, "On Sublimity," quotation and intertextuality more broadly have been articulated in terms of loyalty and freedom. In Longinus' terms quoting is, at one and the same time, a situation of being possessed by another and of freely competing with him or her (19). Questions of freedom and fidelity are constantly drifting from the content of his examples of rhetorical sublimity into his guidelines for its achievement, especially when it is a matter of intertextuality. The treatise ends with a dialogue that showcases the unresolved tension between two opposing threats to the existence of literature: complete lack of freedom,

following sections I examine the ways Habiby occupies stories and events, as well as other texts—that is, the ways he cites, quotes, and paraphrases—in order to uncover what kind of relationship, if any, between loyalty and resistance, or between repetition and difference, makes them funny. Through this examination of Habiby's humorous methods of reappropriation I therefore hope to achieve a twofold goal: understanding the operation of humor in the novel, on the one hand, and understanding the politics it offers, on the other.

Let us start unpacking the workings of humor in this novel from the side of "loyalty" and faithful repetition. Time and again the novel stresses Saeed's "extravagant loyalty to the state, its security and its laws," as he puts it (Habiby 121). For the sake of brevity suffice it to mention his faithful work as a collaborator and his naming of his son "Walaa"—meaning, loyalty. He then abstains from having any other children since he realizes that, for Palestinians in Israel, "birth control [is] a proof of loyalty" (Habiby 97). This self-denial of reproduction reveals that it is this very same logic of obedience and loyalty that causes Saeed (and, by extension, Palestinians more broadly) to disappear. This disappearance is not limited to the end of the novel, when Saeed takes off with the space creature (Habiby 163); rather, Saeed disappears during his terrestrial life as well, for he "drew no attention throughout his life" (Habiby 3). There is therefore a certain disappearance in loyalty.[54]

As the title implies, this disappearance is indeed central to the novel, but what exactly is its significance here? It is important to note that this disappearance is at once a cause and an

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on the one hand, and not enslaving oneself enough, on the other (Longinus 51–53). In his writing about Longinus' sublime turn, Neil Hertz emphasizes specifically the centrality of the oath, which is a recurrent theme in the content of Longinus' examples, as indicative of its formal role in the rhetorical sublime—a kind of liberating form of self-enslavement to another ("A Reading of Longinus" 1–21).

[54] This disappearance in loyalty forges a link between Habiby's writing and the more recent writing of Sayed Kashua—both in his novels and for his television show, *ʿAvoda ʿAravit* ("An Arab Job")—and his humorous obsession with obedience and "passing" as an Israeli.

effect. First and foremost, Palestinians in Israel were made to disappear by the state, particularly from its history and its geography. During and after the 1948 war, streets were renamed, villages destroyed or reinstated as Jewish communities with Hebrew names, and Palestinian history erased from both the books and the scenery. Nothing expresses this phenomenon better than the absurd term "present-absentees," used to describe internally displaced Palestinians, who live within the 1949 armistice borders of Israel but were driven away from their homes during the 1948 War and whose property was subsequently confiscated by the State. Moreover, as Saeed's old schoolmaster explains to him in a rather Benjaminian way, every occupation of this land has led to the eradication of the defeated and history has thus always been written by the victors who actively dispensed with other narratives (Habiby 23–24).[55] Habiby himself once explained in an interview that his incentive for writing was a statement made by the Israeli minister Yigʾal Alon, according to which had a Palestinian nation truly existed it would have developed its own literature (Abu Remaileh 88). Habiby's novel thus may be seen as responding to this imposed disappearance by trying to write the figure of the Israeli-Palestinian back into public discourse, history, and landscape.

How to write an absence, a disappearance? How to undermine the dichotomous logic that excludes Palestinians, as Arabs, from the Israeli collective, at the same time as it portrays them as failed, inauthentic Arabs in the eyes of the Arab world? Perceived as traitors by both societies, loyalty becomes ever more important. Thus, Habiby's practice of quotation seems to allow him

[55] In his seventh thesis on the concept of history, Walter Benjamin argues that the adherents of historicism empathize only with the victors and that "[w]hoever has emerged victorious participates to this day in the triumphal procession in which the present rulers step over those who are lying prostrate. According to traditional practice, the spoils are carried along in the procession. They are called cultural treasures […]" ("Theses on the Philosophy of History" 256). Moreover, in the third thesis Benjamin claims that in the class struggle, it is not in the form of these spoils that the "refined and spiritual things" (as opposed to the crude and material) present themselves; rather, "they manifest themselves […] as courage, *humor*, cunning, and fortitude" (254–5, my emphasis).

to give presence to absentees precisely by supposedly being "faithful," to varying degrees, to different kinds of sources and stories. Indeed the novel is packed with footnotes, allusions, and quotation, citing historical events, poetry, newspapers and literature and imbedding them in the narrative. Habiby weaves into the text a myriad of sources—from the medieval writing of al-Jaḥiẓ, through the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhani and al-Ḥariri, through Sufism, the Isma'ili heritage, and the esoteric philosophy of *Ikhwan al-ṣafa* (Brethren of Purity), all the way to the editorials of *al-Ittiḥad* and other newspapers. In his use of the genre of the *maqāma*, for example—which the novel constantly evokes yet never directly imitates—he seems to recognize the recurrent concern of the classic *maqāma* with the lower, oppressed classes and therefore recruits its form to convey the contemporary oppression of Palestinians.[56] By so doing Habiby strives to endow Palestinian literature with the status of literature, with its own canon and history, but as a literature that reworks the classics and finds its own place within Arab cultural production.

In this sense, disappearance is both a result of this oppression, of this making-invisible, and a form of resisting it. Disappearance itself can serve as a place of refuge and alternative reconstruction of identity. Like the treasure-concealing caves in the novel, the secret space of this disappearance-through-loyalty allows for the composition of alternative stories. The secret, which comes up repeatedly in the novel, is a space of freedom that the state cannot access.[57] The very fact of having a secret—as is the case, for example, when Saeed's wife, Baqiyya, tells him about the treasure chest that her father had buried for her in an underwater cave near Tanturah—empowers Saeed (Habiby 88–89). It is the knowledge of the existence of the treasure, the secret itself, that empowers him, not the actual treasure, which he never actually finds. Scholars such as

[56] On these intertextual relations and the use of the form of the *maqāma* see Abisaab 1–2.

[57] On caves and secrets as spaces of refuge, hope, and alternative stories see Abu Remaileh; Levy. On the "dialectic of the secret," between veiling and revealing, see Abisaab 2–7.

Refqa Abu Remaileh and Lital Levy have therefore interpreted the secrets in the novel, like the treasure and the cave, as spaces where identity, freedom and alternative futures are formed. Beyond these abstract notions, however, what Saeed seems to find in his secret, I argue, is the power to act, to affect change. Trying to explain to Baqiyya who exactly are the communists, Saeed portrays them as heretics for they claim to have the power to change predetermined fate. When the amazed Baqiyya asks how they became so powerful Saeed replies that perhaps their fathers too hid treasures for them along the shores of their own Tanturahs (Habiby 91). The communists are thus the secret itself, insofar as this secret is the power to covertly change the given order, to resist. The many stories of secrets in the novel expose the impotency of oppressors when facing a collective ubiquitous secret. This is the case, for example, when Saeed describes the becoming-communist of the village of Jisr a-Zarqa in the same language of secrets. This secret, the becoming-communist of the village, not only resists but also creates a new community, different from both the family and the state, for it is described as overcoming isolation and the obstacle of "the spider-web" of family ties (Habiby 86). Thus, the secret uses "loyalty" to affect change as well as to produces its own community.

Humor in this novel works in a similar manner. It uses "loyalty," repetition of reality to the letter, in order not only to expose its absurdity but also to fight against it and create an alternative community. While initially seeming to be self-negating, these "loyal repetitions" in fact allow Habiby to return to the very logic that excluded him and, by over-zealously repeating it, to transgress it and radically contest its validity. For example, when Saeed meets his distraught aunt, Umm Asʿad, who had been displaced and dispossessed, made to become an "absentee" in her own land, Habiby gives a remarkably humorous expression to this forced disappearance—a humorous expression which makes use of disappearance itself. Upon meeting Saeed, Umm

Asʿad cries out, "*ana maḥsiyya, ya khawaja!*"—meaning, "I am an absentee, sir!" However, we are told that she pronounces the second word as *makhsiyya*, "the way the Israeli soldiers pronounce it," thus in effect saying "I am castrated, sir!"[58] Sticking to the letter, trying to assimilate by taking on the language of those in power—including their disregard for Arabic language itself—Umm Asʿad exposes the true meaning of her present-absentee status and its cruelty. By binding herself most faithfully to the details of the reality she faces, Umm Asʿad exposes its hidden law and frees herself to do precisely what this law forbids. The law behind the language of "present-absentees" marks Palestinians as people who abandoned their homes, thereby enabling the state's confiscation of their property while denying them the status of refugees, the status of the displaced and dispossessed. Such status might have allowed Palestinians to be recognized as victims, point out Israel's role as an aggressor and demand the appropriate rights or suitable reparations. This is precisely the law that Umm Asʿad exposes by dubbing herself castrated, betraying her impotence to resist the process of her "absentiation" and defying the very law latent in the language of "present-absentees," which orders us never to accord Palestinians the status of victims.

In addition, an interesting chronology emerges here, a certain inversion of cause and effect, which is recurrent throughout the novel and accounts for part of its humor. Habiby rejects the logic of the Israeli law—according to which this absentee status is the result of and the punishment for Palestinian resistance. Instead, through Umm Asʿad, Habiby takes the punishment first—supposedly accepting the absentee status and adhering to it fully, pronouncing it the exact same way as the soldiers would, in order to release a little moment of resistance. This

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[58] The joke is rather lost in the English translation, where it is rendered as, "They've already had me, in the census." See in the Arabic original (Habiby 47/62). Henceforth, when two different page numbers are cited in this chapter the latter refers to the original Arabic (or, later on in the chapter, the original French, in the Case of Candide).

operation of humor recalls Gilles Deleuze's writing about masochism as humor, where he describes the humorist operation as the most logical result of a law that is completely arbitrary and illegible. The humorist takes the punishment first, following the law to the letter, in order to guarantee pleasure. He thus inverts the law of desire, according to which it is because we transgress and take pleasure that we are punished. Masochistic humor, Deleuze argues, takes the punishment first in order to ensure transgression and pleasure, just as the blows of the whip, far from preventing orgasm, incite and ensure it ("Coldness and Cruelty" 88–89). As such, this humorist operation exposes the law as empty and arbitrary, as merely the law of the strongest, at the same time as it releases the very movement that the law was intended to prevent—sexual pleasure in the case of the masochist; resistance and recognition in the case of the pessoptimist.

Consider another example: In one of the vignettes that Habiby weaves into this novel, a discussion of the Palestinian town of Fureidis leads Saeed to tell us the following joke that was "related to [him] [with good intentions] by [his] master Jacob"—a Mizrahi Jewish man who is Saeed's immediate boss, a kind of mediating figure between him and "the big man," the big boss.

> The elders of Zikhron Yaakov [a Jewish village near Fureidis] disagreed about the following problem: Is it lawful for a man to sleep with his wife on Shabbat, or is the act a kind of work and therefore not lawful on that day? They went to the rabbi for a decision as to whether it was work or pleasure. The rabbi thought long and hard, and then ruled that it was pleasure. When they asked him for his reasoning he replied: "Well, if it were work then you would give it to the Arabs of Fureidis to perform" (Habiby 80/104-105, translation modified).

This story exposes the hidden logics underlying Israeli (and Palestinian) society.[59] "It is funny because it is true." I apologize in advance for ruining the joke by explaining it but it is indeed true that for decades Palestinians supplied the manpower for all cheap manual labor in Israel. It is just as true that most Israelis cannot conceive of the idea of Jewish women (or men, for that matter) having sexual relations with Palestinians. By following these given logics to their absurd conclusion the joke not only exposes an already absurd situation but also transgresses its law. It brings to mind the possibility of Jews from Zikhron engaging in manual labor and, more importantly, transgresses the taboo on interracial sexual relations. At least in our minds.[60] This is precisely the point where loyalty is transformed into resistance.

Furthermore, immediately after telling us this joke about the elders of Zikhron Yaakov and the workers of Fureidis, Saeed comments: "My, how we laughed at this story—Jacob because he hates Ashkenazis and I because he laughed." He further adds that even "[t]hese settlers [from Zikhron Yaakov] laughed good-naturedly when the story about them spread" (Habiby 80). Thus, this joke seems to elicit laughter from everyone, even those who are its butt. As such, the humor of this joke not only exposes the absurdity of the law as it transgresses it; it also creates a community of those who "get it," a community that is quite open. Of course, there are different degrees of "getting" the jokes, insofar as each reader, according to her place and position, has a certain level of familiarity with the literatures and cultures involved. Israeli-Palestinians probably understand most, if not all, of the humor, whereas Palestinians "on the outside," as well as Israelis, need to make more of an effort. A greater effort is probably required

[59] Or, its "hidden transcripts," as Feldhay Brenner calls them (94–95).

[60] In this context it is interesting to recall Freud's understanding of smut jokes as a form of sexual engagement, both with the woman in the room (who must, of course, blush with shame) and with the other men, with whom a certain bond is created through the sublimated sexual harassment (Freud III.1–2).

of Arabs who are further away, and perhaps an even greater effort still is required of other interested readers. Yet everybody is welcome. This difference is merely a difference of degree, a quantitative rather than a qualitative difference, which invites learning by tempting the reader to expand her familiarity so as to expand the pleasure she derives from the humor in the novel and to join the community of laughers.[61] This community is thus a community by choice, a kind of fragmented or diasporic community, in which familiarity with local cultures and literatures replaces the law and race as the organizing principles of collective belonging.

III. "The Amazing Similarity between Saeed and Candide"

However, what exactly is the relationship between this pessoptimistic humor, along with the community it creates, and the law? Is humor necessarily premised on the very law it contests and transgresses? One way of foregrounding the specific operation of pessoptimistic humor and its relation to the law is by comparing it to the humor of Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'optimisme,* which it explicitly cites and after which it is consciously modeled. An obvious way to start would be by asking what exactly is pessoptimism, or rather what the difference is between optimism and pessoptimism. Pangloss, the figure of the Leibnizian teacher in *Candide*, teaches the young and naïve protagonist that his world is necessarily the best of all possible worlds and therefore whatever happens must happen for the best. From that he also draws absurd causal connections, ridiculing Leibniz's theory of causation, such as our nose existing to support our glasses (Voltaire 20–21). The implication of this optimistic view for Candide is that there is no reason to intervene in the course of events and struggle to better the world. The implication for Voltaire is that all he has to do in order to criticize this worldview and produce his biting humor

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[61] While very inclusive, this community does, like any other political community, exclude some people. It excludes precisely those who refuse to take part in the humor, those for whom the logic that the joke criticizes and transgresses, like the taboo on inter-ethnic relations, is absolutely sacred.

is to follow reality and extend it by the same exact logic, to be as loyal as possible to the already-absurd events so as to expose their inherent absurdity and evil.

Pessoptimism, too, subscribes to this belief in the best of all possible worlds, even if this optimism is phrased in the negative, as a belief in lesser evil—the belief that whatever happens could always have been worse. Thus, Habiby, like Voltaire, makes use of this form of over-loyalty to expose an absurd situation. However, this optimism is combined with a more implicit pessimist belief that this is in fact the worst of all possible worlds. Saeed is always surprised when the worst does not happen.[62] He also expresses his conviction in the existence of "worlds other than ours. And better, too" (Habiby 30). Ironically, it is this pessimistic aspect that brings back the possibility of action, for while optimism assumes that if there are better worlds then "they'll find us before we them" (Habiby 30), pessimism reflects the insight that the existence of better worlds out there allows one to resist the givenness of this world and endeavor to change it. Thus this pessoptimistic humor is critical of mere criticism. Moreover, it is the most disloyal act—radically challenging the naturalization of the current world order as the best possible. The implication for Habiby's work is that using this kind of over-loyalty in order to convey an already absurd situation is no longer enough. His humor does something more. As seen in the examples above, it transgresses the very logic it ridicules by appearing to faithfully follow it.

At the beginning of Part Two of *The Pessoptimist*, in a chapter titled "The Amazing Similarity between Saeed and Candide," we find that the friends of Saeed's journalist interlocutor have criticized *The Pessoptimist* (or, at least, its first part, for the novel was originally published in parts in serial form in the newspaper *al-Ittiḥad*). Their criticism

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[62] E.g., "Take me, for example. I don't differentiate between optimism and pessimism and am quite at a loss as to which of the two characterizes me. When I awake in the morning I thank the Lord he did not take my soul during the night. If harm befalls me during the day, I thank Him that it was no worse. So which am I, a pessimist or an optimist?" (Habiby 12).

concerned the resemblance between Saeed's story and Voltaire's famous *conte.* They claim that although he prepared himself for a grand leap, Habiby has landed two hundred years behind, with *Candide*. Even his celestial friend accuses Saeed of imitation. "Don't blame me for that," Saeed responds. "Blame our way of life that hasn't changed since Voltaire's days, except that Eldorado has now come to exist on this planet" (Habiby 72). This sentence epitomizes the quotational use Habiby makes of Voltaire and the differences between their senses of humor. Habiby's humor first follows Voltaire's criticism of optimism and this world's evils, thereby voicing a similar critique and extending it to highlight the fact that, indeed, nothing has changed, despite our belief in being far more enlightened today. At the same time, Habiby turns this critique, as well as its ideal, on its head, using it against Voltaire and his enlightened values, just as he turns, in the quotation above, Voltaire's utopic Eldorado into an object of critique, for it is presented as nothing other than the State of Israel.

First, then, Saeed establishes the similarities between the two texts, demonstrating how little progress humanity has made in two hundred years. He therefore reminds us of Pangloss' "optimistic" comforting words to the women of the Abare, who have been raped and slaughtered in the hands of Bulgar soldiers, and compares those to the consoling words of Israeli officials after the killing of Israeli athletes in the Munich Olympics in September 1972. Just as Pangloss comforts Abare women by saying that their own soldiers have dealt a similar blow to the Bulgars, so too the Israeli Minister of Education and Culture, Yigʾal Alon, consoles Israeli widows for the deaths in Munich by celebrating the successful retaliatory mission of the Israeli Air Force that savagely bombed refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria, killing more women and children who were "just beginning to enjoy the sport of life" (Habiby 73). In both cases, the language of revenge betrays the "optimistic" Panglossian reversal of cause and effect, where the

punishment of others somehow retroactively justifies or redeems earlier deaths. Hence, it indeed seems like nothing has changed since the days of Voltaire: Just as Voltaire had ridiculed Pangloss' justifications of the horrors of the Seven Years' War, so too Habiby ridicules the "optimistic" justification of suffering by revenge, as though one suffering can serve as a compensation for another.

Saeed points out another similarity. He reminds us of a scene that takes place after Candide is drafted, when he naively assumes that he is allowed to make use of his natural freedom and walk about as he pleases only to realize, as he is captured by Bulgar soldiers, that his free will is not so free after all (Voltaire 24). Saeed then compares this event to the arrest of Palestinian boys who naively believed that it is within their natural rights to walk as they please from their village to the beach only to be held by Israeli soldiers and discover that the right of free movement is reserved for Jewish citizens only (Habiby 73–74). By these comparisons Habiby demonstrates how the basic human rights for which Voltaire and his contemporaries have fought—those rights that we consider an integral part of our world by now—are still persistently violated in the world of Palestinians. Indeed, it seems as though nothing has changed in over two hundred years.

Habiby, however, takes this derision of the absurd situation one step further. After establishing the similarities, Habiby turns to point out the differences between the two cases—most notably that in this analogy, the Palestinians are neither Abares nor Bulgars but rather suffer the terror of both, as in the case of the village of Barta'a, where both the Jordanians and the Israelis have been attacking the inhabitants and treating them as collaborators (75). In Voltaire's description of war, the two armies end up merging together in "*une harmonie*" of blood and bones, both just as evil and just as slaughtered (25/9). He thus portrays war as a cruel

situation in which loss and culpability are distributed evenly. Leading to the suffering and destruction of all, civilians and soldiers alike, war is presented as a senseless, irrational choice that stems from an outdated belief in the importance of revenge or from an illogical reversal of causality. The emphasis is placed on *ethics* (or lack thereof) and on affective identification with the suffering of individual victims.[63]

In Habiby's rendering, however, war is a *political* matter, where not everybody is equally culpable nor suffers the same consequences. It is indeed cruel and unnecessary but it is not simply senseless; it is decided, planned, and conducted by politicians and generals who make rational choices that are based on calculations of loss and gain. War is no longer imagined as involving two sides fighting over resources, let alone as involving equal sides. Instead, it is presented as the "war on terror," the continual subjugation of a population—a subjugation which is fundamentally uneven and involves multiple participants with fundamentally uneven weapon technologies. Those who bear most of the consequences, the Palestinians, are also those who possess the least agency in this situation and are mostly deprived of means of retaliation. Already this comparison, then, shows Habiby's effort to pull away from Voltaire's merely ethical critique and veer toward the political.

Finally, Saeed refers to one more scene in *Candide,* where, as part of the long story of her hardships, the old lady recounts how her splendid ship was captured by North African pirates who enslaved her. She tells Candide and his friends about the bodily searches that followed, during which the corsairs have "put their fingers into a place where we women normally admit nothing but a syringe-tube" in order to ascertain whether the women are concealing diamonds.

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[63] On Voltaire's emphasis on ethics, on compassion for individual suffering, and its relation to the emergence of human rights see Hagen Kjørholt 66, 84; Dobie.

She then goes on to ironically justify this strange ceremony as a practice established "from time immemorial among civilized seafaring nations" and as part of "international law" from which not even the very religious Knights of Malta deviate, for they too never fail to conduct this search when Turkish prisoners fall into their hands (Voltaire 51).

At first glance, this scene seems as another instance of Voltaire's criticism of Christian institutions, simply berating Christian knights for using such a barbarous practice—a practice that, Voltaire seems to suggest, at best befits what he perceives as primitive and inferior civilizations.[64] However, there seems to be another level of criticism here. Humorously whitewashing this incident by indicting natural law and the law of nations (the precursor of international law) for the barbaric practices they sanction, we might think that Voltaire here ridicules the very notion of the law. However, I argue that it is not the law as such that Voltaire targets so much as it is the insufficient or inadequate laws that are in effect during his time. His scorn for natural law is particularly telling. It conveys criticism of a certain prevalent notion at the time, according to which Nature herself has already devised the best laws possible; we ought therefore to follow this God-given wisdom, adhere to the tradition that transmitted them, in order to secure good, harmonious lives.[65] Responding to this view, Voltaire claims rather that the longevity of a law or a norm and their appearance as natural do not necessarily render them the

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[64] Oddly enough, Voltaire does not seem too disturbed by this incident. Unlike his sharp criticism of the brutality involved in the transatlantic slave trade (which we shall soon consider), Voltaire seems rather amused by other instances of slavery, most notably the enslavement and trafficking of women. While the transatlantic slave trade is criticized in *Candide*, this episode of women trafficking and subjection is used rather as an Orientalist trope to exoticize and sexualize the story. On this topic see Hagen Kjørholt 77–78.

[65] This criticism of natural law almost seems as a direct jab at Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who believed that natural law, the immediate and unrepresented law of nature—which, for Rousseau, amounts to nothing other than emotion, pity itself—to be the only law men should follow. Moreover, Rousseau consistently depicts primordial society as better than our own precisely because of its closer, more immediate relation to nature (for example, Rousseau 32–33). See also the discussion of Edmund Burke's perception of the Law of Nature and its superiority over man made laws in the Introduction.

best possible ones. On the contrary, international law, Voltaire seems to propose, should rather protect us from the caprices of both power-thirsty Christian knights and those of "lawless" savages. International law is therefore needed to protect and guide us; the problem is rather with the content of the current law of nations, which allows such ungodly practices.

Criticizing and ridiculing only the present articulation of the law, as opposed to its very form, Voltaire thus seems to exhibit confidence in the power of legal reform. This is most boldly evident when Candide and Cacambo arrive in Surinam and meet a mutilated African slave, who is presented in a very different light than the old lady's enslavement. This scene is quite unique in the context of the *conte*, both in its style and in its treatment of bodies. At this moment Voltaire turns deadly serious and portrays the body no longer as merely carnivalesque but rather as tormented. The horrified Candide tries to fathom how the slave ended up in this situation, lying on the road practically naked and missing both a hand and a leg. The slave then explains that African slaves in the colonies are entitled to one new undergarment twice a year and that if their fingers get caught in the mill (while feeding it with sugar canes), their hand is cut off. He adds that if slaves try to escape their leg is cut off and that in his case both scenarios have occurred. The slave addresses Candide directly and unequivocally points out European imperialism and the burgeoning global market as the culprits in his dire situation: "That's the price of your eating sugar in Europe" (Voltaire 86).

While Candide is quite rattled by the slave's suffering, even moved to tears, the text does not seem to respond to this evil in any way beyond individual empathy. More than anything, this scene seems to criticize the Code Noir—the French law that regulated the treatment of slaves in the colonies. Despite the fact that it takes place in Surinam (which is under Dutch rule at the time), the scene bears clear intertextual relations to the French Code Noir, including the duty of

slave owners to supply minimal clothing twice a year and the specification of amputating legs and hands as punishments for escape attempts and caught fingers respectively. Being invested in the transatlantic slave trade and celebrating the fruits of a global economic system in his writings, Voltaire in no way rejects slavery or colonialism as such.[66] Rather, tying this scene to the Code Noir, his critique merely targets the specific current iteration of the slavery law and exposes its cruelty.[67] Therefore, what he seems to propose is that a better, more humane legislation of slavery is possible, one that protects basic human rights without necessarily abolishing slavery altogether. Similarly, the more humorous scene of the cavity search may be read as a reformist call to abandon old laws, as natural and as primordial as they seem, and reshape international law with some concern for human rights and dignity.

Habiby's humor and its relation to the law are very different. After he reminds us of the story of *la vieille* in *Candide*, Saeed compares it to the invasive bodily searches that the "soldiers of Pangloss"—that is, the Israel Defense Forces—are conducting in turn on "their Turks," the Palestinians, in the checkpoints, the airport and the "open bridges." At first, this too appears to be a mere critique of these "barbaric" invasive practices and of the fact that they have not yet been eradicated since the days of the Knights of Malta. However, unlike the old lady, who is surprised by this habit, Palestinian women, Saeed tells us, know what to do: they wear their finest underwear when traveling so as to raise respectful jealousy in the hearts of the searching female soldiers and to ensure their good behavior (Habiby 74). Habiby therefore not only exposes the

[66] Voltaire in no way advanced a general anti-slavery position and his writings exhibit patently racist ideas. He seemed to have believed in polygenesis and natural inequalities between races and argued that slavery may be necessary for a functioning society (Hagen Kjørholt 74). Moreover, he was himself financially invested in the transatlantic slave trade, which was enabling the global economic system that he was so happily celebrating in his *Le Mondain* (Ginzburg 103).

[67] On intertextual connections to the Code Noir and their significance see Hagen Kjørholt 74–76.

ridiculous law that sanctions such demeaning searches—a law that openly advances racial profiling and segregation; he also humorously reverses the balance of powers by the supposed obedience to the rules and by these attempts to outdo the Zionists soldiers in their own game. Palestinian women thus regain agency in this story and the taboo on interracial (as well as homosexual) relations is broken yet again. In addition, what Habiby is presenting as a way to resist this legally sectioned atrocity is not a reform of the law or an appeal to international law. It is rather an everyday practice—the choice of underwear. The "nice" underwear is not merely a form of accepting a grim situation, responding to it with spiteful dignity; it also, we are told, forces the searching soldiers to "behave themselves." It thus can be read as suggesting that any future solution, rather than lying in legal reform, lies in interpersonal manners and relations. Again, over-obedience allows Habiby not only to expose the farce of the situation, ironically lamenting the political impotence of Palestinians in Israel, but also to break its very law insofar as he subverts the distribution of power, violates racial segregation by evoking the idea of interracial (lesbian) relations, and marks (humorous, sexual, practical) interpersonal relations and behaviors as the path to change.

Habiby, unlike Voltaire, ridicules the law as such. When Saeed asks his wife Baqiyya why her family never turned to the law to reclaim their stolen lands, she replies by passing on to him the message that her village received from the government: "You fought and were defeated; therefore both you and all your property have legally become ours. By what law do the defeated claim their rights from the conqueror?" (Habiby 90–91). The law, even the law of rights, is thus the law of the victors and it merely serves to perpetuate their control. The law is nothing but a manifestation of the current state of power relations and there is nothing intrinsically good or just about it. Furthermore, Saeed claims to be obeying *all laws*, even the ones that are not yet

promulgated (Habiby 121). He thus expresses the frustration of the subjugated, who can never fully satisfy the demands of the law because he can never fully understand the law, which, as a tool of those in power, constantly shifts and changes in ways that serve their interests. He further suggests that the problem is greater than the law and has to do rather with the underwriting logic, the unspoken laws, that enable the formal ones. Habiby therefore seems to claim that there is no solace in the law and no hope for a better law that will secure Palestinians' rights.

Moreover, by mentioning these not-yet-formulated laws, which may one day be needed, Saeed showcases and mocks the inability of universal laws, due to their abstract nature, to cover all possible particular cases. This is also the situation in one of the funniest scenes in the novel, which takes place immediately after the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. Upon hearing a radio broadcast that commands all defeated Palestinians to raise a white flag as a sign of surrender, the loyal Saeed hastens to hang a white sheet off of the roof of his house. Jacob, his supervisor, arrives and violently scolds him for his idiocy, explaining that "the big man with the small stature"—the big boss and a representative of Israel's security services—will perceive the flag as an act of treason. The call on the radio was intended for the recently occupied Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza. Raising a white flag in Haifa, Saeed's over-obedience is interpreted as a rebellious claim that Haifa, too, is part of the occupied Palestinian territories and should therefore be liberated (Habiby 120-22). This scene demonstrates the law's inability to ever be fully articulated because of its universal, abstract nature. This is not simply an oversight of this specific command, but rather the very nature of the law. As abstract and universal, it must materialize in concrete particular cases. Those, in turn, influence and reshape it, forcing the law to rewrite itself in order to encompass them or else turn to violence as the only other means for regulation (which is indeed the case here, as Saeed is sent to prison and brutalized in response).

However, raising the white flag was already supposed to be a form of punishment and humiliation. By overly obeying the law and willingly taking on the punishment first, Saeed once again manages to resist, as he releases the very movement that the law was trying to prevent. This time, the law's intention is to separate the Palestinians of the occupied territories from those living within '67-borders Israel and mark their defeat. By his over-obedience, Saeed undermines this very separation, joins the Palestinians of the occupied territories and boldly claims Haifa to be just as occupied as Ramallah. The law is therefore not mocked in order to be reformed, as was the case with *Candide*; it is rather the law as such that is being ridiculed—exposed as empty, insofar as it is not intrinsically good or just but merely serves those in power, and therefore is illegible, abstract, and constantly morphing.

In contrast, belief in universal laws and ideals is ubiquitous in *Candide,* where cosmopolitanism is celebrated and the world is presented as smooth and homogeneous. The characters, and especially Candide, move from one place to another rather freely[68] and encounter no problems of translation, either linguistic or cultural. They generally manage to understand everything that takes place around them. Miraculously, one of them always speaks the local language—Candide suddenly speaks Dutch when the need to communicate with the African slave arises; Cacambo speaks all the native languages they encounter in the Americas; the old lady understands the languages she encounters in North Africa; and all of them somehow experience no difficulties understanding the Dervish and the Turk with whom they converse at the end of the narrative. From the New World to the Old world and back again—this time to the periphery of Europe—everything is translatable and understandable. Pangloss' name, which literally means "all tongues," "all languages"—or, alternatively, "all glossed," "all explained"—

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[68] Even if most of them, including the more royal characters, mostly travel as commodities that are repeatedly bought and sold.

epitomizes this sense of utter translatability across languages and regions. By feeling at home everywhere, these cosmopolitan characters paradoxically affirm their ethnocentricity, projecting their ideals onto all other cultures. In their travels they imply that not only is the entire world one and the same, everywhere suffering from the same forms of corruption and evil, but also that the same moral norms and political solutions can be applied to all these disparate regions.

This logic reaches its apogee in the turning point of the story—in its middle part, when Candide finally abandons his optimist belief that this is the best of all possible worlds, while beginning to exploit others and enjoy the spoils of colonialism himself. This turning point is the discovery of Eldorado, the sublimely prosperous, perfect society of which Europeans have been dreaming for over a century. Eldorado, the utopian ideal, presents us with a counterpart to the "real" world—a counterpart that serves Voltaire to better expose this world's shortcomings and evils. In Eldorado there is no poverty, no money, no exploitation, no crime or punishment, and no ruling class (save for an effable, nearly Kantian king). It is a society blessed with great wealth, with highly developed sciences, and with shared norms and values to which everybody willingly adheres; a society that enjoys a kind of natural religion that is completely devoid of the faults of institutionalized religion (and which is similar to Voltaire's notion of Deism). This perfect community is clearly a universal ideal for Voltaire. Most telling in this regard is the Eldoradian man's response to Candide and Cacambo's bafflement at the existence of but one God in the kingdom: "Of course we [worship only one God]" says the old man. "There is only one God not two, three, or four. What odd questions you foreigners ask!" (Voltaire 79). It is therefore precisely when Candide and Cacambo leave the real world and cross into the realm of the ideal that Voltaire's enlightened universalism is patently exposed. For Voltaire, there is then only one standard for a good political society and life, just as there is only one God.

What this scene essentially betrays is Voltaire's conviction that were all political communities to be constituted in accordance with this one model, the world would have been indeed the best of all possible worlds. It is a universal ideal to which every political community should aspire, even if its complete achievement is impossible. This is related to Voltaire's meliorism—that is, his belief that the world can be made better, can be gradually reformed, by aspiring to this ideal model.[69] In this sense, Voltaire is inflicted with his own kind of optimism—one that no longer pertains to the invisible intentions of a lofty God who chooses for us the best of all possible worlds, but rather insists on human ability to work towards a universal ideal of the Good and reform the world step by step so as to approach it. Yet, as benevolent as this utopia may seem, it is still a specific Western ideal made universal. Indeed, it is a very enlightened ideal, which supposedly addresses all possible human rights, satisfies all possible human needs, and rids us of all possible evils. However, what are our basic needs? What are our basic rights? What do we consider evils? We know, at least today, that these are not the same everywhere and have seen horrendous crimes committed in the name of these human rights. We have seen people subjected and countries invaded in the name of human rights; we have witnessed the human rights (or simply the lives, freedoms, or justice) of some trampled in the name of the human rights of others. These are, I argue, precisely the concerns that Habiby sets forth in his treatment of Eldorado.

With Habiby, over two hundred years later, we discover a completely different Eldorado, one which is no longer an ideal community but rather has come to exist on the face of the earth. Moreover, this supposedly universal enlightened ideal of the best of all possible worlds has now materialized as nothing other than the State of Israel. It is hardly controversial that Israel's establishment has been precipitated by the invocation of the human rights of Jewish survivors of

[69] On Voltaire's meliorism see Bottiglia 725.

the Holocaust and the humanitarian commitment to its refugees. However, this utopian state, a socialist secular haven meant to protect the human rights of Jews everywhere, has been achieved at the price of the devastation of Palestinians and has been safeguarding the unfeasibility of a sovereign Palestinian collectivity ever since.

Therefore, whereas Voltaire's solution lies in human rights, as well as in the belief in the power of a universal law or moral norm to reform society, Habiby seems to criticize and deride the results of precisely this enlightened universalist logic. For this reason, unlike in *Candide*, translation in *The Pessoptimist* is never smooth and the idea of translatability itself is consistently mocked. We have already encountered an example of this phenomenon in the joke about the mispronunciation of the word "*maḥsiyya*." In a different scene, Saeed, who does not yet speak Hebrew, manages to come up with the Hebrew words *ma sha'a* (loosely, "what is time") in order to ask one of the passing Jewish workers for the time, only to completely misunderstand the response. The worker means to reply *Aḥat,* meaning "one" in Hebrew, yet Saeed hears *acht*, the German word for eight (Habiby 48).[70]

Even proper names of places are not transparent. When Saeed arrives from Lebanon to Haifa he is welcomed, in Hebrew, to "*medinat* Israel," meaning, to the state of Israel. However, the word *medinat* in Arabic means "the city of" rather than "the state of," therefore, upon hearing this greeting, Saeed believes that the name of his beloved city has now been changed into "the city of Israel" (Habiby 42). Similarly, other names of streets and places are translated for the reader, mentioned both in Hebrew and Arabic, as if following the assumption that Arabic names

[70] This misunderstanding is not completely Saeed's fault for it hinges on a difference in pronunciation introduced by Jews of European origins into Modern Hebrew—substituting for the correct pronunciation of the letter *Ḥet* (*ḥ*) the Ashkenazi-inflected pronunciation *kh*, thus widening the difference between the Hebrew word for "one" (*Aḥat*, now pronounced *Akhat*) and the Arabic word (*waḥad*). Through this blunder Habiby also highlights the role of European colonialism in severing communicability between these two closely related Semitic languages.

are not transparent to Hebrew speakers and vice versa. One example of this is when Saeed mentions, for instance, "Shekhem, which is no other than Arab Nablus" (Habiby 136/179).

The stakes of this practice peak when Saeed and the big man are riding together in the car on the way to the horrible Shatta prison, where Saeed is about to be incarcerated for his flag-raising mishap. On the way, Saeed names the valley they are crossing by its Arabic name—Marj Ibn ʿAmer. The annoyed big man then corrects him and insists on the Hebrew name—the Yizraʾel plain. Trying to appease him, Saeed quotes the well-known Shakespearean phrase, "What's in a name?"—a quotation for which he soon pays dearly as he is brutally beaten up in return (Habiby 123/160). In *The Pessoptimist*, then, a name really does matter and specific languages and dialects are not so readily translatable—so much so that the very attempt to create an equivalency between them may solicit a severe physical punishment.

IV. Humanitarian Militarism

But Habiby's criticism does not end with this insistence on the impossibility of total translatability. During the same car ride to the Shatta prison, his Jewish boss, the big man, explains to Saeed the behavior expected of him in prison and the following conversation ensues. Saeed says,

> "I have merely noticed according to your account of prison rules of etiquette and behavior that your prisons treat inmates with *great humanitarianism and compassion*—just as you treat us on the outside. And we behave the same too. But how do you punish Arabs who are criminals, sir?"
>
> [The big man responds:] "This is what bothers us considerably. That's why our minister general has said that our occupation has been the most compassionate known on earth ever since paradise was liberated from its occupation by Adam and Eve.

> Among our leadership there are some who believe that we treat Arabs inside prisons even better than we treat them outside, though this latter treatment is, as you know, excellent. These same leaders are convinced that we thus encourage them to continue to resist our civilizational mission in the new territories, just like those ungrateful African cannibals who eat their benefactors."
>
> "How do you mean, sir?"
>
> "Well, take for example our policy of punishing people with exile. This we award them without their going to jail. If they once entered jail they will become as firmly established there as the British occupation once was."
>
> "Yes, God bless you indeed, sir!"
>
> "And we demolish their homes when they're outside, but when they're inside prison we let them occupy themselves building."
>
> "That's really great! God bless you! But what do they build?"
>
> "New prisons and new cells in old jails; and they plant shade trees around them too."
>
> "God bless you again! But why do you demolish their homes outside the prisons?"
>
> "To exterminate the rats that build their nests in them. This way we save them from the plague."
>
> "God bless and save you! But could you explain that?"
>
> "This was the justification, *pure and humanitarian*, made by the Ministry of Health, and quoted by the minister of defense when he explained the reasons compelling us to demolish the houses in the Jiftlick villages in the lowlands" (Habiby 124–25, emphasis added).

The big man plays here the role of Pangloss, presenting this current Eldorado, the State of Israel, as the best of all possible worlds and using this logic to justify Israel's occupation as the most compassionate, most humanitarian occupation of all. This optimistic logic of the "best of all

possible worlds” is the logic that serves to justify the expulsion, oppression, incarceration and dispossession of Palestinians, in the name of approximating the Western ideal of a state. It also displays the Panglossian distortion of causality—for example, the increasing numbers of incarcerated Palestinians requiring more prisons and jails is depicted as Israel’s benevolent employment of Palestinian prisoners in building more prisons and prison cells to keep them occupied; Israel’s punishment of Palestinians by demolishing their houses is depicted as an attempt to exterminate future attacks by the “rats that build their nests there” and even, on the literal level, as an action out of mere concern for Palestinians’ health. The Israeli version of Pangloss is therefore no longer explaining evil and suffering as such, or accounting for his and his people’s own suffering, as was the case in *Candide*. Rather, the Panglossian logic is used here to justify the *suffering of others*—that is, to justify one’s own evil-doings as the lesser of all possible evils. The comment about Israel’s occupation being the most compassionate occupation since Adam and Eve’s divine occupation of Eden exposes the absurdity of this attempt to quantify humanitarianism or evil.

This claim of lesser evil is quite familiar to anyone who has been following the news from the Middle East. The claims that the Israel Defense Force is the most moral army in the world and that Israel upholds the most humanitarian and compassionate occupation of all, striving to minimize the suffering of Palestinian civilians to the bare minimum, have been voiced repeatedly—especially during the recent closure of the Gaza Strip and the series of military operations launched against it. The IDF has been singing the praises of its targeted killings, its practices of informing civilians before bombardment (by written messages, phone calls, or simply by launching smaller missiles), its humanitarian ceasefires and its sporadic compassionate willingness to allow basic aid, food supplies, and scanty electricity into the Strip. Leaving aside

the question of the effectivity of these practices in shielding civilians from harm, let us focus on the logic behind them. All these practices—just like the "humane" incarceration conditions described here by the big man, or his policy of punishing by exile instead of incarceration, by house demolition instead of killing—betray Israel's use of the language of compassion and human rights not so much to check as to ensure the potency of its attacks and military control and guard against criticism or intervention.

In his book, *The Least of All Possible Evils: Humanitarian Violence from Arendt to Gaza*, Eyal Weizman shows how human rights and international law have been recently integrated into warfare through the economization of violence and its language of balance and proportionality. Relief, aid and prevention have all been imbricated with violence through calculation, thereby replacing absolute values with numbers and ratios that are always open to interpretation. It is precisely through this language of lesser evil—the smallest amount of violence and subjection necessary to maintain security—that societies like Israel can uphold their self-image as democratic while maintaining their occupation and colonization. While Weizman ties this humanitarian-military complex to what he calls the "present neo-Panglossian pessimism of the 'least of all possible evils'" (3), and therefore to Voltaire's *Candide*, he neglects Habiby's criticism of this very same logic as applied to warfare in the very same region with which Weizman is concerned. Moreover, whereas Weizman seems to consider this a post-Cold War phenomenon, Habiby's novel suggests that humanitarian militarism (or militaristic humanitarianism) already characterized Israeli practices of control in the early days of the 1967 occupation and even as early as 1948—the very year in which human rights have become the focus of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights was issued.[71]

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[71] For a critical discussion of 1948 and its centrality for issues of human rights see a special issue of *Critical Inquiry* dedicated to these questions (Gandhi and Nelson). In particular, see Ariella Azoulay's

I therefore claim that the long quotation above demonstrates Habiby's criticism of Voltaire's belief in the power of the law to ground human rights, as well as his belief in ethical affective response. Habiby's writing clearly reveals how taking sheer brutality out of the equation and tweaking laws and policies to make them more "compassionate' according to humanitarian ideals in no way solve the problem, for an "enlightened occupation" is still an occupation.[72] Habiby therefore insists that compassion and human rights, as well as international law, are of very little help to Palestinians. The world might have changed since Voltaire's days and arrived at different ideas of universal standards of basic needs and rights; however, those are not only recognized selectively but are also used to facilitate and justify Israel's control over Palestinians. The humorous and critical presentation of house demolitions, exiling, incarceration, and even war itself, as stemming from the logic of humanitarianism reveals the latter's complicity in subjection and violence and casts doubt on the entire project of universal law and human rights as the mechanisms for the political ordering and prevention of suffering, subjugation and death.

The question of the political validity and efficacy of human rights is, of course, vast and has been much debated. Here, I will merely offer a small genealogy, in very broad strokes, of the discourse of rights and its criticisms, relying on Jacques Rancière's famous essay, "Who is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" Beginning with the Rights of Man of the eighteenth century Rancière follows Arendt's criticism and claims that "the 'man' of the Rights of Man was a mere

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discussion therein of the Palestinian case of 1948 as exposing the concrete limits of the new discourse of human rights given the refusal to recognize certain forms of violence as violating them (336).

[72] "Enlightened occupation" is the name given to the policy instituted by the Minister of Security, Moshe Dayan, after the '67 occupation and which consisted in treating Palestinians "with generosity. Dayan called on the Israelis to make "the outmost effort in the humane realm." This policy degenerated during the 1970s and finally came to an end during the 1980's. This expression was used quite commonly and is still sometimes invoked.

abstraction because the only real rights were the rights of citizens, the rights attached to a national community as such" ("Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" 298). Thus, the Arendtian (and Agambenian) paradox is that human rights are either the rights of citizens, those who already have rights, or they are the rights of humans as merely human, those who have been reduced to bare life, who are not protected by a nation state and therefore have no rights. Human rights are thus "either a void or a tautology, and, in both cases, a deceptive trick" (Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" 312). They are therefore the rights of others, of the rightless depoliticized others, who are excluded from the political negotiation of who is included in the count and how are rights to be read, used, and configured (although they can sometimes protest this exclusion). In the next stage, those rights for which the citizen has no use are being sent (like everything else we no longer need) to the less well off, but fail to protect these others precisely because they are merely human. Thus, with humanitarianism, Rancière claims, void rights are "sent back to the sender," thereby authorizing "humanitarian interventions" in the name of an absolute victim and an absolute injustice—the radically Other (Rancière, "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" 308–9).

This genealogy, I believe, parallels the differences and shifts between Candide and Saeed. If the Rights of Man in the eighteenth century, the rights of citizens, are the rights of oneself, as Ariella Azoulay argues (345), then it is clear why Voltaire's identification with suffering remains on the individual level and why he believes in the law and in cosmopolitanism. And if then the void human rights of others return to the sender and become humanitarian rights of an absolute Other that authorize "us" to act in the name of some absolute justice, what Habiby presents here is the dialectical reaction to these humanitarian rights. It is a kind of "humanitarian-war rights," the rights of my-others—the suffering others whom I refuse not only to naturalize

but also to allow to be fully other and thus to appear as victims (who might justify a humanitarian intervention or, alternatively, contest their exclusion from the political, civil realm). While in humanitarianism war is waged "for others," elsewhere, for the sake of protecting their rights (while gaining power and control over resources along the way), humanitarian war is the use of rights, their calculation and calibration, to protect war itself, to sustain control over populations and resources without allowing the victim to ever be recognized as such. It is a transition from the absolute Other and absolute victim, for the sake of whom my action temporarily liberates itself by shedding any constraints, to the never fully other and never fully victim, by whom my action frees and perpetuates itself by assuming temporary calculated constraints.

V. Conclusions: Anti-Solutionism

By way of conclusion, let us take a quick look at the rather ambiguous endings of the two novels, which parallel their senses of humor. Voltaire's *conte* ends with Candide's realization that "we must cultivate our garden" as he and his companions establish a little farming community, where they work the land in order to provide for all their wants (143–44). There has been much debate about the significance of this ending, especially concerning the question whether or not Voltaire advocates withdrawal from the world or, on the contrary, insists that we must struggle to change it. William Bottiglia, for example, surveys a vast scope of scholarship on the topic, including quite a few scholars who consider the conclusion to be one of resignation, eventually claiming that while the ending presents us with a rather isolated society it is in fact a model society, which interacts with the world through commerce and thus aspires to gradually change it (722). In this sense, Botagllia views *Candide*'s finale as exposing Voltaire's

meliorism—his belief in working towards gradual reform, a rejection of both Pangloss' optimism and Martin's pessimism in favor of a golden mean based on common sense (725).

Despite Botagllia's compelling argument, it seems to me that this small society is rather of the kind that disappears merely to better the conditions of its own members, ignoring greater evils in the world. Slavery being the price for eating sugar in Europe, it therefore seems to follow that the characters should turn their backs on society in disdain and grow their own sugar. However, growing their own sugar they do not attempt to stop slavery or colonialism; they merely become "beautiful souls" whose own hands are not soiled by this evil.[73] It is unclear how this isolated small community of like-minded philosophers (even if ones that work, not just theorize), can serve as a model society for the rest of the world in order to reform it—both because it is ethically withdrawn from this world and because, even if it were not, the material conditions of others might not allow them to follow such a model. Bottiglia argues that such communication with the world exists in the characters' selling of produce in the global market; however, this seems to me to support the very same market that is responsible for the African slave's mutilation. This disappearance from the world therefore seems to have little to no political effect on it, being entirely based on an ethics of compassion and human rights.

Similarly, Voltaire's humor is melioristic, affirming the need for the law and merely mocking its current content, which can and should be reformed. As we have seen, this humor exposes and ridiculous the specific current content of the law (permitting cavity searches, for instance) without even having the chance to transgress it, for it is premised on following this

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[73] The phrase "beautiful soul" in this specific ethical sense is taken from GWF Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Criticizing this romantic notion (which was prevalent at his time and appears in the writing of such figures as Novalis, Schiller, Goethe, and Rousseau), Hegel articulates it as pertaining to a consciousness that, in the name of pure goodness, avoids any concrete ethical action and shies away from all moral aspects of everyday life. The more completely it withdraws from action the more indulgently it basks in its secluded holiness (572–577).

“bad” law to its absurd conclusion. Believing in universal ideals, this humor thus also seems to mark clear solutions for “misguided” laws, which supposedly apply globally (such as “pirates should not conduct cavity searches on women”). It does not create a community as much as presents us with a universal model of one (the farm as well as Eldorado), which allegedly may be transported everywhere. It is a cosmopolitan humor that does not recognize differences within its audience and assumes itself to be funny everywhere.

When power becomes increasingly invisible, as with our society of discipline and control, it is indeed quite reasonable to fight it by similar means—that is, by disappearing. As long as disappearance remains concealed, however, it stays at the level of ethics. It only becomes political once it reappears and affects change in the world. This seems to be what Habiby’s ambiguous ending achieves. Habiby’s novel ends with Saeed sitting on a stake, trying to decide whether to come down or keep waiting for the creatures from outer space to save him. He turns to all other characters in the novel for help, yet they all reject him in the name of their different political ideals and the righteousness of their different political ways, forcing him to choose one of their solutions. For example, Yuaad is trying to drag him down to an “exile’s grave”; the young Saeed calls on him to join him and promises to warm Saeed up with his crimson cloak; the communist with the newspapers under his arm demands that Saeed come down to the streets and join the communists, and even tries to cut off Saeed’s stake with an axe; Baqiyya tries to convince him to join her and Walaa in their sea shell palace; and Jacob says he has his own stake to worry about (Habiby 157–59). Traditional readings of the novel have seen Saeed’s disappearance as a form of resignation that is the object of criticism here, therefore reestablishing the dichotomist logic of choice between loyalty and resistance, inaction and action. I claim, however, that it is rather the isolated fragmentation portrayed by the characters’ reactions to his

plight that is criticized by Saeed's disappearance. What Saeed leaves behind when disappearing is the story and a community that was created by his hardships, a political community made up of different races, nationalities and genders. Unlike Candide's cosmopolitans, who are supposed to serve as a global model of emulation, this community is open and diverse, bringing into continual conversation and negotiation the different possible ways of action.

Similarly, we have seen that the humor in Habiby's piece, while still dependent on the law, criticizes the law as such and does not merely suggest a corrective to it. Rather, this humor transgresses the ridiculous logic it exposes in the law (as is the case, for example, with the joke's performance of the interracial relations that the law prohibits). It further suggests, in the form of this complex differential and dissensual community, an alternative to the law as the organizing principle of our society. Beyond creating this open and inviting community, beyond breaking us out of our isolation, Habiby's humor works as the exposure of a secret, as a covert power to actively change fate. It leads to the incorporation of resistance, and transgression, within the parameters of "loyalty." This humor is what allows Habiby to "cling to his position without resigning his place"—that is, to insist that his transgressive view be included in his society and thus to change this society itself. It is a way of faithfully holding to the place as his place, while forcing this place, if it is indeed his, to extend and change to encompass his position—as resistant and as transgressive as it may be—and therefore to faithfully change the structure of this place. In this sense, his humor recalls one of Alenka Zupančič's definitions of humor as a structure in which two elements are not allowed to merge into one but at the same time cannot be fully separated (118–124).

Insisting on both optimism and pessimism—as opposed to Voltaire's rejection of both for the sake of a happy median—and criticizing the different characters' attempts at forcing Saeed to

make a decision by following one of their solutions, this humor does not present us with one clear solution to the situation it criticizes (as Voltaire's optimistic humor seemed to do). Rather, it constitutes a language of anti-solutionism. Between total loyalty and ardent resistance, it does not suggest a third way nor does it force us to choose. For many years now, there has been a heated debate around the question whether the solution for the problem of Israel-Palestine lies in one state or in two states, in one binational state for both or in two separate states—in merging or in difference. What Habiby seems to suggest, however, is that this logic of one or two states, which we were led to believe are our only options—this logic of solutionism—should be abandoned completely. He presents us instead with another logic altogether—the logic of those who are already living this hybrid situation, the *de facto* one-which-is-two state. The refusal to choose, the tension of holding onto one's position while not resigning one's place, is what makes this piece both comical and politically powerful.

Getting off the stake thus means getting out of our isolation, where we lack any possibilities for action. Getting off the stake means getting over the focus on clear solutions—loyalty or opposition, one-state or two-state—and focusing on what is currently given, on the secret of the power to change things through a complex community. After all, humor seems to be nothing other than the combination of loyalty—i.e., repetition of the given as is—with attempts at resistance and rebellion, at establishing the existence of our own singularity, humanity, and freedom. The stake is thus anti-humor. It is isolationist and paralyzing, a secret that remains hidden and leads to stagnation. The stake is the element that keeps demanding a decision, a solution, thus perpetuating the dichotomy. One moment in the novel that seems to have been overlooked is Jacob's reply to Saeed's call for help regarding the stake: "but we all sit on one!"

As Saeed refuses to believe him, for he cannot see others' stakes, Jacob states: "And we see no one else's either. Each of us is alone, on his own stake. That is our mutual stake" (Habiby 158).

CHAPTER 3

NIHILISM AND REPETITION: DAHLIA RAVIKOVITCH'S REITERATIONS AS CRITIQUE

What does she have to say?
What else does she have to say?
She's got a perverted desire for suffering.
Well, in our country we have such lovely landscapes,
vineyards perched on the mountainside,
the shadow of clouds on the plain
and light
and a fenced-in plot of land;
and three rows of olive trees too,
uprooted as punitive measure.
And three old women, their teeth rotted out.
Because of old age, of course, what else?
Violence isn't everything.
Why, of all things, on a bright clear Shabbat,
a perfectly happy Shabbat,
does the memory of that man
have to sneak up again, the one they beat to death?
Ye shall not kill that man and his son both in one day.
[…] What does she have to say?
She is just looking for ways to suffer,
to say a bad word.
She's not one of us.

—Ravikovitch, "Free Associations."

As if Friedrich Nietzsche's famous announcement of the death of God was not dramatic enough, Gilles Deleuze dramatizes it further, employing it to outline a typology of nihilisms based on the various potential meanings of this statement. The first form of nihilism he introduces, the *negative nihilism* of the death of the Judeo-Christian-Pauline God, manifests itself in the will to nothingness—an ascetic rejection of this world, whereby life takes on the value of nil and all trust is vested in higher ideals as grounding all knowledge, values, and action. To it belongs what Nietzsche terms slave morality, the blind obedience to transcendent laws and norms regardless of their content, assigning blames and punishments in order to view oneself as good. The second

form, the *reactive nihilism* of the European higher man, who killed God only to put himself in His place, constitutes a reaction to this devaluation of life by annulling higher values themselves. It may therefore be seen as characterizing a critical modern perception of the law: Unlike the Law of ancient philosophy or the Judeo-Christian Law, which were considered to be grounded in some ideal Good, our modern laws are nothing but manifestations of the current state of power struggles and the good is simply determined by the legal.[74] Thus, upon realizing that even when taking the place of God he remains a slave—living a depreciated life and following empty conventions—man has no one to blame but himself. We then end up with the *passive nihilism* of Buddhism, or of the death of Christ as Buddha—the last man's preference of nothingness of the will over a will to nothingness, his noble acceptance of the destruction of the self itself, of the end of man.[75]

However, beyond this supposedly linear progression towards absolute annihilation, and at the height of nihilism—precisely at the point where it overcomes itself—we find Nietzsche's hypothesis of *the eternal return of the same* as another type of nihilism. In the eternal return Deleuze recognizes the radical, active nihilism of the super-human consciousness, the active willing of man's own destruction—in no way an effort to put an end to one's life, but rather joyfully accepting the death of God and actively killing what is "man" in us. Turning the eternal return into the repetition of difference, Deleuze characterizes it as a selection—affirmative, active, creative—whose ultimate end is the most radical form of critique, a critique in action and not merely in representation, a critique beyond critique. It is the radical transformation of all

[74] For Deleuze's elaboration on this modern perception of the law—and on true repetition as set against the law—see Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; Deleuze, "Coldness and Cruelty," especially pp. 81–90.

[75] For Deleuze's typology of Nietzsche's nihilisms as dramatized by the death of God see Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 152–56.

known values; not a change in values but a change in the very element from which the value of values is derived (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 68–72, 171–75).

Focusing on Israeli poet Dahlia Ravikovitch's (1936-2005) poem "A Lullaby Translated from the Yiddish"[76]—written in 1989, in response to the exoneration of IDF (Israel Defense Forces) soldiers accused of beating a Palestinian civilian to death—this chapter explores the first three types of nihilism, demonstrating how Ravikovitch exposes the nihilist nature of laws and norms in Israeli society. It further examines whether certain practices of reiteration that the poet utilizes may be seen as instances of the final, active type of nihilism, and whether this should be perceived as the culmination of nihilism or as its very dissolution, a different form of political critique and action. Analyzing Ravikovitch's practices of reiteration I show how it is precisely by pushing nihilism to its extreme forms—utilizing the nil itself and the active selective repetition of the eternal return—that Ravikovitch suggests a radical form of critique against the nihilist implications of the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

There are two byproducts to this endeavor. Concretizing the fictional concept of the eternal return through reiterative literary devices—namely, allusions and quotations of a certain kind—may aid us in illuminating the idea of the eternal return itself, which is considered impossible to grasp since its active nihilism is allegedly predicated on the destruction of the very subject who thinks—or rather, experiences—it.[77] Second, the various types of nihilism surveyed above constitute not only types of interpretations and evaluations of the world, but also types of

[76] Hebrew, *Shir 'eres meturgam mi-Yidish* (Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-shirim* 334–5).

[77] This heuristic analogy between the eternal return and poetic reiterations seems quite sensible taking into account their similarities: citation, either by quoting or alluding, like the eternal return, seems to be self-annihilating and, like the eternal return, is in fact selective, emphasizing difference—fragmenting texts, we select elements to be repeated and thus affirmed, and interpreting them creatively we are able to reinvent the rules of the game, the criteria for judging.

interpretations and evaluations of the self and its agency in relation to others—ranging from a self who lacks any will and is completely dependent on a transcendental "master" to a super-consciousness that goes beyond itself so as to connect with the world, with others. I therefore argue that this active, critical nihilism is bound up with a necessarily different relation to others and as such brings about a different concept of political collectivity or action.

Indeed, the relation of Ravikovitch's poetry to Palestinian suffering is quite unique in the sphere of Hebrew poetry. Her own generation of poets, the so-called Statehood Generation (1950s-1970s),[78] tended to shun overtly political issues in favor of mundane and personal experiences, a move commonly viewed as a rebellion against the previous generation—the *Palmach* Generation. This previous generation consisted mainly of poets who participated in the establishment of the state of Israel and generally prided themselves on the nationalist character of their work.[79] While Ravikovitch's political poetry is not satisfied with this self-obsessed enclosed subject and therefore clearly differs from the poetry of her own generation, it nonetheless avoids merely returning to the methods of the *Palmach* Generation. Those nationalist poets, even when attempting to step outside of themselves in writing about the Palestinian disaster of 1948 (the *Nakba*), tended to view it through the lens of the Jewish Holocaust, enslaving the former to latter, rendering the Holocaust the cause and justification for the *Nakba* and whitewashing its crimes.[80] Between a complete disengagement from the other, left in its radical alterity and rendered fully inaccessible, and its absolute subsumption under

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[78] Among the prominent poets of the Statehood Generation are Yehuda Amichay, David Avidan, Yona Wallach, Meir Wieseltier, Natan Zach, and others.

[79] Central to this generation of poets were Natan Alterman, Avraham Shlonsky, Amir Gilboa and Haim Gouri, among others. For a discussion of the history of poetry in Israel as a generational struggle (or even an Oedipal rebellion against the father) and Ravikovitch's place within it see Gluzman 173–74.

[80] As Hannan Hever demonstrates in his introduction to the collection *Al Tagidu be-Gat* (9–55).

one's own language—which leaves nothing of the other's alterity in place, thereby missing it altogether—Ravikovitch's political poetry suggests a third, more ethical, alternative. It is through her use of poetic reiterations, as I will demonstrate bellow, that Ravikovitch articulates a certain relation to the other that is based on fiction and thus avoids both representing the other and disengaging from her, and which I here term sympathy.[81]

Like many of Ravikovitch's political poems, "A Lullaby Translated from the Yiddish" directly addresses the issue of the nihilism of the law and ethical judgment by constructing—or rather, reconstructing—a trial of sorts, presenting a certain case for us to evaluate.[82] Written in 1989 in the wake of a military trial known as the Givʿati Case, this poem not only stages a trial but also refers to a recent one. The case revolved around an incident that occurred on August 22, 1988, during the First Palestinian Intifada, at the Jabalya refugee camp in the Gaza Strip, when four Givʿati Brigade IDF soldiers brutally beat a father and his teenage son during the apprehension of the son, allegedly involved in stone-throwing. The father and son were then detained and brought to the military post, where later that night the father, Hani al-Shami, died of his wounds. The four soldiers were prosecuted for manslaughter in a Military Court, claiming in their defense to have been merely following orders.[83] When a later beating at the military post by

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[81] I use the term sympathy here, rather than other similar expressions—such as empathy, for instance—for three main reasons. First, its etymology suggests participating in the pain of others, feeling with them (from Greek *sympatheia*: *syn*- "together" and *pathos*- "feeling"), and it therefore more adequately signifies Ravikovitch's specific relation to others, which will be discussed bellow. Secondly, the concept of sympathy has a long, rich history in political thought, especially in the thought of the Eighteenth Century, when central figures such as Adam Smith, David Hume and Edmund Burke were discussing its power as an aesthetic, ethical and political emotion, capable of tying society together. Finally, the word is already in use in the pajorative term "Palestinian sympathizer," serving to denote precisely those who maintain an empathic and supportive relation to Palestinians.

[82] On the proliferation of trials in Ravikovitch's writing and their staging as a site of strife between conflicting interpretations see Szobel, especially 43–48.

[83] These orders—stipulating that during apprehension, suspects of disturbance of peace should be beaten to the point of broken limbs, regardless of whether or not they resist arrest—were indeed, as a defense witnesses pointed out, congruent with the spirit of the phrase coined by the Israeli Minister of Defense at

other, supposedly unknown, IDF soldiers came to be regarded as the *more direct* cause of al-Shami's death, the military judges acquitted the defendants of manslaughter, finding them guilty of brutality alone and never prosecuting the soldiers involved in the later beating.[84] Evidently, the nature of the law here is such that it is only interested in the question "is this the case?"—that is, whether or not this case falls under the category of the offense, here translated into the question "is it or is it not a case of manslaughter?" The work of judgment here is merely concerned with subsuming this particular case under a universal category and hence shows no interest in the questions of who actually committed the offense, why and how, just as it shows no interest in the question of its actual ethics. In Nietzsche and Deleuze's terms, it is the negative nihilism of delegating all moral criteria to the law, exempting oneself of genuine evaluation. However, Ravikovitch's poem—asking rather "which is the case," "of what type it is"[85]—

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the time, Yitzhak Rabin, famously calling upon the IDF "to break their arms and legs." See in the ruling itself (Kassim 196) as well as Grossman 10; Gordon 157.

[84] Everyone involved in this case—defendants, investigators, and witnesses who allegedly saw the beating at the post—claimed no knowledge (or recollection) of the identity of any of those who took part in this fatal beating (Kassim 190–91).

[85] Against what he calls "the judgment of God"—i.e., Kantian determinative judgment or transcendental judgment—which is merely interested in the Socratic question "what is x?," or "is this x?," and is therefore only concerned with subsuming particular objects and cases under universal categories and rules—Deleuze sets up a notion of Nietzschean immanent evaluation based rather on the question "which is the case?", "of which type it is?" [Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* A132/B172 (p. 206); Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 20, 76–79]. It may be tempting to perceive the alternative form of evaluation that I am about to present here in terms of the Kantian reflective judgment, especially in its aesthetic forms, for reflective judgment is indeed concerned with the particular and employs the imagination in order to generate a universal rule (or a principle, a category, or a concept) in order to account for it [Kant, *Critique of Judgment* 180–181 (pp. 18–20)]. However, by way of anticipation of my argument in section II, I would like to stress that the idea of a generalizable type as a mode of evaluation has nothing to do with creating a universal; its generalization is always local and limited and in no way assumes universality. While the evaluation of a type may in fact rely on similarities and differences in relation to precedents, for example (and as such is related to the legal tradition of the common law, as opposed to the codified civil law), it is closer to a search of a certain concrete episteme of a particular era in a particular place—or, in Deleuze's words, "a type is a reality which is simultaneously biological, psychical, historical, social and political" (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 115).

contests this nihilistic dimension of the law through its reiterations and offers a different perspective for interpreting and evaluating the case, one founded on sympathy.

Interestingly, this poem is the only one in Ravikovitch's *Complete Poems* (*Kol ha-shirim*) that is itself repeated, being published in two versions—an earlier one, bearing the full title "A Lullaby Translated from the Yiddish," and a later one, simply titled "A Lullaby" (*Shir ʿeres*), as though no longer in need to be as obvious about its "origin" or about the very fact of being a reiteration. This self-attested repetition is, however, the very reason I chose to focus here on the earlier version. Additionally, and unlike the later version, this version incorporates quotations of testimonies from the judicial decision in this case, quotations which constitute the first form of poetic reiteration discussed here.

The second form of poetic reiteration employed by Ravikovitch, a certain kind of allusion, is implied by the title, which proclaims the poem itself to be a repetition—not an exact rendering but rather a slightly altered one, a translation. What is supposedly translated here is a Yiddish lullaby. It is not, however, any particular lullaby, but rather an archetype of this Eastern European Jewish genre, which was traditionally combined with the genre of lamentation songs and used to grieve and protest persecution and devastation (Kronfeld 527–28). The translation process here refers primarily to the importation of the form of the Yiddish lullaby into the Israeli-Palestinian reality, so as to lament and oppose the persecution of Palestinians by IDF soldiers. In order to do so, however, Ravikovitch must evacuate the Yiddish lullaby of its Jewish protagonists, at least partially, actively introducing some nil into it, in order to allow others to temporarily and simultaneously take a place in it.[86] This is achieved already through the

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[86] This gesture, which becomes even more explicit in the final stanza, suggests a transgression of a tacit command that is increasingly upheld in Israel—never to compare any calamity to the Holocaust or to any other anti-Semitic persecutions (which are the main concern in Yiddish lamentation lullabies). On this command see Ophir 12–21. Most recently, a bill was introduced in the Israeli parliament, legally banning

ambiguity concerning the target language of this translation. On the surface, the poem seems to "translate" the language and cultural heritage of Yiddish into those of Modern Hebrew, the language in which it is in fact written, and as such is seen as a lullaby addressed to a young Israeli boy. However, the poem may also be understood as a "translation" from Yiddish culture to the Arabic experience of a Gaza refugee camp, even if it was never written in either of these languages. This ambiguity, attained by hollowing out Ravikovitch's own heritage as she repeats it, is central to the political effect of the poem, for it manifests the active nihilism Deleuze finds in Nietzsche, which may serve to combat the nihilism of the law.

I. "After all, he had his orders"[87]: Ravikovitch's Critique of the Law

The poem consists of three lullaby stanzas, separated by two blocks of quotations from the judges' decision in this case. Since Ravikovitch's critique of the law and its nihilism is largely found in the middle part of the poem, I will introduce the first stanza briefly and circle back to it later.

> Mama and Grandma shall sing,
> shining-white mothers of yours.
> The wing of Mama's shawl
> is touching the covers almost.
> Mama and Grandma shall sing
> an ancient and mournful tune; [88]

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the use of Holocaust symbols and vocabulary when not in reference to the Holocaust itself, thus limiting any such comparisons and identifications.

[87] "After all, he had his orders" is a line from Ravikovitch's visceral poem, "You can't Kill a Baby Twice," about the massacres in Sabra and Shitla refugee camps in Lebanon (For the full poem see, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 193–94).

[88] The translation is mine. It is, however, in dialogue with Bloch and Kronfeld's translation of the later version of the poem, titled "Lullaby," which appeared in the most recent English collection of Ravikovitch's poems (Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 219–220).

These first few lines already contain Ravikovitch's poetic justice in a nutshell. They fashion the classic setting of a lullaby—the physical intimacy of mothers tending over the bed of a sleeping, or about to be sleeping, child—and situate Ravikovitch's trial within it, as a song, a poetic search for justice, addressed to a half-anesthetized, largely disinterested puerile audience. As we shall see, these verses, like the title, produce an ambiguity as to the mothers' identity by hollowing out the form of the Yiddish lullaby, opening their figures up to be occupied by Palestinians as well, thereby involving the readers in an active interpretation. Finally, they intimate a certain repetition by referencing a generational cycle and indicate that any judgment is suspended, is only to-come, by staging the entire scene in the future tense, as though this song, the alternative trial, is not the one we are reading but is rather yet to be sung.

Additionally, these opening lines position the reader as the addressee of the poem—the child who is being put to sleep. In line with the ambiguity discussed above, the readers are put either in the position of a young Israeli child, about to hear the story of the Givʿati Case and hopefully grow up to be critical of the situation it discloses, or in the place of a Palestinian child, perhaps the very Palestinian child who was the victim of the Givʿati soldiers.[89] Thus, we are made to take the place of both an Israeli and a Palestinian child, both a victim and a future judge of this case, and therefore evaluate this case by imaginatively experiencing the situation of the victim rather than merely assessing it as a removed object.

Captured thus by the singing mothers, put in the place of the passive listening child, the reader is now presented with a certain scene from the case, which is about to be repeated three times throughout the poem:

in the dark cordon in Jabalya

[89] In her reading of the later version of the poem, Ulmert suggests another possibility—that the lullaby is addressed to a different son of al-Shami, a brother of the one involved in this affair (438).

> set down, clasped in each other,
> a broken father, spitting langue-blood,
> and his fifteen-year-old son.

This scene, of the shattered father and son being held by each other,[90] portrays a specific moment in the chain of events, after they had already been beaten at their home, detained, and brought to the post, where they experienced further violence. The posture depicted recalls the iconography of a *Pietà*, the scene of the lamenting Virgin Mary cradling the dead body of Christ,[91] and mirrors the singing mothers in their intimate scene over the child's bed. I will return to this posture and the associations it raises shortly.

Ravikovitch then interrupts the form of the lullaby in order to introduce the first quotation from the judicial decision—an excerpt of a witness testimony—which repeats the very scene that was just portrayed by the poet, yet in a language aspiring to the objectivity of legal discourse:

> The first witness who referred to the assault on the deceased at the post was Second-Lieutenant Zaken, Shimon… At the beginning of his testimony the witness notes that he remembers the incident… The deceased was wearing a white *galabiyya* stained with blood… The witness noted that at the time the deceased and his son were leaning against the wall, shoulder to shoulder… Second-Lieutenant Zaken notes that at that time he threatened the deceased and told him to shut his mouth.

Notice Ravikovitch's omissions, her emptying out of the legal text as her efforts are primarily focused on extrapolating this specific scene of *Pietà*. The first ellipsis indicates the omission of

[90] This reciprocity is further emphasized in the Hebrew original (*aḥuzim ze ba-ze*).

[91] In the later version of the poem, this image of the mournful mother is further echoed in mentioning "Rachel weeping over her sons," as a kind of "Jewish" version of the Mournful Virgin (for the poem see (Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-shirim* 241; Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 219).

some concrete details about the witness, such as his identification number and position, while the second marks the omission of the context of the incident, "during which the deceased and his son arrived at the post and were leaning on the western wall of the [soldiers'] rooms" (Kassim 198). The third ellipsis stands for the omission of the witness' reported account of his attempt to converse with al-Shami: "He tried to speak with the deceased, asked his name and address, but only heard him groaning 'I want to die'."[92] Just as Ravikovitch dismisses the supposedly concrete details of the witness' identity and of the context of the event, so too she rejects Second-Lieutenant Zaken's account, reported by the judges, of al-Shami's words on this occasion, despite their dramatic effect. Repeating al-Shami's refusal to give his formal details to Zakan, Ravikovitch refuses to put words in his mouth that are three times removed from their source. She does not allege to know what al-Shami said or felt under the circumstances; she merely focuses on the bodily aspects of the scene, now "corroborated" by the quotation from the decision—the father and son leaning toward each other in a kind of mutual *Pietà* while blood is oozing out of the father's mouth.

Why does Ravikovitch omit these concrete details, emptying out and fragmenting the quotation from the testimony? Why does she repeat the same scene instead of adding new ones? Why does she focus most of her efforts on these bodies, their posture and their suffering? It is only in the next stanza, which reintroduces the form of the lullaby, that we learn against what Ravikovitch is struggling and by what means.

> Moving in his sleep, the child,
> shaking his innocent head.
> Four angels from the throne of glory
> flapping their wings above him.

[92] For the full testimony see Kassim 198.

Suddenly trembling seized him
and his mouth dried up like straw.
It is only a nightmare you witnessed,
a dream and not reality.
Back to sleep, my dear, apple of my eye,
nothing has happened yet.

The child is suddenly awakened by a horrific dream, which is described as the most astonishing religious revelation. Echoing a long tradition of lamentation, the stanza mentions the throne of glory from the Book of Jeremiah (Jer. 17:12 NIV) and the four angels of the throne, alluding to a mystical revelation in the Book of Ezekiel, when the workings of heaven are revealed to the prophet in the form of a throne engulfed by four heavenly hybrid creatures (Ezek. 1:26). This description therefore refers us to the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel, both of whom forebode the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple due to the Israelites' sins.[93] With this allusion in mind, the child's revelation seems like one of reproach, foretelling the punishment and destruction of those who had transgressed God's laws by their murderous act, a punishment that is still to come, for, as the wording of the poem has it, "nothing has happened *yet*."

With these allusions in mind, this revelation seems to follow the logic of negative nihilism, the resignation to transcendent laws and ethical codes while neglecting life in this world, the implications of violence on living bodies, and the duty to perform ethical interpretations and evaluations of one's own. However, since these references appear in the poem immediately after the presentation of the brutalized father and son, they may also be

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[93] Moreover, since this revelation leads the child to be seized by trembling (Hebrew, "*ra'ada aḥaza bo*") it also alludes to a verse in the Book of Isaiah, which depicts the fear and trembling that seize sinners upon God's destructive journey to exalt His glory: "The sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling grips [seizes, *aḥaza*] the godless: 'Who of us can dwell with the consuming fire?'" (Isa. 33:14). The answer to this question is clarified in the next verse: only the righteous will survive.

perceived as ironically characterizing the cruel, senseless orders that the Givʿati soldiers allegedly received—to break the limbs of disturbers of peace whether or not they resist arrest—as following the tautological logic of negative nihilism: That is, as acceptable, even good, simply because they came from above. Within this logic, the soldiers' obedience was "good" (regardless of the brutality inflicted) on the condition that this was indeed the order given, for the order itself must have been good. Hence, the judges' obsessive attempts throughout most of the trial to determine whether those were in fact the orders—so as to determine the culpability of the soldiers—become a grotesque embodiment of this nightmarish tautological logic.

However, the nightmare can also be understood as the terror produced precisely by the fact that nothing has happened yet, that no punishment had come upon the transgressors—for the brutal soldiers were acquitted of manslaughter and the murderers were never prosecuted. As such, the terror pertains to both Israeli and Palestinian children, now taught by their mothers that any hope of punishment for the attackers is merely "a dream and not a reality." These allusions thus question the authority of the law in its purest form—the Godly law, the transcendent, universal law that is one with the infinite Wisdom and Goodness of the Absolute Himself—for it does not correlate to its consequences. At the very least, these allusions establish that any such system of Godly judgment, in which there is perfect correlation between the moral good, the law, and its consequences, belongs in dreams and is no longer part of this world.. This perspective embodies the turn toward reactive nihilism—annihilating all higher values just to be left with the horror of no values in this world—which then culminates in the passive nihilism of sleep.

This nihilistic perception of the law is further implied by another allusion suggested by the trembling that seizes the child as he dreams—that of Eliphaz the Temanite's dream in the Book of Job.

> Amid disquieting dreams in the night, when deep sleep falls on people, *fear and trembling seized* me and made all my bones shake. A spirit glided past my face, and the hair on my body stood on end. It stopped, but I could not tell what it was. A form stood before my eyes, and I heard a hushed voice: "Can a mortal be more righteous than God?" (Job 4:12-17).

This revelatory dream—recounted by one of Job's comforting friends—attempts to uphold the validity of God's universally Good law against Job's doubt in its logic. However, nowhere in the Bible is the divine law less knowable and less congruent with the Good than in the Book of Job: Job never knows, and could never know, the content of God's law, and is therefore unable to decipher the legal logic behind his severe punishment. Furthermore, he utterly rejects the negatively nihilistic logic offered to him by his consoling friends, according to which the law is inevitably just, transparent, and universal, and hence any punishment, including Job's, is necessarily indicative of sin. Despite his friends' every effort to impose complete subjugation to God's law upon him, Job—struggling to read the logic of the law in his wounds, in the sentence inscribed on his body[94]—is perhaps the first man to radically doubt the strict correlation between the law and its consequences. Believing that his personal, very physical and material suffering is indicative of the arbitrariness of God's laws, he extrapolates from this private experience to make a larger claim about justice in the world: God's justice is not an "objective" justice but merely a "justice" that the stronger imposes upon the weaker (Job 9,10). Given that in the Book of Job, Eliphaz and the other comforting friends are eventually exposed as flatterers, while Job is

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[94] See Michel de Certeau's and Deleuze and Guattari's conceptions of the unintelligible law that inscribes itself on bodies and is therefore readable only in the wounds (as in Kafka's "Penal Colony" and *The Trial*), as well as Jonathan Lamb's association of their conception with the Book of Job (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*; de Certeau; Lamb) "Every power, including the power of law," Lamb quotes de Certeau, "is written first of all on the backs of its subjects… Books are only metaphors of the body. But in times of crisis, paper is no longer enough for the law, and it writes itself again on the bodies themselves" (de Certeau 140).

crowned as the one who speaks truth of God (Job 42:7), the story of Job epitomizes the moment of the turn from negative nihilism to the empty law of reactive nihilism, intimating that not even God can serve as a clear and knowable ideal that can anchor laws and values. Since the child's revelation, aligned with Eliphaz's dream of a universal law, is dismissed as merely a dream, this allusion too points at the reactively nihilistic nature of the law—as a legal rule and as a moral code—and presents it as empty, simply as a power that the stronger inflicts upon the weaker.

This turn from negative to reactive nihilism—a very subtle turn, for, as Deleuze points out, the two are rather interdependent and consist of the same type of depreciated life (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 25–29)—was itself played out during this specific trial, when, in a highly unorthodox step, the brutality itself and the legitimacy of the orders came to be examined. Once the causal link between the beating at the house and al-Shami's death had been loosened, the military judges could not but acquit the defendants of manslaughter, in line with the "yes or no" logic of legal judgment. Yet, in this case, whose "uniqueness" is emphasized over and over again throughout their decision,[20] the judges exceptionally found the defendants guilty of brutality, ruling that they should have refused the order to beat non-resisting suspects, for the order was itself "manifestly illegal" (Kassim 236).

A "blatantly illegal order" is a specific legal category within the Israeli military codex referring to an order that is so patently illegal and immoral that soldiers ought to disobey it (as opposed to a merely illegal order, which soldiers are in fact required to obey).[95] By taking an apparently legislative, sovereign stance, putting themselves in some external meta-position and rendering this specific order exceptionally illegal, the judges did not reestablish some higher

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[95] This legal term was first introduced by Judge Binyamin Levi in his decision in the affair of the Kufr Qassem slaughter in 1957 (Parush). As Leora Bilsky showed, Levi was a central figure in the Holocaust trials of the 1950s-1960s and an advocate of harsh punishments to Jewish collaborators with the Nazis (Bilsky).

principle of moral good beyond the law or the order. Rather, by this exception, they fundamentally legalized and sanctioned all other immoral and illegal orders—including the ones that were given in the military post and might have led, according to the ruling itself, to al-Shami's death. The law's self-correction in the form of the "manifestly illegal order" does not solve the problem of its nihilism, but rather leads to that nihilism of a second order—reactive nihilism.[96]

II. "The Poetics of Moderate Physical Pressure"[97]: Ravikovitch's Quotations

The way Ravikovitch relates to this case, however, is in every way opposed to this logic of the judgment by law. In her poetic reworking of this legal affair, she does not ask herself whether or not this is the case, whether or not the four Givʿati soldiers directly caused al-Shami's death, whether or not those were the orders, or whether or not they were legal. This dichotomous logic is of little help to her. Furthermore, Ravikovitch is not interested in what actions exactly took place and in what words were allegedly uttered. Rather, she is concerned with the questions "which is the case?" "of what type is it?" and with the very bodies of the victims themselves, presenting them to us as almost-physical evidence. This is one form of Ravikovitch's political reiteration, the form of a quotation, with which this section is concerned.

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[96] Interestingly, a similar exceptionalist logic underlies God's answer to Job when He finally gives in and responds to Job's call to defend the unknowable law that might correlate to the unfathomable pain the obedient Job is suffering. God does nothing but cite his own creation at Job, instancing other exceptional beings and phenomena that do not, and could not, obey or represent any law (Job 38, 40). As mentioned in the Introduction, according to Lamb, while the narratives of Job's adversarial friends tautologize pain, God's theophany, his citation of his exceptional creations, tautologizes everything, for "Everything is because it is; the unique is instanced as unique, put in parallel with itself as an unparalleled phenomenon" (Lamb 35).

[97] This is the title of one of Ravikovitch's most famous poems, where she parodies and challenges the IDF practice of interrogating Palestinians under what they term "moderate physical pressure" .(For the full poem see, Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 261–62).

Quotations, as a collection of examples, are the exact opposite of the horizontal, universal, and abstract law that is grounded only in itself. They are always particular, concrete cases, which, by the very act of repetition, are imbedded in a vertical tradition, thereby calling for an evaluation according to their similarities and differences in relation to their precedents and according to the criteria they themselves suggest. This evaluation is never a sentencing; its verdict is forever differed, for the body of text is still addressed to anyone who positions herself as its reader. As particular examples, quotations do not attempt to represent anything; they certainly do not seek to abstract any universal logic pertaining to each and every case. Rather, they merely present, physically importing a body of text and positing it before us.

Let us examine these notions in Ravikovitch's second quotation from the Judgment:

> Another witness, Corporal Teperberg, Haim… noticed the deceased, who was walking bending forward and was set down next to the wall. He was leaning against the wall and putting his head on his son's shoulder. At that time, blood was oozing from his mouth.

Why does Ravikovitch repeat the same exact scene for the third time, again emptying out the testimony of any concrete or new details? She omits all these details that may have been relevant to the questions posed by the judges because she is concerned with something else entirely—namely, the body and its suffering posture. This selective quotation, eliminating everything but the body, is a desperate attempt to relate to an other as he is, without any representation that would impose her own language on him—without putting words in his mouth, thoughts in his head, or feelings in his gestures. As a literary excursion, having no real access to the bodies of these others, this attempt is of course destined to fail; however, this does not prevent Ravikovitch from asymptotically aspiring to articulate nothing more than these bodies, thereby testifying to

the preposterousness of the legal system's pretense to know these others and this event inside and out and give a conclusive verdict on the matter.

Ravikovitch's practice of quotation emphasizes the inanity of this pretense further: first, because it showcases the discrepancies between the different witnesses' accounts (and between those and her own), thus demonstrating the impossibility of knowing anything beyond the mere fact of the suffering body; secondly, because her practice of quotation itself repeats the same gesture as the attempt to present the body in itself, without representation: Instead of reporting the event of the trial, instead of criticizing its proceedings and this aspiration for objective knowledge—for critique is still within the realm of representation—Ravikovitch merely brings parts of it into her text. It is a nearly physical importation of fragments of the Judgment into her poem in an attempt to avoid any representation whatsoever. This attempt, again, remains merely asymptotic, for any selection must in fact involve *some* interpretation. However, since the selection of the parts of text is primarily focused on descriptions of suffering bodies, both form and content here unite in accentuating a certain surplus of the body, particularly the suffering body, over the logic of the law.

In a paraphrase of Benjamin's portrayal of Karl Kraus' satirical quotation as a *corpus delicti*, as the body of crime that serves as Kraus' ultimate weapon and proof (Benjamin, "Karl Kraus" 443), I describe Ravikovitch's practice of quotation as a *habeas corpus*—a bringing forth of a body of text, which is discussed, considered, and evaluated in relation to its precedents and according to the criteria it itself suggests. Ravikovitch's selections therefore force us to look at this specific case, at this specific body brought before us, leaving behind the legal yes/no questions and their universalist disjunctive logic. We are no longer required to judge whether or not this is the case the law stipulates, but rather, asking "which is the case," "of which type it is,"

we must actively invent a rule, a logic, that may account for this case, that may allow us to evaluate it.

But what is the type that Ravikovitch finds in this case as a rule for interpreting and evaluating it? It is none other than the type of the *Pietà*, which she discerns in the posture of the bodies themselves. Emphasizing this type—by repeating the same bodily scene three times and mirroring it in constructing the entire poem as a lullaby—Ravikovitch suggests that we evaluate the case according to its posture and the traditional iconographies it recalls. This *Pietà* scene may be seen not only as forging a link between the beaten son in Jabalya and the dozing-off child in the poem (and between the dying father and the child who is falling asleep)—thus further strengthening the ambivalent positioning of the reader—but also as bringing into consideration the often-neglected perspective of women and mothers. Many scholars have claimed that Ravikovitch makes ample use of her perspective as a woman to undermine the national narrative and transgress national boundaries by sympathizing with other "private" women.[98] However, Ravikovitch goes here beyond any personal identification—as a woman, as a mother, or as an orphan who lost her father as a child. By the redoubling of the mothers in the father and son, Ravikovitch imports this scene of pity, of pain for the suffering of others, along with the lullaby scene, into her reconstituted court, thus taking the case out of the male environment of the

[98] The imagining of the suffering of other women and mothers through her own experience as a woman and a mother seems to characterize much of Ravikovitch's poetry, especially in her book *Mother with a Child* (Hebrew, Ima ʿim yeled). In her poem "A Mother Walk Around" (Hebrew, *Ima mithalekhet*), for example, Ravikovitch is striving to imagine the suffering that a pregnant Palestinian woman whose fetus was killed by the IDF might experience in giving birth to a dead child and living the rest of her life in his absence. Throughout her poetic attempt to understand, Ravikovitch maintains the future tense and the counterfactual form—that is, narrating the events that will not happen, but could have happened, had this child been born. For the poem see (Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-shirim* 234; Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 214–15) For discussions of the role of motherhood and femininity in Ravikovitch's poetry, see Szobel, *A Poetics of Trauma*; Kronfeld, "Shira poliṭit ke-omanut lashon"; Hamutal Tzamir, "ha-Tsofa le-vet Yiśra'el mibi-fenim: Daliyah Raviḳovitch, ha-shira ha-le'umit-Yiśra'elit, ṿe ha-migdar shel ha-yetsugiyut," in *Kitme or*, 416–43; Ulmert, "'Ani lo kan'."

military post or the courtroom, placing it in relation to other historical sufferings, and introducing a new logic for its evaluation: the logic of a sympathetic relation, of pity, that is inherent in the lullaby itself—for ultimately, a lullaby is nothing other than a parent fictionally attempting to relate, from within their own monologue, to an other that is physically present yet verbally inaccessible. In other words, unlike other scholars, I do not believe that Ravikovitch simply uses her "femininity" or "motherhood" in order to relate to other women or mothers, thus accepting given gender divides. Rather, while recognizing that she indeed has nothing ay her disposal other than these constructions, she pokes holes in them and imaginatively uses them to relate to those who are not necessarily women or mothers. She uses the position in which she is already imbedded and repeats it differently precisely in order to relate to those who do not immediately belong to the same category, thereby challenging the category itself. As we will see in the next section, Ravikovitch makes similar use of the category of her Jewishness.

This process—inventing new rules according to the case itself, while insisting on its difference—is, according to Deleuze, characteristic of the active selection of the eternal return. Yes, there are many cases like this one, and they repeat time and again. But instead of judging them according to a pre-given law, we may choose to be active and evaluate each of them creatively according to the criteria it suggests—in this case, following the logic of the *Pietà* and the lullaby. Deleuze uses Nietzsche's metaphor of the dice-throw to clarify this aspect of the eternal return. We may cast the dice over and over again, waiting for the winning combination according to the rules of the game, the one that will allow us to roll again. *Or* we can reinvent the rules of the game each time the dice fall back on the table, affirming the result by creatively extrapolating a rule out of it in order to "win" and bring back the dice throw (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 25–29). The bad player counts on the return of the combination by the repetition

of throws; the good player obtains the repetition of the dice-throw in the fatally rolled number. This is Deleuze's definition of the repetition of difference: Unlike the repetition of the same, the repetition interpreted and evaluated according to a preexisting rule, it is a repetition that creatively selects, reads the difference in each return, and invents rules to account for and evaluate it.

Moreover, according to Deleuze, the repetition of difference, the eternal return, also eliminates from returning all reactive forces negating negation itself, its *ressentiment* and will to nothingness, thus bringing about a transmutation of values (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 68–71). For Ravikovitch, this means that her repetition of the "same" scene eliminates everything that has to do with preexisting laws and their logic—the concrete details of the witnesses, the militaristic context, the descriptions of the orders and the beatings, all presented in the ruling in order to answer the question "is this the case?" Rather than judging the case by these preconceived universal rules she invents a new, temporary one, immanently evaluating the case according to what she creatively selects in its returning, according to the type she both recognizes and constructs. It is thus that quotation can approximate the active, selective and creative selection of the eternal return.

III. "I am Not Here": Ravikovitch's Allusions

Let us now return to the first stanza and to that second form of nihilistic reiteration that Ravikovitch implements—the ambiguity produced by her practice of allusions, by introducing a certain absence into the reiteration of her own tradition. While the shawl (Hebrew, *miṭpaḥat*), for example, worn by the singing mother in the opening stanza seems at first as a specifically Jewish attribute, the word *miṭpaḥat* in no way signifies Jewish head covers alone and may in fact refer to any kind of head covers, including Muslim ones (or even to other forms of fabrics worn or held

by the mother). Similarly, while the characterization of the mothers as “shining white mothers,” as pure and holy mothers, is a convention of the Yiddish lullaby (Kronfeld 522), the redoubling of the mother in the figure of the grandmother does not belong to these conventions and therefore opens them up to other connotations: Since in the following four verses we learn of the violent incident at Jabalya, one of the ways to make sense of this redoubling is to understand the two mothers as singing each to her own son—that is, the Palestinian child from Jabalya, the mother’s son, and his (dead) father, the grandmother’s son. Thus, the “holy mothers” convention of the Yiddish lullaby, just like the *miṭpaḥat*, is opened up to being potentially occupied by Palestinians as well.

This enlisting of “Jewish” symbols and conventions and their opening up to be occupied, at least partially and potentially, by others, culminate in the sixth line, when we learn that the song to be sung, presenting the Givʿati case, is “an ancient and mournful tune” (Hebrew, *zemer ʿatik ṿe-nuge*). This phrase is not merely an ironic comment about the affair, portraying it as the regretful repeated behavior of IDF soldiers; it also merges together, and thus hollows out, two canonical Hebrew poems, “Mournful Song” (*Zemer nuge*), written by Raḥel Bluwstein in the 1920s, and “Ancient Tune” (*Nigun ʿatik*), written by Natan Alterman in the 1950s. While these poems, which were set to music and are therefore widely known in Israel, seem so particularly Israeli, their contents, as unrequited love songs, aspire to the universality of human experience. However, this attempt at universality—composing melancholy love songs whose story is as ancient as time, only purely in Hebrew—is itself part and parcel of the national enterprise, for it positions Hebrew poetry as one national corpus amongst all others and situates Israel itself—whose canon, too, now consists of ancient mournful tunes and is thus itself as ancient as time—

as one nation amongst all others.[99] Ravikovitch's placing of these poems in the mouths of the two lamenting mothers not only hollows out the canon of Hebrew poetry to make room in it for the mournful and long-familiar tune of soldiers' brutality toward Palestinians, but also redeems these poems of their universalist aspirations, tying them back up to their locality, and precisely thereby exposing their nationalist ambition and transgressing their national boundaries. After all, the "ancient and mournful tune" that the mothers are about to sing is the very story of the violent murder in Jabalya.

This tactic of repeating her own tradition while hollowing it out, just like her critique of the political situation and its discourse, is recurrent in Ravikovitch's poetry. Of special importance here is her known poem "Hovering at a Low Altitude" (1982). Ravikovitch opens this poem, which then proceeds to depict the rape and murder of a young Palestinian girl, by declaring, "I am not here" (*Ani lo kan*). While it appears at first as an absolute negation of the self or as a form of nihilist escapism, this nonsensical formula—"I am not here"—encapsulates in fact the logic of Ravikovitch's un-occupying or self-evacuating practice of reiteration as a struggle against ethical and legal nihilism. It is at once an ironic rendering of an escapist spirit and an emblem of the practice of sharing our "here" with other bodies and voices by removing some of the self.[100] The "I" that suspends itself from "here" makes room for others to appear; however, since by indexing a "here" with its finger the "I" cannot be fully absent, Ravikovitch's formula marks this active partial removal of the self as a political act and suggests that she relates to others and their suffering precisely through the "here" of her "I." In "A Lullaby

[99] Tzamir makes similar claims in relation to the Statehood Generation in Hebrew poetry (Tzamir, *be-Shem ha-nof*).

[100] On the status of the self in "Hovering at a Low Altitude" (Hebrew, *Reḥifa be-gova namukh*), compare: Ulmert; Kronfeld.

Translated from Yiddish"—like in many other political poems in Ravikovitch's *Mother with a Child* and *True Love*[101]—the "I am Not Here" formula is consistently utilized, as Jewish identity, tradition, and experience do not merely serve as an alternative to those of Zionism, but also as an arsenal of cultural and historical experiences, as that "here" that helps her get closer to, and sympathize with, others. Ravikovitch seems to understand the suffering of Palestinians not by separating herself from the Jewish collective and its history (including the occupation of Palestine itself), but rather by making this history all the more present: she recruits her heritage to the fullest degree in order to allow her "I" not to be "here," in order to create some empty space for the other to appear.

This poetic practice of hollowing out the self is congruent with the affirmative forgetting that Deleuze discovers in Nietzsche. According to Nietzsche, memory is the "festering wound" ("Ecce Homo" 6) of the base man—it is the *ressentiment* and the spirit of revenge of the nihilist who ceaselessly blames and accuses, who knows all too well "how to not forget" ("On the Genealogy of Morals" 1, 10), and never acts on her painful emotions. The noble, active and creative, on the other hand, know how to actively forget (Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy* 116). It is only in active forgetting that one can truly love one's enemy ("On the Genealogy of Morals" 1, 10). Overcoming a nihilistic attitude requires this active selection, deciding which burdens we can let go of, what memories we can eliminate from future returns. Klossowski, even more so than Deleuze, makes this forgetting "[coincide] with the revelation of the [Eternal] Return," since in it "I learn that I was other than I am now for having forgotten this truth, and

[101] This is most readily apparent in a section in *True Love* (*Ahava amitit*) titled "Issues in Contemporary Judaism" (*Sugiyot be-Yahadut bat-zemanenu*), which, as its name clearly suggests, contemporizes issues traditionally regarded as Jewish, rendering them relevant to recent political events in Israel-Palestine, often by opening them up to being occupied by Palestinians as well ((Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-shirim* 199–208; Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 189–98).

thus that I have become another by learning it" (Klossowski 57). This active selective annihilation of the self—literally, an active nihilism—is the second sense of radical nihilism, as an overcoming of nihilism by pushing it to its limits and as a new form of critique, which is found in Ravikovitch's reiterations.

As mentioned in the Introduction, the repetition of something of the same—of part of the "I," of the "here" of the "I"—is indeed necessary, not only for our ability *to identify* the return of a sign as the same despite its difference—that is, as that stabilizing element that preconditions iterability in Derrida's terminology ("Signature, Event, Context."); it is also required for our ability *to identify with* an other, to sympathize with her, to relate to her ethically and politically. This is the reason Rousseau, for example, argues that the emergence of society is predicated both on the emergence of our capacity to discern similarities (and differences), *to identify* the other as (somewhat) similar to ourselves, and upon the appearance of pity—our ability *to identify with* that other, to imagine ourselves in her place (Rousseau, *Essay on the Origin of Language* 32–34).

However, while this practice recognizes a basic similarity between the self and the other, thus relating to her through speculating upon one's own experience, Ravikovitch's sympathetic relation does not consume this other for it assumes and marks differences through the nil, without describing that different being. The Palestinian mothers putting the child to sleep in this poem are in no way equated with Jewish mothers in Yiddish lullabies—such a repetition of the same would merely trivialize their pain by universalizing it, turning all suffering into one and the same suffering.[102] Similarly, had Ravikovitch attempted to speak for them or give them a

[102] This form of relating to Palestinian suffering, equating it with historical Jewish suffering, is prevalent in Hebrew poetry—or at least among the few Israeli poets who attempted to fathom Palestinian pain (see, for example, Hever, *Al tagidu be-Gat)*.

concrete form from within her own language she would have simply erased their alterity and specificity. Instead, it is her own heritage that she repeats but with a difference—selectively, with gaps, according to the logic of the "I am not here"—so that the differences of this specific case may shine forth. Whatever interpretation is produced in this gap constantly attests to the fact that it is merely fictional and could have been produced differently. This is accomplished not only through the ambiguity surrounding the mothers' identities, but also by the narration of the scene in the future tense—suggesting that the events may unfold otherwise—and by the use of qualifiers, such as the "almost" describing the encounter between the shawl and the covers as a metonymy for the encounter between mother and son.[103]

The labeling of this lullaby as a translation seems less arbitrary considering that this hollowing out and making room, this unoccupying, appears to be the very definition of translation. Walter Benjamin's seminal essay "The Task of the Translator," for example, emphasizes precisely this gap, which is produced, according to him, by any translation: "Whereas content and language form a certain unity in the original, like a fruit and its skin, the language of the translation envelops its content like a royal robe with ample folds […] and thus remains unsuited to its content, overpowering and alien" ("The Task of the Translator" 258). The very process of translation therefore necessarily creates a gap between the language of the translation and "its content," between the reiteration and its supposed origin. The repetition of

[103] This signaling of the fictionality of her account and the fact that it could have been produced differently is most prominently achieved in Ravikovitch's poetry by her characterization through counter-factuals, which serves her to tacitly present an alternative story to the one she is engaged in telling and to fictionally speculate about others without imposing her interpretation upon them as a truth claim. See, for example, "Hovering at a Low Altitude," where she relates to a young Palestinian girl by listing the things she is not and the things she has not done, and the aforementioned "A Mother Walks Around," in which Ravikovitch narrates the events that a dead Palestinian baby and his mother will not experience, but could have potentially experienced, were it to be born (Ravikovitch, *Kol ha-shirim* 179, 234; Ravikovitch, *Hovering at a Low Altitude* 174, 214).

the textual heritage of the self with a difference, the repetition of the form of the Yiddish lullaby in Modern Hebrew in relation to Palestinian suffering, thus necessarily introduces this "overpowering and alien" gap.

Maurice Blanchot takes this gaping a step further, claiming that this spacing of the text, infusing it with "the privilege of ambiguity and instability," is the very definition of a *good* translation, for when a translation is successful, it not only brings with it a "feeling of a light space between the words and what they aim at," as in Benjamin's metaphor, but also makes these meanings "oscillate mysteriously between many forms whose perfect suitability is not enough to restrain them." By creating gaps, good translations evoke all the other possible translations for the text before us, hence "[involving] us in restoring to them in silence all that the passage from one language to another has made them lose, and all that no language would ever have allowed them to express" (Blanchot 180–89). Blanchot therefore considers a good translation to be the quintessential literary act: by gaping, it opens up a sea of potential meanings, thus involving us in active reading and interpretation, while indicating that any interpretation, including that of the translator herself, is merely experimental and temporary and could have been otherwise.

Simultaneously, the questions introduced by the notion of translation also epitomize the quandary of relating to others. The incessant negotiations between an impossible absolute faithfulness to a source and an equally impossible absolute freedom from it are ever-present in western theories of translation throughout history. The entire problem of translation lies between the extremes of absolute untranslatability—the impossibility of accessing the other for it is so foreign that it cannot be translated—and radical translatability, the complete reduction of others to the language of the self due to the absence of any markers of a shared meaning beyond what we imagine in our own language. The fact that translations do exist constantly undermines this

assumed impasse and attests to the fact that some relation to others is always already in place. The question, therefore, should rather be how this relation operates.[104] This is, I argue, precisely what Ravikovitch asks in this poem, which thus justifies its title to the last degree.

Before moving on to the final stanza of the poem, I would like to address a question that may arise from this idea of the removal of the self and from the above comparison between a quotation and a body: Is this fragmentation of a text or a heritage necessarily a violent act? Must a quotation of another author be a violent usurpation of his power and right of judgment? In other words, does this relation to the other again miss her altogether because it violently appropriates her words? The model I have attempted to suggest here, the model of a relation to the other as sympathy, seeks to avoid that. As a quotation, it is the selection of parts of the body of text instead of representing it in one's own language. This selection nonetheless encourages a reading or an interpretation of that body as a specific case, a reading which does not attempt to make a universal claim about this other or about the whole text, but merely comes up with a temporary evaluation of the specific logic of this part. Therefore, any interpretation we read into the gap in relation to this mention is merely fictional and marks its fictionality. This sympathy is therefore not a substitution, a full taking over of the place of an other; it is rather an ever-incomplete attempt to relate to an almost physical part that is given to us at the moment by fictionally filling in the gaps around it.

Therefore, against the notion of "the violence of reading," a recurrent theme in French

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[104] This discussion is in dialogue with recent post-colonialist theories, which seem to present a similar impasse in relation to the other. See, for example, Spivak. For a historical survey of the negotiations between faithfulness and freedom in translation see, for example, Bassnett; Bassnett and Lefevere.

thought of the second half of the twentieth century,[105] the model presented here, the model of an intertextual relation to the other as sympathy, suggests that when an author (or a reader) chooses to bring to light a certain fragment of a text, she does not necessarily commit violence against the rest of the text or against other possible meanings—at the very least, not more so than a person or a group aiding someone in need while inevitably neglecting other suffering beings. This bringing to light is not violent, negative, or obliterating. Quite to the contrary, it is an affirmative selection that "saves," that leads us to experience, at least part of the text, temporarily highlighting this part—a practice which is infinitely better than leaving the entire text, or the entire case, in the dark. Moreover, our identification with these parts of text at this moment does not preclude others from identifying with it differently or from identifying with other parts, texts, and authors. This concept of the violence of reading, or the violence of interpretation, not only stifles our ability to read and interpret but also transforms everything into violence, thereby denying us any grounds for resisting obviously violent acts. Again, it is a matter of how we do it: When done cautiously, interpretation is not at all violent; it is rather the affirmative selection of a certain possibility, perhaps even a few, and an experiment in actualizing them.

IV. "And Their Cry Went Up Night after Night"[106]: Eternal Return as Radical Nihilism

> Mama and grandma are singing a song
> so that you sleep without harm, tender child,

[105] See, for example, Michel Foucault's claim that the event is nothing other than the exploitation of the law of the stronger and a usurpation of power, "the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it," in order to apply power against power (Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" 380); or Derrida's "Violence and Metaphysics" (*Writing and Difference* 79–102).

[106] This line is taken from Ravikovitch's second version of this poem, "Lullaby" (*Hovering at a Low Altitude* 219–20).

holy mothers are watching over you.
Here, a twig from above you fell as well. [107]

Thus begins the final stanza. The ironic, even sarcastic, tone that runs like a red thread through the poem, condemning the nihilistic attitude of those who "sleep" during such injustices, culminates here, with the "holy mothers" of the Yiddish lullaby alleging to sing a song that is keeping the child from harm: As a Palestinian, the child is already brutally harmed, and as an Israeli, being thus kept from harm in his bed, he needs no protection and stands in stark contrast to the injured Palestinian child, his utter passivity thereby disparaged.

This passive will to perish, this "nothingness of the will," is further implied by the allusion to the title of one of the most famous poems by Chaim Nahman Bilik, Israel's national poet, "A Twig Fell" (*Tzanaḥ lo zalzal*). This late poem by Bialik laments the perishing of his life, and creative force, through an extended metaphor comparing human life to the journey of a twig throughout the cycle of natural seasons; come spring, however, the subject of this poem will no longer flourish again, like a twig no longer organically connected to a tree. The opening verse of this poem, which lends it its name, encapsulates much of its significance: "A twig fell upon a fence and slumbered."[108] It is this slumber on the fence that leads to the subject's demise, for had the twig fallen on either side of the fence, upon fertile ground—that is, had the narrator taken any action instead of merely sleeping or sitting on the fence—then it might have not ended up barren, thrown out of the cycle of life. Linking passivity and sleep with death, the twig thus joins the

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[107] In the Hebrew—"*hine gam zalzal me'alekha tsanaḥ"—me'alekha* might signify both "(from) above you" and "from amongst your leafs." I chose to focus on the first meaning since it echoes the mothers' protection from above, as well as that of the angels, thus relating to Ravikovitch's struggle against transcendental judgment.

[108] Hebrew, "*tzanaḥ lo zalzal 'al gader ṿa-yanom…*"

four angels from the throne in foreboding destruction and in calling upon the sleeping children of Israel and Palestine to awaken, to transform their passivity into action.

The sense of a cyclical return introduced by this allusion is reinforced in the next verses:

> And you shall grow up and become a man,
> and the anguish of Jabalya you shall never forget
> from ’48 to ’67, from ’67 to ’88,
> the anguish of Jabalya you shall never forget,
> and the Village of Beita and the village of Hawara
> and Saja‘iyya and the village of Silfit.

While any judgment is suspended, this suspension is complemented by a plea to never forget, thus guaranteeing that this suspension is not an absence of awareness (but, perhaps, an awareness of a certain absence). With this plea to never forget Ravikovitch again enlists her own cultural heritage, explicitly hollowing it out in order to allow room for relating to others. In this case, she reappropriates two Holocaust commemoration practices: first, the practice of listing names of towns where suffering was endured, here replacing East European names with Palestinian ones; second, the command to “never forget,” here “translated” from its established collective form of Holocaust commemoration in Israel, “we shall not forget” (*lo nishkaḥ*), into the second-person imperative, “you shall not forget” (*lo tishkaḥ*). Ravikovitch says nothing here about Palestinians or for them; she merely introduces difference into her own culture. Through the selective appropriation of these practices she takes this struggle against injustice out of the national realm and makes it the concern of anyone who positions herself as the addressee of this poem, anyone who sympathizes, thus paving the way to imagining a broader civil society.

Furthermore, these commemoration practices are clearly used here to observe Palestinian suffering. This is done, however, merely by citing towns’ names, without attempting to represent

Palestinian suffering in Ravikovitch's own words and without unifying it, without speaking about *the* Palestinian suffering. The repetition of names of concrete places is redoubled in the repetition of years marking specific events in time (the *Nakba* of 1948, the occupation of 1967, and the incident at Jabalya during the First Intifada in 1988), which in the Hebrew original is intensified through the alliteration of the sound *aḥ*, a cry of pain and anguish, concluding the names of the Hebrew years and the command to never forget ("*mi-tashaḥ le-tashkaḥ, mi-tashkaḥ le-tashmaḥ, / et tza'ar Jibaliyya lo tishkaḥ*"). Here, Ravikovitch joins together the two methods she has been employing so far: the allusions to Jewish history, which is being partially hollowed out, and the citing of suffering of Palestinian towns, using proper names—which, like quotations, are the closest thing to concrete bodies and their singularity, without mediation. These methods allow Ravikovitch and her reader the option of relating to this suffering through their own experiences, while not losing sight of concrete places, events, and people, and while maintaining the awareness that this relation is fictional.

The catalogue of places and dates creates a certain kind of metonymic generalization. As opposed to the exceptionalist logic of the judges in the case mentioned above, the repetitive allusions to Palestinian pain in other places and times suggest that the Givʿati affair was not "unique" but rather one among many other cases of senseless orders and acts of brutality. The repetition here is clearly not of the kind of the eternal return, but rather a nihilistic repetition of the same. What is repeated is a nihilistic type of orders, norms, and legal proceedings and their acceptance in Israeli society. In Ravikovitch's critical presentation of this vicious cycle, however, the different cases are not equated—they maintain their proper names, their singularity. Unlike the judgment by law, or other acts of judgment that place particulars under a universal rule, concept, or category, this kind of typical generalization generates a community through

difference. It is a matter of a different relation between the one and the many, which implies the possibility of a different kind of community.

Interestingly, Ravikovitch seems to oppose this use of particular cases to make more general claims about the situation. In her poem, "Marina Ḥadad"—where she narrates a counterfactual, the events that could have happened were the news reporters to enter the "right door" and visit the recently deceased Marina Ḥadad (a name suggestive of a Christian Palestinian)—Ravikovitch writes,

> All the makings were there: bereavement, sorrow,
> the mother a single parent, the state of the nation as metonymy
> for the fate of the individual (especially vice versa) [...]
> She was one of a kind,
> call it the luck of a *goy* that she alone
> was not exploited
> to diagnose the state of the nation
> and forecast the inescapable reifications.[109]

It seems as though, despite terming it a metonymy, it is rather the form of synecdoche that Ravikovitch rejects, for it is the exploitation of the individual Marina Ḥadad to represent the whole, the entire nation, which disconcerts her. The practice of reiterating the names of years and towns does not fall under the same category for it does not universalize the Givʿati Case or efface all differences between different calamities, even within Palestinian history itself. It is clearly not standing for the whole nation, clearly not a synecdoche, but rather a metonymy, an open and limited generalization of sorts, indicating that this singular case shares features in

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[109] The translation is by Bloch and Kronfeld (*Hovering at a Low Altitude*, 259–60).

common with a few other particular cases to which it is adjacent. It brings particulars together in a non-binding way according to misfortunes and needs that are imagined as somewhat similar.[110]

V. "Violence is Not Everything": Conclusions

The conclusion of the lullaby brings the critical effect to its most radical peak:

> And all their blood shall be on our heads,
> demand it from us,
> nice child.

The blood on our heads alludes to the biblical story of Rahab. Rahab is known as the prostitute who hid the Israelite spies—sent by Joshua to explore the land of Canaan before its occupation—from their enemies. In return, she obtains immunity, assuring that she and her family will not be harmed during the coming occupation as long as they remain within her clearly marked house. If they leave the house, their bloodshed will be "on their heads"; if they do not, their bloodshed will be "on our heads." Indeed, the promise is kept and Rahab and her family are saved, while the rest of the population of Jericho is massacred (Jos 2:19, 6:16-17). The blood "on our heads" in the poem is therefore the bloodshed of the exceptionally sacred, those who were not supposed to be harmed. However, unlike the occupation of the land in the days of Joshua, the modern

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[110] In a similar way, the very specific details of the very singular suffering of Job become metonymic for something greater—for his greater collective or for a more generalized, but not universal, mechanism in the world. Maimonides, like many before him, was debating the question whether Job was a real man or a poetic fiction, an allegory (*mashal*, literally, a fable), and claimed that since there are so many different interpretations regarding whether or not Job existed—as well as with regards to when and where—then this must be an allegory. At the same time, Maimonides points out the fact that the book opens with the words "*Ish haya b'erets 'Utz*" ("There was a man in the land of Uz)—*'utz* being both a proper name (as in Gen. 22.21: "Uz his firstborn") and the second person imperative of the verb *la'utz* which means to consult, to deliberate, to decide (as in Isa. 8.10: "*'utzu 'etza,*" "take counsel"). Thus, the name Uz also expresses, according to Maimonides, the exhortation to consider well this text, study it, grasp its ideas, in order to evaluate (*Guide for the Perplexed* III.22) . Reading along Maimonides' interpretation, we might say that Job was at one and the same time a singular, existing man *and* a fable, and that the very undecidability between the two is inherent in the experience of reading Job.

occupation of Palestine spares no one and makes no differentiations between the inhabitants according to their different conducts, hence "*all* their blood shall be on our heads." Simultaneously, this blood "on our heads" is the very mark of the rare exception to the violence of occupation, that single instance when the order to commit a massacre will not be legal. It is thus an emblem of the blatantly illegal order and a sign that even this exceptionalist logic does not absolve of responsibility for suffering but rather intensifies the sense of nihilism.

Finally, the call on the child and the reader to demand this blood from the collective is a twofold call. On the one hand, it is a call for a re-trial, for a new and completely different evaluation of this case. This re-evaluation, however, is suspended, still to-come, for an alternative trial never materializes in the poem itself. It remains a potential prospect, in some future time when the addressee of this poem, the child or the reader, has "grown" to re-evaluate the situation and oppose its logic. The suspended temporality of this trial—obviously preferable to the decisive rulings of the soldiers and the judges—resists the law's demand that we subsume the case under a category, for the most important part is yet to happen. Rather, it implores us to experience the case at hand and come up with a general rule, basing our creative evaluation on the criteria dictated by the case and its precedents, so that we conduct ourselves ethically. On the other hand, Ravikovitch's poem pleads for the (self)destruction of the collective in its militant and nihilistic form—a destruction that is the very turning point between passive and active nihilism. While Ravikovitch herself may be unable to take this active supra-critical position, she has already paved the way for her reader, urging her to take this step.

Ravikovitch's quotations, almost physical fragments of a foreign text, are not turned into an exotic artifact judged under our preconceived criteria but rather present us with a selective hint, a physical fragment, of a larger entity, with which we can relate by the literary practice of

sympathy—a speculative and temporary identification with the other performed in the gaps left by the selections. A similar sympathetic evaluation is offered by Ravikovitch's use of allusions, these hollowed out repetitions of the self. As such, Ravikovitch's poetic justice, these evaluative trials-by-reiteration, constitutes a radical form of critique precisely by not criticizing in the prevalent sense of the word—for these reiterations merely present the case anew. According to Deleuze, true critique is not criticism—negative, reactive, representative—but a political experience—affirmative, active, creative, transgressing the law and pushing its limits. As such, it has a double function: exposing the law as empty and, subsequently, reinstituting the very movement it is attempting to prohibit—in our case, the movement towards others. In this way, critique and affirmation are bound together, for this critique is at the same time creative, substituting the principle of difference and selection for the principles of universalism or resemblance. This figure of reiteration is a repetition geared towards the future, towards difference. It is the eternal return as Deleuze perceives it in his reading of Nietzsche—the repetition of that which differs from itself, whose ultimate goal is the radical transformation of values. Finally, it suggests not only a certain interpersonal ethical relation, but also the possibility of a different political collective as metonymic—that is, brought together by shared analogical concerns, that are not necessarily "the same" but are still perceived, from within each particular experience, as relatable.

CHAPTER 4

RETURNING TO METAPHOR: JUDGMENT, CONFLICT AND TIME IN GHASSAN KANAFANI'S "RETURNING TO HAIFA"

> *"What is truth?" Maryam asked me.*
> *"It is the meeting of two lies."*
> *Is it possible for two lies to meet above one land and give it its truth?*
>
> — Khoury, *The Kingdom of Strangers* (translation modified).

In this chapter I would like to return to Ghassan Kanafani's novella, "*ʿAid la Ḥaifa*" ("Returning to Haifa," 1968), with which I opened this discussion of conflicts and repetitions in the preface. I will focus on a couple of central metaphors, as well as on the metaphoric structure of the encounter between the protagonists in this novella, in order to demonstrate how creative metaphors undermine the logic of judgment and present an alternative by producing and upholding a certain kind of conflict. Like Ravikovich's use of allusions and quotations, Kanafani's metaphors, too, create something new through a parodic re-use and thereby change our relation to others. Focusing on the kind of conflict that metaphors create, I will show how they multiply worlds and worldviews, setting them in refractory relations of struggle, which no one has the authority to resolve. While Ravikovich's allusions and quotations introduce an affective change, Kanafani's metaphors are used to introduce change into our perception—to make us see, hear and understand differently. By so doing, they, too, bring us closer to sympathy. Moreover, Kanafani's metaphoric structure allows us to think of a political community that is based on difference and conflict, continuously negotiating this conflict without resolving it.

Ghassan Kanafani was a leading Palestinian novelist and essayist and is still regarded as one of the foremost Palestinian prose writers. He was born in Acre, Palestine, in 1936 and grew

up in Jaffa until he was expelled during the 1948 War. He lived as a refugee in Lebanon, Syria and Kuwait, finally settling in Beirut, where he edited several newspapers and published a constant stream of novellas. In 1967 he joined the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and for the rest of his life was its official spokesperson and the editor of its weekly newspaper, *al-Hadaf* (The Goal). He was assassinated in a car bomb explosion by the Israeli Mossad in 1972 in Beirut (Kilpatrick 53–54; Sheetrit 91).

Given his biography, there is a tendency in the scholarship to read Kanafani's writing, and particularly his novella "Returning to Haifa," as didactic—as voicing a clear, single, propagandist message, calling on young Palestinians to join the resistance movement.[111] On the other hand, however, just as certain scholars have attempted to save Habiby from what they deemed to be a collaborative approach toward Israel, other scholars have strived to save Kanafani from himself and from his advancement of violence by reading his work "against the grain" to make it appear less violent or antagonistic. Many efforts were put into re-constructing "Returning to Haifa" as undermining its own call to arms.[112] What I would like to argue, however, is that while there are indeed more nuanced and complicated literary possibilities underneath the "didactic" level of the novella, they in no way annul the call to arms. Rather, it is precisely the Israeli refusal to listen to these other voices and possibilities in the novella—its

[111] See, for instance, Siddiq; Oppenheimer. See further in the collection of commemorative essays published after Kanafani's death (Iḥsan, al-Naqib, and Khoury).

[112] Some of these attempts go as far as claiming that the work betrays an unresolved trauma, which in turn undermines its explicit call to arms (Campbell). Another example is Gil Hochberg's suggestion that the novella is a meta-discussion of national narratives that exposes the "shortcoming" of all national narratives insofar as they require "the active forgetting or erasure of the other" (164, ft. 13). See also Barbara Harlow's analysis, on which Hochberg explicitly relies: "Kanafani's short novel *Return to Haifa* is less an attempt to restore, or even invent, a historical legitimacy for the Palestinians' claims to their homeland, than it is the elaboration of a political vision of a 'democratic solution' to what is usually referred to as the Arab-Israeli problem" (21).

blindness to the metaphorical message—that necessitates a violent struggle.

Interestingly, however, Kanafani's English obituary described him as the "the commando who never fired a gun." Much like Karl Kraus in Benjamin's description (see Introduction), it was said that Kanafani's "weapon was a ballpoint pen and his arena newspaper pages" (Harlow 9). In this sense, Kanafani's commitment to violent resistance did not necessarily take precedence over his commitment to writing (either journalistic or literary). In fact, with regard to the relationship between politics and literature in his life, Kanafani himself has stated:

> My political position springs from my being a novelist. In so far as I am concerned, politics and the novel are an indivisible case and I can categorically state that I became politically committed because I am a novelist, not the opposite. I started writing the story of my Palestinian life before I found a clear political position or joined any organization (Kanafani in an interview, as quoted by Riley and Harlow in the Introduction to *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories* 17).

This statement thus frustrates any attempt to read Kanafani's writing as didactic, for here he insists that it is only through literature that he managed to work out his political commitments and not vice versa. That is, Kanafani is not simply using literature as a way to convey already-formed political positions but rather to bring those about and figure out their form. But how can literature make us "politically committed" or help us shape our political perception? In this chapter I engage these questions, focusing in particular on the way figures may help us figure out politics.

The theoretical issue at stake here involves the old question of dead and living metaphors—or, alternatively, philosophical and poetic language. Both de Man and Derrida have underscored the figurative origin of all philosophical language—with Derrida also inscribing philosophical concepts at the origin of Western metaphors (de Man, "The Epistemology of

Metaphor" 30; Derrida, "White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 219). Moreover, both have given special consideration to the notion of *catachresis*—that is, the use of an existing term to designate a phenomenon yet without a name—a notion that will be central to this chapter. Finally, both have recognized the Western relegation of catachresis to the status of dead metaphor, where it everywhere conjures monsters and ghosts (de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor" 21; Derrida, "White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 255).

Derrida's catachrestic name for a "dead metaphor" is nothing other than "catachresis." What he characterizes as catachreses are defining tropes (like "idea"), which precede any philosophical rhetoric and are the summit of philosophy's violence. Catachresis is, for him, the "violent, forced, abusive, inscription of a sign, the imposition of a sign upon a meaning which did not yet have its own proper sign in language. So much so that there is no substitution here […] but rather the irruptive extension of a sign, a meaning, deprived of their signifier. A 'secondary origin'" (Derrida, "White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 255).[113]

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[113] Gayatri Spivak takes the notion of catachresis as a violent abuse of language one step further, especially in terms of its political implications in the context of colonialism. Spivak uses the term catachresis to designate "master concepts," either of the kind that claim to represent a group—talking about women while there are obviously no examples in reality of a "true woman" (*Outside in the Teaching Machine* 127)—or as key Western "regulative political concepts" imposed upon the East (e.g. "democracy," "nationhood," "citizenship," etc.) without properly corresponding to any "historically adequate referent" in that other culture (Spivak, *Outside in the Teaching Machine* 60). These catachreses at the heart of the colonial encounter between the West and its East, according to Spivak, destine the subaltern to muteness. However, is not this conception of catachresis—again, perceived precisely as a dead metaphor—rather the very definition of the Platonic Idea, the concept of all concepts, to which nothing actual in the world ever corresponds? It seems to me therefore that the postcolonial problem depicted by Spivak here pertains precisely to concepts and their misapplication and not to metaphors as such. This problem of misapplication indeed involves problems of translation for it carries concepts from one culture to another in which they do not belong, thereby imposing the First World's sets of values on the Third World. However woven together the concept of translation and the concept of metaphor may be, this misapplication seems to be rather a problem of abusive translation.

Spivak seems to dismiss any positive or affirmative aspect of creative metaphors, to reject the idea of using catachresis to resist a colonial (or any other) power or the possibility of the term changing in its encounter with the Third World. Even if we agree that insurrection, revolution, and democracy are catachreses—even though, as true concepts, as Ideas, they do not have a proper referent *anywhere*—none of these concepts can mean the same after the "Arab spring" (a new metaphor is needed here instead of

Similarly, de Man translates (and since translation is for him already the translation of metaphor he can be said to be metaphorizing [17]) catachresis (in Latin, *abusio*) into the abuses of language in Locke, discovering that abuse is "itself the name of a trope: catachresis," thus subsuming all the mixed modes in Locke under this name, as though they are all of the same kind of metaphor. And these metaphors are, as mentioned, utterly dead and gruesome: "Something monstrous lurks in the most innocent of catachresis: when one speaks of the legs of the table or the face of the mountain, catachresis is already turning into prosopopeia, and one begins to perceive a world of potential ghosts and monsters" (de Man, "The Epistemology of Metaphor" 21). For Derrida and de Man, catachresis then comes to designate both a dead

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this mistranslation, or what Spivak would like to call catachresis). The problem does not concern the catachrestic moment—giving a new form to a yet silent appearance—as much as it involves rather the imposition of a Western (metaphorical) concept upon other cultures and its sedimentation. That is to say, the problem is with the sedimentation of subjugation and not so much with poetic language in its creative capacity. A creative catachresis, in the other's own language, may in fact help her understand and act in face of a colonial force. Moreover, is it better that we remain silent? Should we say nothing to or about the other? Should we obey the liberal command to never speak for the Other, therefore annulling any possibility for identification, sympathy, or solidarity? Should we make no effort to name a phenomenon on the border of our perception in order to bring it to light? When wounded Eritrean and Sudanese refugees appear on the southern shores of Israel we may refuse to recognize their silent cry for help, because we have no words to give it without imposing our own set of values upon it. On the other hand, we might metaphorize or translate this "lacuna" or "silence" in our language by one of two ways: by using the sedimented metaphors which serve the government—e.g., infiltrators—and which entail a certain kind of relation to this translated speech, *or* by employing creative metaphors, new at least to some extent, which would give a different shape and voice to this new phenomena on our shores, thereby entailing a different form of action in relation to it (one such application can be the inventive use that some make in this context of the legal term of asylum seekers and refugees). In a "catachrestic" translation of Derrida's concepts into the discourse of postcolonialism, Spivak takes his theory to an extreme and, in a sense, puts the final bullet in the corpse of the political which was already dead in Derrida's account.

Finally, the Subaltern obviously speaks, and more importantly, acts. Therefore, an account of possible operation and a typology of different forms of action and their different levels of efficacy are in order. Of course, we can only talk from within our own vocabulary, but we should still speak up. The move towards a perception of insurmountable difference and non-intervention as a dialectical reaction to centuries of colonialism and over-intervention is no solution. Certainly, one should be careful when transferring metaphors from one culture or community to another, but this act is not necessarily violent or colonialist; it can be an act of resistance, or even of kindness (see the example of Ravikovitch's poetic speech in the previous chapter). Not everything we do with words, especially in their poetic capacity, is necessarily violent. Like any other act, the catachrestic act should be examined within the specific context in which it is embedded.

metaphor and a violent abuse of language.

In that, they seem to proceed along the tradition inaugurated by Cicero and dismiss the one initiated by Quintilian. While Cicero insisted that catachresis denotes the inexact use of a like and kindred word in place of the precise and proper one, and hence understood it as an abuse (IV. xxxiii.45; 343), Quintilian understood catachresis as an action of bringing an object which did not yet have a name into being by bestowing it with a name, preferably the "nearest name" possible. As such, Quintilian's definition, relying on the Aristotelian one, is somewhat closer to the original Greek meaning of the word, which seems to designate a *mis*use rather than an *ab*use (and this despite the fact that he declares the Latin translation of catachresis as *abusio* to be correct) (8.6. 34; 445). It seems as though the creative, non-abusive possibility that was offered by Quintilian was somehow lost somewhere along the way in Western history.

Departing from de Man and Derrida's work, I am therefore concerned here with the possibility of reviving catachresis—that is, of examining the political possibilities inherent in new, creative metaphors given historical change and specificity. I claim that beyond the distinction between dead and living metaphors, *the specific manner* in which different metaphors work is significant. Metaphors work, and they work differently than concepts. Even if all concepts were indeed metaphors in their origin (and vice versa), there is still a need to account for the different ways metaphors work, especially if one is interested in the political implications of their everyday, artistic, or philosophical applications. In a paraphrase of Deleuze and Guattari's often-cited slogan, I am less interested here in what a metaphor is, in the question "what does it mean," than in metaphors' forms of operation, in the question of *how* metaphors—in the plural—work. Simultaneously, seeing catachresis as a model (perhaps a metaphor?) for political action, this examination is also intended to further develop our understanding of

political action itself. What is at stake here for me is the possibility of severing signs from intention, or at least from the need to read them in relation to what the author has meant, while at the same time maintaining the possibility of political action and change.

Haifa, the name of the city that is the destination of the return in Kanafani's novella, might itself be a dead metaphor. Its origins are unknown. In Hebrew it might be etymologically related to the word *ḥof*, meaning "shore," to which it is adjacent, or to the word *ḥipuy*, meaning "cover" or "protection," which its natural harbor and the Carmel Mount afford. In Arabic, however, Haifa might be derived from the word *ḥayf*—meaning, injustice—as the geographer Yaqut al-Ḥamawi, who lived at the turn of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, suggests in his classical geographical dictionary, *Ma'jum al-buldan*.[114] In this sense, already the title of "Returning to Haifa" literally suggests a reconsideration of an injustice. Moreover, Haifa-as-an-injustice is thus itself related to the notion of abuse, which is nothing other than the Latin name for catachresis, which is consistently considered to be an unjust use of language. In this chapter, I therefore return in both these ways—on the one hand, I follow Kanafani's return to the injustice that took place in Haifa in 1948; on the other hand, I conduct a theoretical return to the notion of the injustice inherent in catachresis. In this second sense, however, the return also implies a reevaluation—that is, entertaining the idea that catachresis might not necessarily be an unjust abuse and might rather constitute an aberrant use that *promotes* or *enables* justice.

I. Disasters of Analogy

I focus on this novella because of the many (very synaesthesic) metaphors it employs and due to the central place it accords to the notion of return. It is only through the protagonists'

[114] al-Ḥamawi never explains what historical injustice might be the source for this name (Attar 44–45).

return to their home and homeland in 1967 that the disaster of 1948 is grasped and figured out. Thus, the very idea of the return in the novella already sets up a metaphorical structure, in which it is only in the re-turn, in the re-troping, that something inexpressible is revealed and thought. Moreover, this return also demonstrates something about the time of the *nakba* itself: the *nakba* is both the radical, local event of 1948 *and* a whole history that is still unfolding, with the occupation of 1967 being one of its iterations. As we will soon see, this dual nature of both an event and a history is also echoed in the type of metaphors that is prevalent in the novella.

After a long journey from Ramallah, filled with flashbacks to the early days of the war in May 1948, the Palestinian couple, Said and Safiyya S., finally arrive at their lost home in Haifa, from which they were expelled during the 1948 War and which they have not seen for nearly twenty years.[115] There, they meet its current occupant, Miriam, who greets them by saying that she has been waiting for them to return (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 163). Said and Safiyya inspect their home in silence, taking account of everything that has changed or is missing. They exchange a few short sentences with Miriam, asking her where she is from ("Poland") and when exactly she arrived in Palestine ("March 1st, 1948") while they look around. It is when Said suddenly notices two missing peacock feathers in the vase and inquires about them that the present existence of the missing child is finally mentioned. His name is now Dov—a Hebrew name, which means "a bear"—and he has been raised by Miriam and her late husband, Iphrat,

[115] The proper transliteration of the Arabic names is Saʿid and Ṣafiyya. As mentioned in the Preface, I use the existing translation's manner of transliteration in order to keep the writing consistent. Moreover, since names are themselves usually dead metaphors it is worth pointing out their dormant meanings. Saʿid, as was mentioned in Chapter Two, means happy, lucky or fortunate, which is here clearly an ironic name. Kanafani's main protagonists, like Saʿid, often have names that are derived form the root S-ʿ-D (such as Umm Saʿad and Asʿad), which is related to the semantic field of success, happiness and luck, as well as help and support. Ṣafiyya means pure, clear, and serene, as well as a sincere friend. Her name, too, ironically relates to happiness and fortune.

who was killed in the Sinai War of 1956 (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 165).[116]

At this dramatic moment, the story of the visit in the present of 1967 is paused and we are introduced to Miriam and Iphrat's history. They are both holocaust survivors, who arrived in Palestine together in 1948 by way of Italy. However, their views on the establishment of Israel and the situation in Palestine vary greatly. Indeed, Iphrat is aware of the fact that Palestine is not a "land with no people for a people with no land" and has observed the battles over Haifa during the 1948 War (corroborating in his account Said and Safiyya's description of the events). Yet, the victims of the war are completely transparent to him—he thinks of them as ghosts—and he is therefore able to unproblematically celebrate the war's results, marveling in his first "true Jewish Sabbath," which immediately follows the battles (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 166–67). Miriam, on the other hand, responds by vocally lamenting the loss of true Sabbaths on Fridays and Sundays (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 168)—that is, the disappearance of Muslim and Christian "Sabbaths" from the city. In other words, Miriam recognizes the injustice at the very foundation of the establishment of the Jewish State, even if only by way of analogy to her own tradition, to her own Sabbath.

Moreover, for Miriam, everything changes the day she witnesses two *Hagana* men carrying an Arab child into a truck in *Hadar* (the middle part of Haifa, a mostly Jewish area that

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[116] The proper transliteration of the Hebrew names is Miryam and—probably—Efrat. It is difficult to conclusively decipher what name exactly Kanafani meant to give the Jewish husband of Miriam (especially since in Hebrew Efrat is a female name). The Arabic vowel system and the fact that the letter "fā'" also stands for a V sound when rendering words from other languages (for this sound is missing in Arabic) allow for different readings of this name as Ifrat, Efrat, Evrat, Ivrat, etc. It is interesting to note that the Hebrew translation of "Returning to Haifa" has glossed over this mystery by simply translating the name as Efrayyim, an easily recognizeable male Hebrew name. It is also interesting to note that, in the bible, Efrat is both a place and a minor character. As a place, it is the site of Rachel's death and it is equated by Jacob with the city of Bethlehem (Gen. 48:7), which is nowadays in the West Bank. As a character, later Jewish interpreters have claimed that Efrat was no other than the Prophet Miriam (Moses and Aaron's sister) (Bavli [Babylonian Talmud], Sotah 11b-12a).

spreads over the Carmel slope). Her husband does not notice this event and, when she directs his attention to it asks how she knows that it was in fact an Arab child. Miriam responds by pointing to the way the child was treated, claiming that a Jewish child would have never been dumped in this manner, like refuse, into a truck. At this point, Kanafani subtly glides into Miriam's own experience of a disaster—that is, her holocaust memories. We are told that Iphrat wanted to challenge her with further questions, but "when he saw her face, he became silent" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 169). Miriam's countenance as the cause for Iphrat's silence is not described. Nor are we given an explicit reason for whatever her face is expressing. The next sentence after Iphrat falls silent—a sentence opening the next paragraph—simply states, "Miriam had lost her father at Auschwitz eight years before." The rest of the paragraph briefly narrates the story of Miriam witnessing the murder of her ten-year-old brother by German soldiers immediately after the death of her father (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 169). Miriam's compassion toward the Palestinian child and her outrage at the way he is treated is not directly connected to, or explained by, this event. Thus, this subtle move from Miriam's compassion and anger at the sight of this abuse of a Palestinian boy and toward her personal history lacks an explicit signaling of the relationship between the two scenes: They are merely set one next to the other. However, this physical proximity on the page is enough to make the reader assume that there is some kind of relationship between her sympathy for the Palestinian boy and her own experience of loss and unfathomable pain. Moreover, once her father has been killed, her younger brother has become her ward and in that sense plays a role similar to a son, thus completing the analogy to the murdered Palestinian boy. Thus, a metaphorical structure seems to be set up between the two events.[117]

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[117] I use the term metaphor here—and throughout this chapter, unless otherwise noted—in the Aristotelian sense, insofar as it includes not only "metaphor proper" but also the different subspecies of metaphor,

Miriam is taken with so much sympathy for Palestinians that she wants to leave the newly-formed state and go back to Italy, the last stop in Miriam and Iphrat's journey to Palestine (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 169). At first, it seems therefore as though the relating of her own misfortune to that of Palestinians allows her a point of identification, through which she can recognize the other's pain and her own wrongdoings. For this reason, Miriam has been treated by scholars as the first fully developed figure of an Israeli, or even of a Jew, in Palestinian literature, and even in Arabic literature more broadly.[118]

However, Miriam never leaves. At first, simply because she could not convince her husband; later on, because when Iphrat is offered a house by the Jewish Agency, he also accepts the child, Khaldun, that is offered along with it, believing that this would facilitate his wife's recovery from the crisis that she experienced after witnessing the Palestinian child being thrown away (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 169–70). Whereas earlier on Miriam has understood the suffering of Palestinians by seeing a Palestinian child through the lens of her own experience of losing her brother, now the suffering Palestinian child becomes her own, as she raises him as a Jewish boy, perhaps as a replacement for that lost brother. Alternatively, the adoption might be understood as a way to make amends and right the injustice that her very presence is causing—an understanding that allows Miriam to stay in the land without remorse. Unlike the Prophet Miriam, who watches over her brother while hiding in the reeds and then gives him away to the

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such as metonymy, synecdoche and metaphor by analogy (Aristotle, *Poetics* XXI (p. 99)).

[118] See, for example, Khoury's discussion of Miriam's humanistic portrayal in the novella ("Rethinking the Nakba" 255) as well as Sasson Somekh's elaboration and criticism of this claim (151). It is worth mentioning that the biblical name Miriam is related to the Hebrew word "*meri*" and to the Arabic cognate "*mirā',*" both meaning rebellion and thus making Miriam into "rebellious." The word also stands for dispute, doubt, resistance and opposition. In this sense, it reflects this Miriam's opposition to hegemonic perceptions of Palestinians and her rebellion against dominant Zionist ideas and practices. At the same time, it also reflects her desire for a clear oppositional structure, such as the one of judgment—a desire that will be discussed in the next section.

Pharaoh's daughter to raise as her own in order to protect him, this Miriam watches her brother's murder from her hiding place and then takes in another's child in belief that she, too, is protecting him. In accordance with the Zionist narrative (as discussed in Chapter One), Miriam sees herself as saving an abandoned child (as well as an abandoned home and land) and her historical disaster becomes the implicit pretext for this appropriation. In making the child her own—her son who is also her murdered brother—Miriam's character demonstrates how even "compassionate" colonizers, by seeing the Palestinian disaster only through the perspective of their own disaster, tend to subject the *nakba* to the holocaust, use the latter as the justification for the former, thereby resolving the tension between the recognition of the injustice they witness and its perpetuation, which is achieved through their own stay in the land (or Miriam's own adoption of the child).

Even before Dov-Khaldun himself enters the stage, coming into the room in his IDF uniform, two important aspects of his figure are already apparent. First, the son symbolizes the home and the homeland. He is first mentioned, for example, in the conversation between Said, Safiyya, and Miriam when the house is being inspected and the missing feathers are noticed. Moreover, Said draws a parallel between the three when he claims that Haifa refuses to acknowledge him despite his acknowledgement of it and that he has a similar feeling with regards to the house and to Khaldun. He then further strengthens the link between the three when he says to Safiyya, "We shouldn't have left anything. Not Khaldun, not the house, not Haifa!" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 173). When Khaldun-Dov arrives at the house, his first response is indeed a refusal to acknowledge his Palestinian parents—he says to Miriam, after she introduces him to his biological parents, "I don't know any mother but you. As for my father, he was killed in the Sinai eleven years ago" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 179).

Secondly, this staging constructs the matter as a zero-sum game. The home (or the homeland, for that matter) seems to be able to house only one family at a time. Similarly, Dov-Khaldun, just as the baby in the story of the judgment of Solomon, cannot be cut in half: He has to be either Khaldun, Said and Safiyya's Palestinian son by blood and nature, or Dov, Miriam and Iphrat's Jewish son by nurture, a proud soldier in the Israeli army. As Dov-Khaldun's aforementioned statement indicates, he seems to have chosen his Jewish identity. This seems to suggest the impossibility of a one-state solution and the necessity of a relation of subjugation: Only one party can control the land and the narrative while the other must relinquish all claims or control. This sense is heightened at the end of the story, when Said seems to realize his mistake in refusing to allow his second son, Khalid, to join the *fidā'īyīn*—the armed resistance fighters—and becomes convinced that armed struggle, not his memories of the house or Khaldun, is in fact the "true Palestine" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 186–87).

Thus, on the one hand, this opening scene of the encounter between the two families presents the reader with the logic of judgment, in which the son is an allegory for the home or the homeland and the relation between the families is couched in terms of a zero-sum game. On the other hand, it already implies the metaphoric structure between the two disasters even before the dramatic conversation between Dov-Khaldun and his Palestinian parents takes place. The metaphoric structure already appears even if, in Miriam's case, this structure seems to collapse into an analogical one, thus hindering her from fully changing her perception or relating to the suffering of Palestinians.

As such, the story seems to suggest that the comparison between the two disasters fails to bring about any change or exchange. Not only does Miriam decide to stay in Israel despite her recognition of the similarities between the suffering of Palestinians due to the *nakba* and that of

Jews due to World War II, but she also decides to appropriate the child, as well as the home and the land. Seeing Miriam as reworking her trauma through the care for the adopted child and as finding a replacement or compensation in him is one possible explanation of this. However, another possible explanation for her failure to take any action is that she remains completely within her own narrative for she is thinking in analogical terms—Fridays and Sundays are for Muslim and Christian Arabs as Saturdays are for Jews. She thus completely subordinates the terms of one set to those of the other, unproblematically understanding these terms through her own, thereby failing to grasp the Palestinian situation on its own terms. Analogies are in this sense much too neat; they have too great a control over the plurality of meanings insofar as they are quite clearly coded. Analogy—the form of metaphor that Aristotle privileges for its clarity and elegance—is thus, to put it in Derrida's terms, a kind of convening of four members, "two by two, a kind of family whose relationships are evident and whose names are known." According to Derrida, in analogies, "[t]he hidden term is not anonymous, does not have to be invented. There is nothing hermetic and elliptical about the exchange. It is almost a comparison or a double comparison" ("White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 242). Since it resolves all the tensions inherent in other forms of metaphor—the tension between the tenor and vehicle, between different possible interpretation, between difference and identity[119]—analogy is a disastrous metaphor. It subsumes the unfamiliar under the familiar, subordinates difference to identity, and thus closes off the space of interpretation.

II. Creative Metaphors: "Breaking Things Open, Breaking Words Open"[120]

"Returning to Haifa" therefore seems to attest to the impossibility of return, both in time

[119] I am following here Ricœur's model of the tensions in metaphors (292).

as in space, not only because nothing is ever the same—Haifa and the house are not the same as they once were and even Khaldun is not really Khaldun[121]—but also because in the linguistic turn, the trope—the holocaust as a trope for the *nakba*—nothing is ever the same, never re-turns to the same thing. The relation between the *nakba* and the holocaust in Miriam's view indeed seems to be one of analogy or allegory, as these forms tend to pedagogically subordinate one set of terms to the other. Remaining within her own disaster narrative and understanding everything else in its terms, Miriam could never relate to Safiyya and Said. Even for Kanafani, who sees the holocaust through the *nakba*, the holocaust seems to take precedence as the underlying cause of, and justification for, the Palestinian disaster. The black hole of the holocaust, both as an incomparable meta-physical event and as a constitutive ineffable trauma, seems to swallow every other disaster.

However, there is a way of reading the dialogue between Said and Khaldun-Dov, which immediately follows, as undermining the notion of a zero-sum game that necessitates war and as doing so without falling into the pitfall of analogy. At a certain point, at the height of the dialogue, Dov-Khaldun can no longer be contained within an analogy to the home/land and his complexity irrupts. He accuses his biological parents of abandoning him, of being too weak, frightened and "backwards" to come back and fight for him (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 182). This kind of accusations sounds remarkably similar to those voiced by the "Second Generation," the sons and daughters of holocaust survivors, toward their parents.[122] The implicit, yet prevalent, accusation of those who survived, as well as those who were murdered, for

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[120] This is the title of an interview Deleuze gave about Foucault (*Negotiations 1972-1990* 83–93).

[121] This is not only due to the fact that Khaldun was raised as Dov. Said eventually speculates that Dov was never Kahldun—"You lied to us," he says to Miriam. The dead Arab boy that Miriam saw carried by *Hagana* soldiers in *Hadar*, he claims—"[i]t was Khaldun" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 183).

"walking like sheep to the slaughter" was echoed, for instance, in the name that was chosen for the holocaust memorial day in Israel—"Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day" (*Yom ha-zikaron la-sho'a ṿela-gevur*a)—which conditions the commemorations of the loss and suffering of the vast majority on its coupling with, and thus on veering the emphasis toward, the very few heroic attempts of resistance. Moreover, when Safiyya wonders whether this supposed cowardice, of which Khaldun-Dov accuses them, justifies his violent treatment of them, Said translates her words, adding that two wrongs do not make a right, for "if that were the case, then what happened to Iphrat and Miriam in Auschwitz was right" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 185). With these words, Kanafani strengthen the relationship between the supposed cowardice and weakness of the victims of the Jewish holocaust to the supposed cowardice and weakness of the victims of the *nakba*.

Finally, the sense that Khaldun-Dov is blaming all of his parents is heightened when he cries out, "*You're all weak*! *Weak*! You're bound by *heavy chains of backwardness and paralysis*! Don't tell me you spent twenty years crying!" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 184, emphasis added). First, the aforementioned paralysis and weakness attributed to holocaust survivors is joined here with the internalized anti-Semitic accusation of backwardness that Zionists have attributed to exilic Ashkenazi Jewishness (as discussed in Chapter One). Here it is explicitly attributed, however, to the Palestinian parents, further emphasizing the parallel. Second, the plural form that Khaldun-Dov is using when supposedly addressing his Palestinian parents—"you're all weak!" (in the original, *ʿājizun*, "weak" in the plural)—might indeed merely refer to his biological parents or to the Palestinian people as a whole. However, it could also be read as referring to all the parents present in the room, including Miriam, the "weak," "paralyzed" and "backward" holocaust survivor. Thus, precisely when his anger and aggression

[122] See for example, Segev, particularly 153-186, 421-445.

erupt, Dov-Khaldun—the land and the home—attests to the *de facto* coexistence of the two narratives, the two disasters, in one and the same body and in one and the same land and puts an end to the zero-sum game of the scene of judgment. He is no longer the son that must be given to one mother or the other in an act of judgment (lest he be murdered in an absurd effort to divide), as is the case in the Judgment of King Solomon. He is rather the son of both mothers, shared instead of divided—even if this sharing is not harmonious or consensual, nor is it discussed or agreed upon.

I claim that the comparison now bears the form of a creative metaphor: bringing together two events, two ideas—or, rather, two worlds, two worldviews—that were not related before. It does so, however, without trying to unite, resolve or equate them. Instead, I argue, it creates and sustains a struggle between them but one that is productive rather than annihilating. In the case above, the two worlds that are brought together are those of the two disasters—the Jewish holocaust and the Palestinian *nakba*. These involve two worldviews that are based on suffering and the ensuing necessity of national liberation. These worldviews, however, are not brought together in the form of a friendly, consented upon conversation but constitute rather a forced encounter, a vehement disagreement, a clash, described with all the bitterness of enmity. This metaphor is a combination of (at least) two meanings held at one and the same time, as a place of debate. As such, this metaphor is still a form of conflict but one where no one is vested with the authority to give a conclusive verdict in the matter. It enables a conflictual difference that refuses decisionism and compromise and transcends the logic of "conflict resolution" or "conflict management." In what follows, I would like to point out a few other implications of understanding this moment, structurally, as a metaphor, and particularly as a catachresis—that is, as a creative metaphor.

III. "But How Differently Each Sees it!": Multiplying Worlds and Worldviews

First, creative metaphors multiply worlds and worldviews and lodge them into one another. We see this already when *Sa'id* and *Ṣafiyya* enter the house and start looking around in silence and "bewilderment" as they see their old belongings—familiar and intimate—redeployed in strange and new ways (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 162). (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 162). The life that Said and Safiyya have known in this home is still very much present there. Most of the material possessions that they had left behind are still there—the bell and the copper lock, the peacock feathers, the Syrian carpet and the photograph of Jerusalem still hanging on the wall in the same exact place. At the very sight of the old home, their old lives are brought before their eyes—for instance, Said is able to imagine Safiyya as a young woman with a braid leaning toward him from the balcony and, passing by the neighbors' home on the first floor, he remembers their children playing in the front and filling the stairway with their voices (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 161).

At the same time, this world is overlaid with Miriam's world, with her new additions to the house—such as the new chairs that now complete Said and Safiyya's set and which seem to Said "crude and out of harmony with the rest of the furniture" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 163). Then, there are the changes Miriam has made to their old possessions, her redeployment of the most "intimate and personal" things, the most familiar things—we are told, for instance, that she is the one who put the peacock feathers in the vase. Finally, there is the showcasing of everything that is now absent—Safiyya's eyes pierce the corners of the room "as though counting up the things that are missing [*taftaqad*]" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 163). Even Miriam's new belongings are seen by Said through the old ones that are missing—for instance, for Said the new blue curtains merely "conceal" the old ones, which Safiyya has made in the

past.[123] The absence of the old curtains is a form of present-absence, for it brings to mind the old curtains while simultaneously showcasing the presence of Miriam's curtains and world. Like a metaphor, it is and is not at the same time—it is and is not the curtain, it is and is not their home.[124]

Moreover, after seeing Said and Safiyya see their home—their home—Miriam, too, now looks at things in the room "as though she were seeing them for the first time" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 163–64). Said and Safiyya's different perception of her home—their ability to see their lives through hers, to see things that are not there through the things that are—also transforms Miriam's seeing of her own home and her life therein. Their metaphorical reading of their home lives in her home life problematizes and foreignizes her own home life, without them communicating a thing to her, such that the most familiar things are suddenly strange and are therefore seen anew. Finally, while Miriam is seeing her home anew, Said and Safiyya involuntarily follow her gaze (*baṣar*, sight), now seeing things anew through her seeing of them. It is a layering and an overlaying of the different home-lives that took place in this home, of different times and different experiences of the very same place and the very same objects. These lives and understandings are held together at the same time and place, yet without precluding one another. As Said thinks to himself upon this multiplication of views: "How strange! Three pairs of eyes looking at one thing… but how differently each sees it!" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 164).

[123] The original Arabic word used to indicate the disappearance of the old curtains, *ikhtifat*, indicates that the curtains are not exactly missing but are rather invisible, concealed

[124] "From this conjunction of fiction and redescription I conclude that the 'place' of metaphor, its most intimate and ultimate abode, is neither the name, nor the sentence, nor even discourse, but the copula of the verb *to be*. The metaphorical 'is' at once signifies both 'is not' and 'is like.' If this is really so, we are allowed to speak of metaphorical truth, but in an equally 'tensive' sense of the word 'truth'" (Ricœur 6).

Friedrich Nietzsche's discussion of new metaphors as opposed to the worn-out coins of dead ones places great emphasis on this foreignizing nature of metaphors and their ability to multiply worlds. This opposition between new and dead metaphors figures prominently in Derrida's discussion of philosophy's sublation of the figurative. However, while Derrida finds Hegel in Nietzsche, according to Nietzsche himself, what we forget under the spell of the moral truth—truth as the conventional lies, as the useful, familiar metaphors that assist in warding off the war of all against all ("On Truth and Lies" 84)—is not, or at least not only, the usure of metaphor, the process of metaphorization as idealization by which we efface the original sensual character of metaphors. Rather, what we forget when we submit ourselves to the social contract of moral truth and dead metaphors is our fundamental freedom to create new metaphors or interpret existing ones in innovative ways. The moral drive for truth—which adheres to sublated, ideal concepts—thus characterizes the rational man of science and philosophy, who not only overlooks the fact that concepts are merely agreed upon metaphors, accepted lies, but also forgets his own creative ability and works solely by dissimulation, by making things familiar (Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies" 80).

We may therefore say that in Nietzsche's writing, this morality to which we subjugate ourselves is precisely the sublation of metaphors into proper spiritual meaning; it is the adherence to the illusion of knowledge *qua* familiarity instead of indulging in the liberty to experiment in "extramoral truth," in problamatizing, foreignizing, and making unfamiliar—that is, creating new metaphors. These new metaphors work by "violating the order of castes and class rank," which is inflicted upon us by concepts (Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies" 85). They "continuously manifest an ardent desire to refashion the world which presents itself to waking man, so that it would be so colorful, irregular, lacking in results and coherence, charming and

eternally new as the world of dreams" (Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies" 89).

When the intellect is free, as in the case of the intuitive man, the man of art,

> [...] with creative pleasure it throws metaphors into confusion and displaces the boundary stones of abstractions [...] that immense framework and planking of concepts to which the needy man clings his whole life long in order to preserve himself is nothing but a scaffolding and toy for the most audacious feats of the liberated intellect. And when it smashes the framework to pieces, throws it into confusion, and puts it back together in an ironic fashion, pairing the most alien things and separating the closest, it is demonstrating that it has no need of these makeshifts of indigence and that it will now be guided by intuitions rather than concepts. There is no regular path which leads from these intuitions into the land of ghostly schemata, the land of abstractions. There exists no word for these intuitions; when man sees them he grows dumb, or else he speaks only in *forbidden metaphors* and in *unheard of combinations of concepts*. He does this so that by shattering and mocking the old conceptual barriers he may at least correspond creatively to the impression of the powerful present intuition (Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies" 90, emphasis added).

Metaphors, therefore, allow for lying in an extramoral sense, lying in the form of art. "Artistic pleasure is the greatest kind of pleasure," Nietzsche asserts, "because it speaks the truth quite generally in the form of lies"—marking its illusion as an illusion— and "therefore it does not wish to deceive; it is true" (Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lies" 96). The fact that this extramoral truth takes shape in art, and more specifically, in art through metaphors, and more specifically still, in art through new metaphors, through catachreses—"*forbidden metaphors"* and "*unheard of combinations of concepts*"—is revealing: the way to counter the liberal social contract, along with its order of classes and casts, passes through the fabrication of the most outrageous metaphors, by the use of catachrestic, "forbidden" combinations that break with given categories.

Immediately after these words, in the next paragraph, Nietzsche appears at first glance to

be juxtaposing the intuitive man and the rational man, as though they represent two sides of the old dichotomies—art and science, poetic and scientific language. However, in the preceding passage, Nietzsche has described the intuitive man with the words "everything that it now does bears the mark of dissimulation" ("On Truth and Lies" 90)—the very same dissimulation that was used earlier in the essay to characterize the rational man ("On Truth and Lies" 80). This suggests that any attempt of understanding contradictions in Nietzsche's writings in terms of a simple binary, or even dialectics, will necessarily fail. The relation between the rational and the intuitive men is not one of simple opposition, but is rather of a metaphorical structure: The two are neither contradicting nor sublated, nor is the one the non-presence of the other; rather, "shattering and mocking the old conceptual boundaries," they are both held together at one and the same time, in relation to one another, suspended, just as the (new, creative) metaphor holds (at least) two meanings together and throws the boundaries between them into disarray.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that there is still a little Hegel in Nietzsche and that the battle between new metaphors and old ones—i.e., concepts—is much too neat. However, this episteme of the metaphor extrapolated from Nietzsche, and particularly its political power to challenge the current order of things, is invaluable. Creative metaphors possess the power to intervene in the consensus—the dominating and stable, clear and consistent designations for things—and break it open by creating a certain foreign world that will somehow influence the regular one. While the *modus operandi* of this mechanism is not fully articulated in Nietzsche, I hope to suggest a possibility for such an articulation here through the model of catachresis.

IV. Creative Metaphors are Conflicts

Second, metaphors of the kind we discuss here are not an amicable conversation, a negotiation of an agreement, or a compromise; rather they put different worlds and worldviews

into struggle and thus present us with a conflict, but one which is not annihilating. Rather than being an invitation to conversation they are a violent constraint or a chance encounter that invites us to interpret in silence. In that sense, they are almost the inverse of the logic of judgment that was discussed early on.

Before Khaldun-Dov arrives, Miriam expresses her expectations of the coming encounter—expectations that correspond to the logic of judgment and to that of the concept. She says,

> I wanted you to wait for Dov—or Khaldun, if you like—so you could talk to each other and the matter could end as it naturally should end. Do you think this hasn't been as much a problem for me as it has been for you? For the past twenty years I've been confused, but now the time has come for us to finish the matter. I know who his father is. And I also know that he is our son. But let's call on him to decide. Let's call on him to choose. He's of age and we must recognize that he's the only one who has the right to choose. Do you agree? (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 172).

With these words, Miriam reveals her hope for an amicable, collaborative, agreed upon and voluntary conversation, which will resolve the matter once and for all by appointing a judge—Dov himself—who will conclusively determine his identity as either Dov or Khaldun. Creating a false equivalency between her "confused" situation and Said and Safiyya's predicament, she claims that this state of things has been "a problem" for her—a problem that she is indeed very eager to resolve. Safiyya, desperate to reunite with her son, immediately agrees to this plan, saying "I'm certain Khaldun will choose his real parents. It's impossible to deny the call of flesh and blood." Said, however, bursts out laughing, "his laughter filled with a profound bitterness that bespoke defeat," and says to his wife, "What Khaldun, Safiyya? What Khaldun? What flesh and blood are you talking about? […] They've taught him how to be for

twenty years, day by day, hour by hour, with his food, his drink, his sleep. […] Let's get out of here and return to the past. The matter is finished. They stole him" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 172). This laughter, this "profound bitterness," is humorously lamenting (or bitterly ridiculing) the fact that a judgment is always made within the rules that have already been set up for the game by the stronger party. It also prefigures the course that the encounter with the young man is about to take—not one of conversation or negotiation, not voluntary and collaborative, but rather one of bitter disagreement and strife. It is an involuntary, forced **struggle**; a type of conflict but one that is not annihilating. Even before Said and Safiyya meet Khaldun-Dov it becomes clear to Said that they are all "on a collision course" and he is, again, filled with "helpless, bitter anger" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 165). When Khaldun-Dov finally walks into the room in his IDF uniform Said's resentment grows even deeper and the following conversation develops:

> "You're in the Army? Who are you fighting? Why?"
> The young man jumped to his feet.
> "You have no right to ask those questions. You're on the other side."
> "I? I'm on the other side?"
> Said laughed heartily. And with that explosive laughter he felt as if he was pushing out all the pain and tension and fear and anguish in his chest. He wanted to keep on laughing and laughing until the entire world was turned upside down or until he fell asleep or died or raced out to his car. But the young man cut him off sharply.
> "I see no reason to laugh."
> "I do."
> He laughed a little longer then stopped and became silent as suddenly as he had burst out laughing (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 180).

Soon after, Said rips Dov's army cap from its place on the table and the latter responds by

saying, "We need to talk like civilized people." Said laughs once more and states, "you don't want to negotiate, isn't that right? You said you and I are on opposite sides. What happened? Do you want to negotiate or what?" No negotiation ensues. In fact, when Safiyya then asks Said to translate what Khaldun-Dov had just said Said summarizes it as "Nothing" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 181).

This short exchange exemplifies a few key points with regards to this encounter. First, it stresses the fact that we are not presented here with a friendly conversation or a scene of negotiation that would have a clear endpoint and a designated judge, such as the conversation for which Miriam has been hoping. Rather, this exchange establishes Said and Khaldun-Dov's mutual recognition of each other as belonging to different "camps" and spells out their rejection of negotiation. They are clearly not trying to convince one another of their truths, conduct an investigation for an objective truth or negotiate a compromise. They voice ideas and claims that are incommensurable and non-communicating but are nonetheless voiced. Furthermore, this exchange is not voluntary but rather forced. Dov has clearly not chosen to take it on and Said's desire to meet his lost son has already subsided, having realized long before the young man has even entered the room that "[t]he matter is finished. They stole him" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 172). This exchange therefore establishes their encounter as a forced conflict.

Bothered by Said's non-communicating laughter and his "violent" gesture of plucking the cap off of the table, Khaldun-Dov is trying to reestablish the kind of collaborative, "civilized" conversation for which Miriam was hoping by saying that there is "no reason to laugh" and by demanding to "talk like civilized people"—a demand which, as we have seen, Said relates to the notion of negotiation. However, Said's response is precisely to laugh again. This response marks his refusal to negotiate or participate in this kind of "civilized conversation." The laughter, like

the metaphorical structure of the encounter, is a refusal of conversation. It, too, serves as an outlet for pain and frustration—an outlet which "clear" words and "civilized" talk fail to provide. Like creative metaphors, it is a moment that adds no new words, no descriptions, and that allows for interpretation in silence rather than a judgment through conversation. Thus, with this laughter, too, the judge is dethroned. It is during his laughter that Said recognizes that things are "upside down." Simultaneously, he recognizes the power of this same laughter to turn the entire world upside down, to make everything seem, and be, different.

Thus, the metaphorical structure that creates a struggle between worldviews works against what Deleuze has called the image of thought (a construction which comes close to what, elsewhere, he termed "the judgment of God"): a perception of philosophy as the collaborative, voluntary conversation between friends in search for truth, which is guided by the logos, led by a belief in the natural character of the search for knowledge, based on the conventional and universal agreement, etc. (*Proust and Signs* 94–95). The creative metaphor, like laughter, gives us instead the encounter between two worldviews in struggle, which enables silent interpretation or evaluation beyond and against the logic of judgment and philosophical thought, beyond subjective choice and engagement, moving into the realm of pathos, chance and even force. Thinking, as opposed to philosophy, is rather a form of creation.[125] When Deleuze talks about this thinking and this creation, he talks about then in terms of the image of essences—both the sign and the interpretation of the work of art—which he opposes to the image of thought. These mysterious essences are, according to Deleuze, murky and obscure, not clear and distinct; they are dangerous, constraining, and violent, not depending on goodwill of thought; they are based

[125] "A friend is not enough for us to approach the truth," Deleuze further claims. "Minds communicate to each other only the conventional; the mind engenders only the possible. [..,] As a matter of fact, the truth is not revealed, it is *betrayed*; it is not communicated, it is *interpreted*; it is not willed, it is *involuntary*" (*Proust and Signs* 95, emphases added).

on what forces us to think, on chance encounters, with the sign, and not on a voluntary decision; they involve disagreement and struggle, not universal agreement and common sense; they follow the poet who leads us to truth, not the philosopher (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 95–97). Interestingly, elsewhere in this book, Deleuze equates essence with style, which in turn he describes as nothing other than metaphor (but as long as metaphors are themselves metamorphosis—change something in both of the terms involved in the encounter).[126]

This dismissal of philosophical conversation, this expression of the futility of this kind of words, is clearly expressed by Safiyya in the novella when she accuses Said of philosophizing, as he pontificates about the fact that they are not seeing Haifa as much as it is shown to them by the Israelis as a mechanism of war: "What's all this philosophy you've been spouting all day long?" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 151). Miriam's commitment to philosophical conversation, on the other hand, is reaffirmed at the very end of the novella, when she tries to stop Said and Safiyya from leaving, by saying, "You can't leave like this. We haven't talked about it enough" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 187). What does this "enough" signify? What would it mean to talk about this matter "enough"? I argue that for Miriam, it is a matter of clearing up her "confusion" by making a clear decision, once and for all, as to the identity of the son so that her guilt can be pacified.

This conflict, however, is clearly not just a state of war. First and foremost, Said keeps stressing the difference between this encounter and an actual war, which might one day come. It

[126] "[…] style is essentially metaphor. But metaphor is essentially metamorphosis and indicates how the two terms exchange their determinations, exchange even the names that designate them, in the new medium that confers the common quality upon them […] This is because style […] reproduces the unstable opposition, the original complication, the struggle and exchange of the primordial elements that constitutes essence itself. [...] An essence is always the birth of the world, but style is that continuous and refracted birth, that birth regained in substances adequate to essences, that birth which has become the metamorphosis of objects. Style is not the man, style is essence itself" (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 48).

is this war-to-come that will "solve" the matter and will settle once and for all the question of who has the right to live in the house: Both at the beginning of their visit and at its Said claims that he and his wife have not come to evacuate Miriam and Dov for settling this matter would "take a war" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 164, 187). Moreover, Dov-Khaldun himself has never yet been to combat, nor has Khalid, Said's second son who is planning to join the freedom fighters. War, as a struggle that aims at annihilating or completely incapacitating the other party, is still not part of this story. Similarly, Dov seems to believe that it is through war that he will be able to prove his belonging to the Jewish collective and to his family: "I haven't been in direct combat yet so I can't describe my feelings… but perhaps in the future I'll be able to confirm to you what I am about to say now: I belong here, and this woman is my mother" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 182). Therefore, once again, war is associated with clear categories and concepts, with the simple opposition of "sides."

On the other hand, the conflict that we are discussing here, the metaphor, is a conflict whose effects are very different. In the disagreement that it allows, this conflict relates—*it is the only thing that relates*—the two sides to each other, indicating that their relationship is that of parts, without uniting them into a whole. In this sense, we encounter the unique kind of intersubjectivy that metaphors afford. Think again about the scene of the multiplication of gazes and worlds in the house. Metaphors communicate nothing and yet they affect a change in our worldview, a change that comes from an other and yet cannot be fully dictated by her. This disagreement thus opens up the possibility for each side to interpret, or re-interpret, creatively and anew, the situation of the other side as well as its own. This is done first and foremost by a change in what is perceptible to both.

V. Creative Metaphors Redistribute the Sensible

As a struggle—one might say, as a dissensus—this encounter also brings about what Jacques Rancière has termed a “partitioning of the sensible”—a political operation consisting in “making what was unseen visible; in getting what was only audible as noise to be heard as speech; in demonstrating to be a feeling of shared 'good' or 'evil' what had appeared merely as an expression of pleasure or pain” (Rancière, *Dissensus* 38). This act of introducing changes into the determinations of what we can say or see and hence of what we can think or do is, I contend, precisely what this creative metaphor achieves. Through this metaphor, a hitherto inexpressible phenomenon is delineated and brought to the protagonists' attention (as well as to our own). Without yet fixing this phenomenon in a proper name of its own, it alters our audio-visual regime, thereby opening up new paths for political action and relation.

For Said and Safiyya themselves, the return, the metaphoric structure, allows the perception of something that was so far merely felt. The pain they were carrying for twenty years is described in the novella as unspeakable, as utterly inexpressible, even while very present: It accompanies everything they do but they are completely unable to speak about it or grasp it.[127] Even on their way to Haifa Said and Safiyya talk about everything but the events of 1948 or the reason they are travelling back to their hometown. In a similar vein, Said mentions that he cannot “calculate” Safiyya’s suffering; while he knows it is great, he cannot comprehend the suffering of his own wife (Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” 152). Thus, the novella showcases the incommunicability of the protagonists’ loss and suffering, of this pain that becomes something expressible and political only in the encounter and through the return.

Furthermore, following this encounter Said changes his entire political worldview. While

[127] For example: “[Said] was amazed that he had never thought about what that suffering must have meant to [Safiyya], and about the extent to which it was buried in the wrinkles of her face and in her eyes and in her mind. It was with her in every bite of food she took and in every hut where she had lived and in every look she cast at her children and at him and at herself” (Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” 152).

before this encounter Said believed he could regain his past—return to what he once lost and thus be saved—he now envisions his future, his son Kahlid, as involving violent resistance. The anger and pain were there before but the political program, in the form of the "new Palestinian," is only born in this encounter. Similarly, he changes his very perception of what Palestine, the homeland, is: while before the encounter he believed it to be the past and his memories he now understands the "true Palestine" to be the future, the fight for the future (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 186–87).[128]

Similarly, while Dov-Khaldun has discovered his past a few years before this encounter, he had no way of talking or thinking about it and so he simply rejected it. However, the encounter, the disagreement, pushes him beyond the speech he had prepared in advance and forces him to re-interpret his entire perception of the world and his place within it. Indeed, Said prophesizes that Dov's life will never be the same from that day onward.[129] While his words are meant to criticize and reject his biological parents, these words also, perhaps against his intention, delineate their disaster and bring it to light, rendering the Palestinian *nakba* visible to him. His own words make it impossible for Khaldun-Dov to ignore the *nakba*, thus complicating Dov's given ideology.

The catachrestic partitioning of the sensible therefore carries a great revolutionary

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[128] Elias Khoury claims that in so doing, Said is mirroring the Israeli initiative in Palestine. He is using Dov, the "new Israeli" (or, more accurately, the "new Jew") as a model for Khalid, the "new Palestinian," who, like the "new Israeli," will leave behind his weakness and backwardness and take on arms in order to fight for his nation ("The Mirror: Imagining Justice in Palestine"). The problem with this reading, however, is that it sees the encounter as nothing but a bridge inside one's own psyche, a bridge leading to *self*-realization. Secondly, it ignores important differences between the "new Jew" and the "new Palestinian," which preclude the latter from being a simple mirror. The most important difference is that the "new Palestinian," unlike the "new Jew," is actually fighting against her own oppressor.

[129] "Said thought: 'We've lost him, but surely he's lost himself after all this. He'll never be the same as he was an hour ago'" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 183).

promise. However, in his political writing, Rancière, like Nietzsche, merely announces this revolutionary power and gives little account of how it works, of how to bring about this event. At the beginning of *The Politics of Aesthetics,* Rancière himself recognizes the strong ties between his model and that of Foucault. However, while Rancière seems to have discovered the lines of light and enunciation—that is, those of the visible and the sayable—as well as the line of power in Foucault's model, he had neglected the line of subjectification. This fourth line is the line that turns lines of force against themselves, the line of action, which Foucault had been working so persistently to construct in his later work.[130] Although Rancière is aware of the fact that the subject is not a given but a process in politics (*Dissensus* 27–28), he gives no indication as to how to bring about a process of subjectification as a form of revolution (and not merely constant resistance to power, a sort of humorous productive-consumption that is dependent upon that power for its existence). As a student of Althusser, he leaves it at the level of the circular mutual constitution of the subject and ideology. What Rancière seems to add to our understanding of catachresis as a creative construction of another world, as a designation of the not yet sayable or perceptible, is the realization that this mechanism works in the realm of aesthetics, of the sensible; we are yet to discover the ways in which it is brought about, the ways it works or brings

[130] This characterization is based on Deleuze's pithy summary of Foucault's model in "What is a Dispositif?". According to Deleuze, a Foucauldian dispositif has four characteristics. The first is the very fact that it is a multilinear ensemble, composed of lines of different natures and directions. Secondly, it is characterized by curves of visibility and of enunciation: machines that make one see and speak, that make things seeable and sayable. Thirdly, dispositifs are characterized by lines of force, which rectify the curves, fill in the gap, go between seeing and saying, waging battle between them. This is a dimension of power formed out of knowledge. Finally, dispositifs also consist of lines of subjectification, or lines of flight. They are the ones to break and bypass the lines of force: making lines of force turn, grow obscure, and fold on themselves, affecting themselves. Subjectification does not mean that there is a self there, as a product, but rather designates a process and a production. It is a line of escape which escapes preceding lines and escapes from itself. The self is neither knowledge nor power; it is a process of individuation which bears on groups and people; it is a sort of surplus-value, a fold. It is the necessary outcome of the line of force: Athens has invented the lines of force, of the rivalry of free men; but for a man to command others, he must first master himself (Deleuze, *Foucault* 159–67).

about a change in the consensus.

It is in his writing about the politics of literature that Rancière comes closer to establishing a theory of this partitioning of the sensible that might be translatable into action. He does so by pointing to literature's "mute letters," the signs of literature that anyone can retrieve and interpret as she pleases (Rancière, "The Politics of Literature" 14–15). I want to argue that these "mute letters" that Rancière mentions are nothing but creative metaphors. As I mentioned, these metaphors are characterized by a certain non-communicating communication, by a certain muteness, for they do not add any new words to the conversation and instead leave some gap or empty space open to inspire the movement of interpretation.

However, in attributing this power to language as such, Rancière seems to miss something about the relationship between metaphors and dissension that was already obvious to Thomas Hobbes in his *Leviathan*. Hobbes' understanding that metaphors possess a great dissensual power is made apparent by his insistence that their use be "utterly excluded" from "demonstration, Councell, and all rigorous search of Truth" (52), for "Metaphors, and senslesse and ambiguous words, are like *ignes fatui*; and reasoning upon them, is wandering amongst innumerable absurdities; and their end, contention, and sedition, or contempt" (Hobbes 36). Contention and sedition—dissension—is Hobbes greatest enemy in the *Leviathan* and this enmity testifies precisely to the political power of dissensual metaphors. In Hobbes' perception of the public sphere, any disagreement or debate over which an external judge does not preside, leads necessarily and immediately to war and violence: "when there is a controversy in an account," Hobbes states, "the parties must by their own accord set up for right reason the reason of some arbitrator, or judge, to whose sentence they will both stand, or their controversy must either come to blows, or be undecided, for want of a right reason constituted by Nature; so is it

also in all debates of what kind soever" (32–33). Hobbes belief in this direct and rapid transition from disagreement to "blows" stems from his assumption that we cannot judge for ourselves and that we should therefore alienate our natural right of judgment to an external judge: the sovereign (120). We learn then that metaphors—with their ambiguity, with their plurality of meanings—resemble the form of disagreement or debate in the public sphere, thereby involving the use of our own judgment and hence excluded by Hobbes. [131]

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[131] Famously, Hobbes makes copious use of figurative language to fight off figurative language, which he perceives to be deceptive. Brian Garsten has called it Hobbes "rhetoric against rhetoric" (25–54). Not only did Hobbes fill the book with metaphors, he titled it with one—Leviathan—which is one of the metaphors he uses to express the commonwealth. Another significant metaphor for the commonwealth, presented at the very introduction of the book, is the "artificial man", or the body politic, which is not only one of the most famous analogical arguments in the history of political thought, but also an argument which stands only by its metaphorical charge. This multi-leveled analogy between the State, an engine, and "that Rationall and most excellent worke of Nature, Man," complete with body and soul, is interwoven throughout Hobbes's treatise, for example in the descriptions of other parts of the body politic and its diseases, as well as in further applications of the body metaphor to the church (*Leviathan* 166-169, 221-230, 268, 321). Andreas Musolff, for instance, writes: "[i]t is because the state ('Common-wealth') is conceived of as both an artifice that it is amenable to scientific analysis and as an organic entity, that the function of its individual members as means to achieve a common purpose can be understood" (7–8).

Hobbes' use of metaphors can be justified from within his own theory. Above I have quoted a section from Hobbes' rejection of metaphors but the full statement is as follows: "In Demonstration, in Councell, and all rigourous search of Truth, Judgement does all; except sometimes the understanding have need to be opened by some apt similitude; and then there is so much use of Fancy. But for Metaphors, they are in this case utterly excluded. For seeing they professe deceipt; to admit them into Councell, or Reasoning, were manifest folly" (*Leviathan* 52). Thus, Hobbes introduces a clear distinction between "metaphors" and "apt similitudes", which may be considered an "innocent use" of language, as Hobbes calls it. That employing similitudes in the search of truth is justified is due to their usefulness in "opening the understanding of a scientific topic." Therefore, according to Hobbes' own terminology, would the metaphors that Hobbes himself uses qualify as "apt similitudes"? It seems to me that what Hobbes' similitudes all share in common, their perspicuousness, is their analogical or allegorical nature. In all these instances we clearly encounter a comparison, where no term is missing, and the analogy is overtly explicated and elaborated (e.g. the case of the body politic). Therefore, Hobbes' exclusion of metaphors should not to be equated with a recommendation to speak or think only in literal terms. What Hobbes does advocate is the explicit signaling of all analogical conclusions (i.e. formulating them as "apt similitudes"), so that the grounds for the analogy is clear and can be opened up to criticism. In *Leviathan*, therefore, the term "metaphor" denotes in the first place a certain kind of communicative "abuse", where a clear, explicated analogy is not present and the plurality of meanings not coded. Hobbes' struggle is not against the figurative or polysemy as such; in this he is closer to Aristotle than he believes, since he does allow polysemy as long as it is finite, and "the different significations are limited in number, and above all sufficiently distinct, each remaining one and identifiable" (Derrida, "White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 247–48). Hobbes' struggle is rather against metaphors as dissemination, as a nonmasterable plurality of meanings, which are open to nonmasterable interpretations.

I therefore argue that dissensual catachreses, whether ones that we ourselves created or ones that were freshly created by others, work as a debate, a disagreement, demanding our active judgment, even if this judgment is forever suspended, never actualized in one of the meanings that a specific metaphor might suggest. Instead of following concepts, "Perspicuous Words," that are, according to Hobbes, "The Light of humane minds" (36), we may choose the twilight, the obscure delineation of that which is not yet perceptible and is nonetheless already marked as not merely a sound, but a voice, or as not just a smudge, but already a somewhat discernible object. Catachresis simply sketches out the existence of some "thing," while keeping it open for interpretation, not limiting it yet, just as it does not limit the ones who perceive it, and yet forcing a change on us, on our perception.

This is precisely what happens in the bitter debate between Said and Khaldun-Dov. It is not a conversation—collaborative, voluntary, conducted amicably between friends or philosophers who are searching for some truth. Rather, it is a passionate disagreement, a clash between two worlds or worldviews. After all, it is precisely at the moment of anger, at the height of the conflict that Khaldun-Dov produces the creative metaphor. Moreover, this conflict between non-communicating worldviews alters our perception of reality, bringing to our attention a phenomenon that has been inexpressible so far and thus nonetheless creates a certain communication, a certain transition, between them through the metaphorical structure.

It is interesting to note that this power of metaphors to "bring before the eyes" and to teach us something new, pleasuring us by rendering us active in trying to solve their riddles, is already suggested in Aristotle's discussion of metaphors (*Poetics* XXII; *On Rhetoric* 113). Moreover, given the redescriptive power of metaphors to change our perception—to make us

"see as," as Ricœur puts it following Hester[132]—the heliotropic metaphors of light and the sun that de Man and Derrida find everywhere throughout the Western discussion of metaphors are not so surprising. Moreover, while Derrida claims that these metaphors of light are a result of philosophy's introduction of its light-related terms (such as theory and idea) into the discussion of metaphoricity ("White Mythology, Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" 250–51), these metaphors may be viewed rather as related to this central function of theirs—shedding light on that which has been invisible thus far.

Another set of prevalent metaphors that Derrida and de Man both detect in the Western discussion of metaphoricity is metaphors of motion and transition (which relate to the metaphorical charge of the word metaphor itself—*meta-pherein,* a carrying over, a transfer).[133] I therefore proceed here by articulating precisely the kind of motion or transition that metaphors allow, first between discourses or contexts and then within time and between history and event.

VI. "Man is a ca(u)se": Judgment as Interpretation

This metaphor that the son creates seems to produce the very site in which such a disagreement could even be seen as a disagreement, in which a conflictual debate is even

[132] "[…] 'seeing as' proffers the missing link in the chain of explanation. 'Seeing as' is the sensible aspect of poetic language. Half thought, half experience, 'seeing as' is the intuitive relationship that holds sense and image together. How? Essentially through its selective character: '*Seeing as is an intuitive experience-act by which one selects from the quasi-sensory mass of imagery one has on reading metaphor the relevant aspects of such imagery*' ([Hester] 180). This definition contains the essential points. 'Seeing as' is an experience and an act at one and the same time. On the one hand, the mass of images is beyond all voluntary control; the image arises, occurs, and there is no rule to be learned for 'having images.' One sees, or one does not see. The intuitive talent for 'seeing as' (182) cannot be taught; at most, it can be assisted, as when one is helped to see the rabbit's eye in the ambiguous figure. On the other hand, 'seeing as' is an act. To understand is to do something. As we said earlier, the image is not free but tied; and, in effect, 'seeing as' orders the flux and governs iconic deployment. In this way, the experience-act of 'seeing as' ensures that imagery is implicated in metaphorical signification: 'The same imagery which *occurs* also *means*' (188)" (Ricœur 252).

[133] See, for instance, de Man discussion of Locke's theory of simple words and ideas as a constant metaphorization of motion ("The Epistemology of Metaphor" 12–13).

conceivable, by generating passageways between the two incommensurable discourses, that of the claim for the land on the basis of an unfathomable suffering in Europe and that of the claim for the same land on the basis of "biological" ties and the need to be free of suffering. Creative metaphors are thus not simply a place of dissension and suspended judgment; *they are the very mechanism by which judgment works, by which a place for dissension itself is carved out*. In this sense, however, judgment now means something completely different. We have started with the judgment of Kant's first *Critique* and we finish with a judgment that is more akin to his Third one—a kind of ongoing interpretation, a mediation between the faculties (or phrase families) that acknowledges their differences while bringing them together.

As part of Dov-Khaldun prepared speech, he states,

> From the time I was small I was a Jew […] When they told me I wasn't their own child, it didn't change anything. Even when they told me—later on—that my original parents were Arabs, it didn't change anything. No, nothing changed, that's certain. After all, in the final analysis, man is a cause [*al-insān huwa qaḍiyya*] (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 181).

Said is stricken by this metaphor—man is a cause—and asks Dov who he is quoting. Dov admits that he does not recall and wonders as to Said's interest in the matter. Said explains: "that's exactly what was going through my mind at this moment" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 181).

Said reiterates this point soon after:

> Man, in the final analysis, is a cause. That's what you said. And it's true. But what cause? That's the question! Think carefully, Khalid is also a cause, not because he is my son. […] When we talk about man it has nothing to do with flesh and blood and identity cards and passports. […] Even if you had accepted us, would we accept you? Let your name be Khaldun or Dov or Ishmael or

> anything else… what changes? In spite of it all, I don't feel any scorn toward you. The guilt isn't yours alone. Maybe the guilt will become your fate from this moment on. But beyond that, what? Isn't a human being made up of what's injected into him hour after hour, day after day, year after year? If I regret anything it's that I believed the opposite for twenty years!" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 183).

This metaphor, man is a cause, seems therefore to be the only thing that Said and Dov agree upon. (Notice, however, that this agreement is not derived from a conversation; it is not the result of an exchange of ideas, persuasion, negotiation or compromise. Instead, both Dov and Said come to this realization separately.) What this formula means, first of all, is that biology as well as names, does not matter; what matters is rather the cause for which one fights. In Edward Said's terms this formula substitute affiliation for filiation as the defining element of the collective—"a solidarity that necessarily violates ethnic, racial and religious boundaries" (Harlow 19).[134] In that sense, Miriam could have been part of this community as well had she not habilitated herself to the ruling ideology, accepting and perpetuating the *nakba*.

Moreover, *qaḍiyya*, the Arabic word used here for "cause," is clearly related to judgment. It means a legal affair or legal action and even a legal ruling. As such, it seems to be reiterating the zero-sum logic of judgment discussed at the beginning—the very logic that relates to identity cards and biology. However, *qaḍiyya* has many other meanings, including "problem" and "case," as well as issue, matter, and question. That is, this metaphoric formula may therefore suggest that a person is not only a legal case or judge, not even merely the cause for which she is fighting, but also the unique problem, the specific case, that she *is*. When trying to think about this problem,

[134] For Edward Sais's discussion see: Edward Said ,"Secular Criticism" in *The Text, the World and the Critic* (Cambridge,Mass.: Harvard University Press,1982), p. 17ff.

to interpret this case, there is no use for given formal categories like names, identity cards, and biology (even while the metaphor used here echoes their existence). What has to be considered is precisely what escapes categories and even words, the difference that makes each of us who we are, the lifetime of what is "injected into [us] hour after hour, day after day, year after year," with our food, drink and sleep (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 183). Man is a problem, not (only) an identity. Similarly, interpretation should not aim for conclusively deciphering identity, names, or categories, but rather for evaluating according to what the case at hand suggests (see previous chapter), considering it as a problem not to be resolved and even further problematizing the given.

This man who is a cause, a case and a problem, Dov-Khaldun, who brings together two worldviews in their conflict without resolving this struggle or problem, brings about, as we have seen, a change in Said and Safiyya's perception of their world (and a change in their world itself). Similarly, the Palestinian parents that he rejects nonetheless bring about a change in his world and perception. There is clearly a transmission of change, a certain mutual intervention, between the two worlds and worldviews but this is done without what we commonly perceive as communication. How does one world influence the other without communication? How do these worlds, which are inexpressible to one another, nonetheless come together in a place where they can be audible to each other? As Rancière puts it, this dissensus, this kind of political argument is "the demonstration of a possible world where the argument could count as argument" (*Dissensus* 39). But how does this happen? While Rancière bitterly criticizes Kant (who for him is one of the main figures responsible for the inauguration of the loathed "aesthetic regime of arts") and even more so, censures Lyotard, it appears as though both of their writings on the sublime, precisely the texts Rancière criticizes, are in fact congruent with Rancière's own theory

of dissensus and have the capacity to advance this theory—and our understanding of creative metaphors—further.

Kant's aesthetic theory in itself already provides us with a few enlightening understandings that share some affinities with Rancière's theory. First and foremost, the sublime is precisely an instance of dissension, this time between the faculties. Secondly, while Hobbes, Locke, and Burke largely ascribed the power of nicely separating things from one another to judgment—and set it in clear opposition to the associating powers that are mostly attributed to wit, fancy, and the imagination—Kant discovers judgment as a power of association and unification as well. Thus, for Kant, the power of judgment is not only "the ability to subsume under rules, i.e., to distinguish whether something does or does not fall under a given rule (is or is not a *casus datae legis*)" (*Critique of Pure Reason* 206); it is also "nothing but a way of bringing given cognitions to the objective unity of apperception" (*Critique of Pure Reason* 184). Not simply one faculty among others, the power of judgment is thus the central cognitive faculty of the mind, integrating and coordinating between the different functions of intuition, imagination, understanding and reason, so as to produce a single cognitive product: a judgment.

Moreover, with Kant, not only is judgment an associating and unifying faculty, but, as "the indirect cognition of an object, viz., the presentation of a presentation of it" (*Critique of Pure Reason* 122), its procedure is precisely the figurative, metaphoric procedure of the "as if" (*als ob*). This is most readily apparent in Kant's *Third Critique,* where judgments of taste act *as if* they were universal and by assuming an *as if*, analogous concept (*Critique of Judgment* 159–62), beauty is a symbol for morality (*Critique of Judgment* 225–230) and the artistic work of genius is analogous to the working of nature (*Critique of Judgment* 173–178). When Lyotard turns to explore Kant's faculty of judgment, he discovers it everywhere in the form of the "as if":

"the noncognitive (descriptive, but dialectical phrase) [pertaining to pure concepts of reason; ideas] is presented with an '*as if*' referent," a presentation through symbols or analogies (*Enthusiasm* 6, emphasis added); the categorical imperative in practical judgment operates *as if* the action one proposes is a law of nature to which she is subjected (*Enthusiasm* 16); dialectical judgment functions *as if* it were dealing with phenomena (*Enthusiasm* 13); the communicability of the judgment of taste is required "*as if* it were a duty" (*Enthusiasm* 37, emphases added), and so on. We may therefore say that judgment is not merely "tainted" with wit or fancy; it operates *solely* through their figures of speech, through a metaphorical procedure that borrows from one realm to engage a term in another, which either has no name or, more dramatically still, does not exist, has no prior meaning. Judgment thus works as a catachresis.

Yet, "inasmuch as its rule for determining which universes are pertinent to it entails some indeterminacy (the free play of the faculties among themselves)," judgment also simultaneously divides (*tranche*) the faculties, thereby revealing the dissensus at the heart of the Kantian theory of the subject, and mediates between them in the form of passage (*transige*) (Lyotard, *Enthusiasm* xvii). Judgment is therefore not only capable of recognizing the legitimacy of respective claims to meaning within each phrase family, but also of suggesting passages between them (Lyotard, *Enthusiasm* xvii). It judges not in the form of a presiding judge who has to choose one side of the dispute over the other, but rather in the form of the critical judge, facilitating discussions between the parties: "For Kant's judge it is not enough to judge this way or the other; he must also admit at least the coexistence of heteronymous phrases. The obligation to compromise presupposes an attraction or general interaction of families of phrases, despite or because of their heteronomy" (Lyotard, "The Sign of History" 410).

The only prescription Rancière provides is along the lines of the phrase "do not close

down the gap of dissensus." Despite his acerbic criticism of Lyotard, it seems as though the latter allows precisely that, by adding an aspect of action to the distribution of the sensible. Although Rancière claims that Lyotard severs the intelligible from the sensible and announces an irremediable incommensurability between the faculties (*Aesthetics and Its Discontents* 103), Lyotard's archipelago—the metaphorization of the different faculties, the different "phrase families," as different islands, between which judgment travels in its metaphorical ship—does not simply divide the discourses (and, certainly does not simply severe the sensible from the intelligible), nor does it keep them forever apart. Lyotard terms the different islands, and the faculties corresponding to them, "phrase families" for a reason: he is adopting this Wittgensteinian vocabulary in order to indicate the incommensurability of different *discourses* and not merely that of the different Kantian faculties. At the end of "The Sign of History," Lyotard makes this explicit, claiming that the *Begebenheit* of our time is in no way homologous to Kant's *Begebenheit*—the enthusiasm of 1789—and it would consist rather of a new kind of sublime, in which "we would feel not only the irremediable gap between an Idea and what presents itself to 'realize' that Idea, but also the gap between the various families of phrases and their respective legitimate presentations" ("The Sign of History" 409). Moreover, Lyotard clearly states that "a philosophy of [the fission of] phrases is more akin to [our] *Begebenheit* than a philosophy of the faculties of the subject" ("The Sign of History" 410).

Although Lyotard is incessantly criticized for this incommensurability and the supposed impasse to which it leads, his notion of the archipelago and of judgment as a ship traveling between the different discourses effectively refutes this claim. Judgment thus no longer chooses between the different parties in a dissensus, announcing, "this is the case," "you are right!" It is rather the very precondition for the scene of judging as interpreting; it is that which allows the

different litigators to convene at the same place and thereby surpasses the *differend*. Judgment is not simply the power to choose between competing meanings in a metaphor—saying "this is the case," as in most readings of the Kantian judgment—but is rather metaphor itself: the bringing of (at least) two worlds, two discourses, together, in a disenssus that is nonetheless a productive one, one in which there is a passage, a transition—literally, a metaphor (from *metapherein*, "transfer, carry over")—between them.

Thus, understanding judgment as a metaphor not only transforms the meaning of metaphor but also that of judgment. This metaphorical form of judgment suggests this odd form of communicability between two, or more, discourses and their continuous deliberation according to the case at hand, as opposed to mere verdict under a given empty law. No longer the Kantian judgment understood in the form of what Deleuze calls "the judgment of God"—"this is X," "this is the case" (*Nietzsche and Philosophy* 20)—but rather judgment as a form of association, discussion, negotiation, and evaluation according to the case at hand: a form of interpretation. Conflict is therefore itself a form of relation—it allows impact and exchange without representative (or intention-guided) communication. As Lyotard claims, the critical tribunal should not—or, at least, not only—subsume under laws, but rather emphasize disputes, even at the risk of aggravating them, giving language to that which cannot be expressed in the language of the judge, even if he is a critical judge (Lyotard, "The Sign of History" 410).

For this reason political catachresis would be different from that of what Rancière calls the police—that is, the current, hegemonic perception of things. The police is solely interested in subsuming under law, in closing off all debate, and in keeping the identity and the power of the self or hegemony intact, as in the example of the Israeli police's use of "infiltrators." Catachresis as an immanent evaluation will be the exact opposite: an attempt to keep the debate going and a

willingness of the self to change in the process, as in the use of the word 'refugees,' which retroactively also reshapes the figure of historical Jewish refugees within Israeli public imagination. Interpretation may be a judgment by case and by degrees which does not set precedents and thus general rules for the future—not "all or nothing" as in Rancière's two different countings (of those who have a part and those who have no part in politics)—but rather this is more beautiful than that, this is better for more people, this causes fewer wrongs in our collective, and so forth.

VII. Reminiscence and the Time of Return

The metaphorical structure in the novella is also closely related to its treatment of time. In a prefatory note to an earlier novel, "Ma tabaqa lakum" (*All That's Left to You*, 1966), Kanafani explicitly states that time is one of the characters in the novel, along with the three human characters and the desert. Furthermore, in his famous novella, "Rijal fi al-shams" ("Men in the Sun," 1963), time becomes the central antagonist—it is time that the main characters must beat in order to survive as they illegally cross the border into Kuwait smuggled inside a water tank under the merciless August desert sun. In "Returning to Haifa," too, time plays a key role, as is indicated by the centrality of the return itself. But what kind of role and what kind of time is it?

The novella is composed of fragmented moments told from diverse points of view, most of which take place either in 1948 or in 1967, but the transition between them is never gradual, linear or clear. The narrative proceeds in fits and breaks, leaping back and forth in time (as well as in space and between viewpoints), through a series of rather cinematic flashbacks. There is nothing tying the different moments together beyond their inclusion in the same novella and beyond their clashes with one another so that conflict is in fact their only form of "unity." As Edward Said has noted in an essay about post-1948 Arabic prose, Kanafani's writing is very

much based on the scene as its basic building block: “if the unit of composition is the scene, and not the period (prologue, middle, end in the Aristotelian sense), then the connection between scenes is tenuous. There is a tendency in fact to episodism, as if the rhythmic succession of scenes can become a substitute for quasi-organic unity” (Said 49–50).

In this context, it is interesting to note that in “Men in the Sun” Kanafani not only writes in the form of rhythmic, non-communicating scenes but describes the state of mind of Abul-Khaizuran, the water-lorry driver, in similar terms: “He wasn't thinking in the strict sense of the term, but [rather] a series of disconnected scenes was passing ceaselessly through his brain, incoherent and inexplicable” (*Men in the Sun, and Other Palestinian Stories* 72). Indeed, this kind of existence, life as a series of disconnected and incoherent scenes, is, according to Edward Said, the very core of Palestinian—and Arab—predicament following the *nakba*. Given the defeats of the Arab armies in 1948 and 1967 and the ongoing threat of U.S. Imperialism and Israeli colonialism, Said claims, what the Arabs are lacking is a sense of the present itself. The present is nothing but the paradoxical and disastrous point of intersection of two lines—the line of the past, from the perspective of which the Arab world has deviated from the road to national identity and unity, from *what has yet to happen*, and the line of the future, a revelation of *what may yet happen*, from the perspective of which “the disaster raised the specter of national fragmentation and extinction” (Said 47). Given this paradoxical nature of the present, Said argues that “the scene is *itself* the very problem of Arabic literature and writing after the disaster of I948: the scene does not merely reflect the crisis, or historical duration, or the paradox of the present. Rather, the scene is *contemporaneiy* in its most problematic and even rarified form” (Said 51). Kanafani’s insistence on the scene is thus his very attempt to *make the present*, for “unlike the Stendhalian or Dickensian case, the present is not an imaginative luxury but a literal

existential necessity." The scene thus becomes a provocation, a device which, "displaced from the tradition that can take it for granted, ironically comments on the rudimentary struggles facing the Palestinian" (Said 53).

In a similar manner, "Returning to Haifa" adjoins non-communicating scenes to one another, creating a fragmentary, incoherent net of events. Thus, the past never neatly follows an introduction in the present; rather, it erupts, violently and involuntarily. When Said and Safiyya arrive in Haifa, for instance, we are told that "the memory didn't return to [Said] little by little. Instead, it rained down inside his head the way a stone wall collapses, the stones piling up, one upon another. The incidents and the events came to him suddenly and began to pile up and fill his entire being" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 149). After Said and Safiyya have been avoiding speaking of the past for twenty years, it now "erupted as though forced out by a volcano" and, soon after, "all at once, the past was upon [Said], sharp as a knife" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 151–152). Similarly, with the sound of explosions and at the sight of a young boy rushing across the street, "the terrible past came back to [Said] with all its tumultuousness. For the first time in twenty years he remembered what happened in minute details, as though he were reliving it again" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 153). As such the past appears in these metaphorical expressions as a local, condensed explosion in the present, a sort of irruptive and disruptive event, which reveals some deeper truth to be reworked. The past is thus treated as a trauma or as an extraordinary event—in any case, as a moment that is complete and done, as powerful as it may seem, a moment that haunts the present, detaches itself from the linear progression of present moments that we call history and insinuates itself into the current present, uncontrollably disruptive, like the return of the repressed. It is thus reminiscent of the concept of time discussed in Chapter One.

In other moments in the novella, however, the past seems to be coexistent or mixed up with the present, as when Said drives his car in Haifa in 1967 according to the cartography and street names of 1948 and feels "as though he hadn't been away for twenty years" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 152), or when at the site of Haifa and under the influence of his flashbacks, Said felt that "[t]he events were mixed up, the past and present running together, both in turn jumbled up with the thoughts and illusions and imaginings and feelings of twenty successive years" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 154). The most telling moment is, however, when we are told that Said "made the whole thing appear, to himself and to his wife, perfectly natural, as though the past twenty years had been put between two huge presses and crushed until they became a thin piece of transparent paper" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 161). At these points in the novella—all of which expressed in metaphorical, or at least tropological, language—the past is not merely a moment in the chain of events that haunts the present or erupts in it; the past and the present are rather coexistent, the two sides of the same translucent piece of paper, which further harbors "the thoughts and illusions and imaginings and feelings of twenty successive years," and produces the shift between them as instantaneous, a crossing through the looking-glass of the transparent sheet. Moreover, even while constituting the parts of the same sheet of paper, the past and present are not necessarily harmonious or constitute a unified whole. Instead, they are parts that are constantly clashing with one another. For instance, seeing 1967 Haifa through the lens of 1948 Haifa Said feels as though he is not seeing present Haifa as much as the Israelis are showing it to him and that he is rejected by the present city. As mentioned, he goes as far as explaining to Safiyya that this showing of Haifa is in fact nothing but a continuation of the war by other means (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 150–51). The clash between their memories of Haifa and what they are currently seeing is therefore in itself part and parcel of the conflict.

One of the things that this dual perception of time reveals is a certain condition of the Palestinian *nakba*. As Elias Khoury has noted, ever since the publication of Constantine Zureik's book (*Maʿnā al-nakba*, The Meaning of the *Nakba*) about the *nakba* as the 1948 War was still raging, the *nakba* has been too often perceived as a momentary event in time, delimited and completed, "as a historical event that happened in the past and once for all," as powerful and as traumatic as it might have been ("Rethinking the Nakba" 259). It may be haunting the present but only in the form of a repressed memory, of a traumatic event that has nonetheless ended. However, for most Palestinians—in Israel, in the occupied Palestinian territories and in other exiles—the *nakba* was and still is an ongoing affair, a past that keeps unfolding in the present. Khoury, for instance, lists four ways in which the *nakba* is continuous—the dispossession of present-absentees, the refusal of return and the refugee camps, the occupation of the Palestinian territories and the apartheid system therein, as well as the massacres in the Palestinian camps in both Lebanon and Palestine. "The *nakba* is not only a memory," Khoury insists, "it is a continuous reality that has not stopped since 1948. Dealing with it as a history of the past is a way to cover up the struggle between presence and interpretation that has not stopped since 1948" (Khoury, "Rethinking the Nakba" 263).

Beyond the continuation of the *nakba* in different forms in the history and the current situations of Palestinians, this coexistence of past and present may also suggest something else. It can be viewed as *reminiscence*. I use this term in the way Deleuze uses it in his book, *Proust and Signs*, where reminiscence is no longer understood as an associative mechanism—that is, on the one hand, as a resemblance between a present and a past sensation and, on the other, a contiguity of the past sensation with a whole that we experienced in the past and revives under the effect of the present sensation. This associative perception of reminiscence does not explain the lack of

simple resemblance between the past and the present sensation. Nor does it explain, in Deleuze's Proustian terms, how, in the famous Madeleine scene, "Combray rises up, not as experienced in contiguity with the past sensation, but in a splendor, with a 'truth' that never had an equivalent in reality" (*Proust and Signs* 56).

Deleuze claims that voluntary memory may indeed proceed in this associative manner from the present moment to a present that has been, thus following the succession of presents as a series of snapshots and never understanding the past directly, as past (*Proust and Signs* 57). With the involuntary memory of reminiscence, however, we do not miss the past; we put ourselves in the past, as the virtual, directly. Moreover, while involuntary memory seems to be based in the resemblance between two moments or two sensations it is in fact, on a profound level, based in "a strict *identity* of a quality common to the two sensations or a sensation common to the two moments, the present and the past," a duration extending over both moments or sensations (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 59). It thus recalls that transparent sheet of paper that Said mentions. At the same time, this common sensation indicates difference—with involuntary memory, Combray becomes internal to, an inseparable context of, the Madeleine. Reminiscence internalizes the context and makes the past context inseparable from the present sensation so that the latter is inseparable from this relation with the different object (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 59–60). What matters for Deleuze is this internalized, immanent difference, where the Madeleine *is* and *is not* Combray, thus bringing about the splendor of a new realization or "truth," a new Combray.

In this sense, reminiscence, Deleuze claims, is nothing but a metaphor of life (whereas metaphors are reminiscences of art). At the very least, one might say that Deleuze sees the work of reminiscence in the realm of time and memory as analogous to that of metaphor in the realm

of art. It takes two different objects, envelopes the one in the other, and makes their relation internal. Involuntary memory and metaphor "have something in common: they determine a relation between two entirely different objects in order to 'withdraw them from the contingencies of time'" (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 55). The sensation common to the two is here only to recall something else, the past context. But upon this invocation this past context rises in an absolutely new form—not in its reality, but in its truth; not in its external and contingent relations but in its internalized difference—its essence. The "new" Combray rises up in a pure past coexistent with the two presents but out of their reach, as a "morsel of time, in the pure state," as virtuality which is essence (Deleuze, *Proust and Signs* 61). However, reminiscence is an inferior metaphor, according to Deleuze, since the essence or the relationship between the two moments is dictated by external and contingent conditions as opposed to real metaphors, the metaphors of art, where essence is the only determining factor (*Proust and Signs* 64).

In the case before us, too, we can see Said and Safiyya's reminiscences, which are themselves rendered in metaphorical terms, as "metaphors of life"—that is, as having the same structure as metaphors do, only in a manner that is more strictly related to time. What rises is indeed, at least for Said, a certain form of splendid truth. What he seems to discover is, as mentioned before, the "true Palestine," the truth of the struggle. This metaphorical structure of time, this metaphorical relationship between moments as well as between things, also allows us to stress an important element of the struggle in the novella. Just as the past and the present are in conflict in the novella and this conflict is their only form of relation—the only element which holds them together, without unifying them—so, too, is the relationship between the struggling terms in a metaphors: only through their conflictual relations do we recognize them as parts without them forming a unified whole.

VIII. The Empty Case: The Role of Silence in Metaphor

It is both interesting and important to note that the past, like any major turn in the plot, erupts in moments of silence or absence. Silence takes on an important role in this novella. Again and again Kanafani uses his words to push into the outside of the text—to describe moments of silence, moments in which there is nothing to say, moments which no words can ever describe. Many of these moments involve Safiyya's silence, for instance, either while the couple is traveling to Haifa or during their conversation with Miriam and Khaldun-Dov. Safiyya's silence, however, is not a simple absence. In her silence, through gazes, gestures, or simply by her very existence (which, among other things, constantly demands translation) she persistently influences the events and their understanding. For instance, after Safiyya first brings up the idea of returning to Haifa she falls silent. She does not answer Said's question regarding what she expects to find there and instead merely nods. Moreover, for a whole week she does not mention this idea at all. However, it seems that, precisely because of her silence, this idea "remained hanging over them, day and night, for a week. They ate it with their food and slept with it, but they did not speak a word about it." Following this silent evaluation, it is Said who, earlier hesitant about this idea, now suggests that they visit Haifa again (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 159). Similarly, there are several moments in the text that frame Said's inability to express what he feels but his framed silence nonetheless affects the narrative.[135] Paradoxically, it is precisely this constant invocation of silence—of the outside of language and of the text, of in-

[135] For instance, upon Said and Safiyya's arrival, Miriam apologizes for the way things have "turned out." In response, "Said smiled bitterly; he didn't know how he could say to her that he hadn't come for that, that he wouldn't get into a political discussion, that he knew she wasn't guilty of anything. She, not guilty of anything? Not exactly. But how could he explain it to her?" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 164). Following this moment of silent reflection and interpretation Safiyya takes initiative and starts asking Miriam questions about her past—questions which Said is required to translate. Thus, all at once, all three of them are speaking to each other and the clashes between them multiply.

communication—that allows communication in the text. It is not by progress or additional representative words that movement and relation occur but rather only in the lack, in blank spaces, in moment of silence and absence.[136] It is this space that allows relation in the novella, between times as well as between viewpoints. This structure, again, is very similar to that of metaphor. In metaphors, too, nothing new is added or said. It is this silence with regards to the new sensation or phenomenon—the mere re-use that adds nothing new, that refuses simple representation—which allows metaphors to work, relate and innovate.

One noticeable absence in the novella is the two missing peacock feathers, the feathers that are no longer in the vase, which Said notices and which, in their absence, both conjure the past—the abandoned child—and expose the existence of Dov in the present. Moreover, the absence of the feathers is also the mark of the time that has passed, of Dov's childhood without his biological parents—for, as Miriam tells Said, the two feathers were probably lost when Dov was playing with them as a child (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 165). It is therefore this absence that opens up a certain communication between Miriam's world and that of Said—between her experience of the home with Dov and his experience of the home before it was lost. It is this absence that allows a movement between the present and the past—between Said and Safiyya's life in this home twenty years ago and Dov's childhood with Miriam and between both of these moments and the present conversation. Moreover, it is this absence that conjures Dov's presence, that brings into the conversation what was left unnamed thus far, what could not have

[136] In this context, see Mohamed Radi's discussion of the palpability and fullness of silences in this novella. He describes these moments of silence as fertile states of promise and possibility; as framing the moments of important speech and directing the reader's attention to the significance of the next statement; as attempting to express the inexpressible and as being the only possible expression of this kind of pain; as figures of passing time and as a fragmenting device; and as elements that draw attention to the difficulty of the exchange, of speech itself. In this sense this silence is not a non-being or a form of negativity but rather a different kind of presence, "an integral part of the composition, which means much more than words themselves" (Radi 276–77, the translation is mine).

been mentioned. It is this absence that brings up Dov as the "truth" and the essence of all these disparate moments and views, their common element and quality, the son who carries all these different meanings.

Another important absence is the empty rectangle on the wall of Faris al-Lubda's original home. In a side-story, which takes up the fourth out of the five sections of this novella, Said takes advantage of one of the moments in which Miriam is absent (having left the room) to tell Safiyya about the parallel experience of their neighbor, Faris al-Lubda. Like them, Faris has recently returned to the home he had lost in 1948. However, unlike Said and Safiyya, their neighbor finds in his old home in Jaffa a Palestinian man, who was himself displaced from his Jaffa home that was bombed while the man was fighting in the 1948 War. When Faris enters the house, he finds the picture of his martyred brother, Badr, on the wall in the living room, still decorated with the wide black ribbon of mourning, right where his family has left it. The man who now lives in the house, and who is never named in the novella, tells Faris that the portrait of his brother has become an integral part of his and his family's life. When he first entered this house, the man recounts, the portrait was the first thing he noticed and for reasons he "can't really explain" led him to rent this home from the Israeli government. The man, who was just released from a prison camp, felt "under siege" in Jaffa, which has lost most of its Palestinian population during the war, describing himself, metaphorically, as "a tiny island, alone and isolated in a sea of raging hostility" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 176). Badr's photograph, according to him, served him as a source of companionship and comfort and helped him "not just to resist but to remain" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 177).[137] He has even named his own son

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[137] "When I saw the picture, I found consolation in it, a companion that spoke to me, to remind me of things I could be proud of, things I considered to be the best in our lives. […] At the time, like now, it seemed to me that for a man to have a companion who bears arms and dies for his country is something

Badr, after Faris' brother. When Faris leaves to go back to Ramallah he asks for his brother's portrait. The man quickly consents and removes it from the wall. It is only when Faris arrives back in Ramallah that he realizes that the photograph in fact belongs in the old home with its new family. He drives all the way back to Jaffa and returns the portrait to the family living in his house. Following this encounter, Said whispers to Safiyya, Faris al-Lubda has decided to join the armed resistance (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 178).

As the man takes the photograph off the wall to give it to Faris it leaves behind "a pale, meaningless rectangle. A disturbing void." When Faris returns and gives back the portrait, the man, who is ecstatic to reunite with it, tells him, "I felt a terrible emptiness when I looked at the rectangle left behind on the wall. My wife cried and my children got very upset. I regretted letting you take the picture. In the end, this man is one of us" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 177). That empty case, that rectangle of slightly fresher coat of paint, manifests the time that has passed between the brother's death during the battles of 1948 and Faris' visit nearly twenty years later. As Campbell describes it very poetically (and with a tint of Orientalism), the "square testifies to twenty years of wear and tear on the paint of the wall—twenty years of sunlight, of tobacco smoke, of the aroma of tasty Palestinian food—twenty years of life for the man's family." Moreover, Campbell claims, his photograph "has protected the paint from this wear and tear, and upon its removal the man is forced to see the Real of the death that has taken the square out of time" (71–72). Campbell seems to believe that it is a trauma that has not been sufficiently addressed that the removal of the photograph exposes and that the photograph itself served as an icon, a kind of psychological talisman, facilitating this repression (62–63). However, Campbell's description may also bring to mind a different possible reading, according to which the relation

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precious that can't be tossed aside. Maybe it was a kind of loyalty to those who fought. I felt that getting rid of it would be an unforgivable betrayal" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 176–177).

of the rectangle to the wall is like those twenty years pressed together until they became the two sides of the same sheet of paper in Said's simile. The empty rectangle is thus simply the mark of time, the eruption of the past into the present or the inclusion of the past in the present. Not so much the traumatic eruption of the real as it is the contiguous point between event and history. Indeed, the removal of the portrait reveals the past all at once, allowing the event of 1948 to erupt in the present. On the other hand, Badr also seems to have survived as little Badr and thus as part of this family, as an ongoing history. Like Khaldun himself, who is metaphorized at the beginning of the novella as a photograph,[138] the portrait is a metaphor covering all of this, allowing all of this, creating all of this.

One may still understand the blank rectangle on the wall as representing something ineffable and inexpressible without understanding the photograph as an icon that enables repression. Rather than a mechanism to avoid a confrontation with a traumatic past, the photograph may be seen precisely as the only possible expression of this inexpressible loss. The portrait of someone else's brother, as well as the dead brother himself, come to stand for a whole generation who fought and died, for an entire lost brotherhood or community, as well as for resistance and steadfastness (*ṣumūd*) themselves. The past in itself is dreadful and inexpressible but it can be perceived, thought and expressed by the brother and by the brother's portrait as metaphor, which brings several worldviews into existence and clash. It allows the family who managed to stay in Jaffa, for instance, to relate to the past, as well as to the present, of those who were expelled.

Moreover, the man also tells Faris that "during the night," while the picture of Badr was

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[138] When Said is trying to return to his house in Haifa during the 1948 battles, as he is pushed by the army's gunfire and a torrent of people towards the harbor, it is mentioned that "[i]n his head there was one picture only, suspended as though hanging on wall: his wife Safiyya and his son Khaldun" (Kanafani, "Returning to Haifa" 155).

gone, “I said to my wife that if you [plural] wanted to reclaim him, you’d [plural] have to reclaim the house, Jaffa, us… The picture doesn’t solve your problem, but with respect to us, it’s your bridge to us and our bridge to you [plural]” (Kanafani, “Returning to Haifa” 177). Thus the picture, this mobile object, serves as a bridge between the worlds of the Palestinians of the “inside” and those in the West Bank, allowing a form of relation between these two severed parts of the Palestinian people (without equating or uniting them into an organic whole). In this sense, it seems that Emile Habiby misinterpreted in fact Kanafani’s novella when he asked that the inscription on his tombstone read “Stayed in Haifa” as a response to Kanafani. Kanafani does not seem to criticize those who stayed in Jaffa or Haifa as much as he is concerned with finding a certain bridge that would allow the travel between these two parts of the Palestinian people and their different experiences of the disaster.

The portrait thus connects times as well as worldviews and bring them into dissensual communication. These are the last attributes of creative metaphors: they not only bring non-communicating worldview to bear on one another but they also allow movement in time, bringing different times to bear on one another. Moreover, the portrait, like the other metaphors in the novel, is a point of transition between event and history—in this case, between the *nakba* as an event and the *nakba* as history. Creative metaphors allow the specific movement between history and event and undermine the dichotomy between structure on the one hand and freedom, history or the subject, on the other.

In order to explain this last point I would like to return again to Deleuze, this time to his masterful essay, “How do we Recognize Structuralism?” where he defines seven criteria of the specific operation of structure in structuralism—or, perhaps, in what we would consider today to

be post-structuralism. While Deleuze expresses utter contempt for metaphors elsewhere,[139] in this essay he clearly accedes their unique role in the structure. This role has to do with the multi-serial character of the structure in (post)structuralism and the homologous relations between series, which are the element that endows the structure with life and movement (Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 182). After defining the structure as differenciating (and therefore as predicated on the differential and the singular) and as based on The Third element (or, the symbolic), as well as on positions and roles, Deleuze turns to consider the serial character of the structure—that is, the serial organization of differential elements and their problematic relations to another series (always at least one other series). Deleuze uses Levi-Strauss' theory of totemism as an example here: it is not the identity or resemblance of a man to an animal that is at stake in Levi-Strauss' totemism but rather one series of differential relations between animals which is in structural homology to a second differential series of social relations. Or, in Lacan's reading of *The Rat Man*, it is the relationship between a paternal series (debt/friend) and a filial series (poor woman/rich woman). What keeps the two series from simply reflecting one another is the slippages or displacements that they undergo in relation to one another, a displacement which, according to Deleuze, is properly structural. For instance, "[I]n the filial series of *The Rat Man*, the poor woman comes to occupy the friend's place in relation to the debt" (Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 183).

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[139] For instance, Deleuze consistently insists that his concepts are not metaphors, that terms such as "face," "tree" or "black hole" are not metaphors but rather machines (Deleuze and Parnet 17, 25), and that "there are no metaphors, only combinations" (Deleuze and Parnet 117). He further states: "There are no literal words, neither are there metaphors (all metaphors are sullied words, or else make them so). There are only inexact words to designate something exactly. Let us create extraordinary words, on condition that they be put to the most ordinary use and that the entity they designate be made to exist in the same way as the most common object" (Deleuze and Parnet 3). Together with Guattari, he insists that Kafka kills all metaphors for the sake of their opposite, metamorphosis—a process which they celebrate (Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka* 22).

Deleuze explains that this multi-serial character and its displacements are precisely "why structuralism brings so much attention to bear on *metaphor and metonymy*. These are not in any way figures of the imagination," which would make the series merely reflect one another, "but are above all structural factors. They are even *the* two structural factors, in the sense that they express the two degrees of freedom of displacement, from one series to another and within the same series. Far from being imaginary, they prevent the series that they animate from confusing or duplicating their terms in imaginary fashion" (Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 184, the first emphasis is mine; the second is in the original). In this complex understanding of the structure of structuralism, metaphors thus become the very element of movement that animates the structure and keeps it from stagnating. They are the very element of freedom within the structure that takes the structure *post* structuralism, making it move, change and persist. We therefore need to think of metaphors, too, as a point of convergence of *series*, not particular points. That is, metaphors bring into relation not two meanings but two series of meanings, two whole contexts, and make them communicate through these slippages and displacements. In our case, Badr's portrait (as well as Badr himself) brings into contact two whole contexts—on the one hand, the series of abu-Lubda's life, his loss and the experience of the Palestinians in exile; on the other hand, the series of the man's life, his fighting and loss, and the experience of the Palestinians on the inside. This is the sense in which the portrait serves as a bridge between them. (Of course, there is also the series of the portrait itself, its relation to the wall and the dead brother.) Similarly, Khaldun-Dov brings into contact different contexts and not merely different meanings: beyond the contact points of Dov and Kahldun, he circulates within and between the two series of, on the one hand, Said and Safiyya's lives and loss, the *nakba* and its unfolding, and the experience of Palestinians during and following the *nakba* more broadly,

and, on the other hand, the series of Miriam and Iphrat's lives and loss, the holocaust, the Jewish experience of this disaster and its aftermath and even the establishment of the State of Israel itself and the creation of the "new Jew." Metaphors, when they work, are thus discursive rather than merely semiotic or semantic elements, as Paul Ricœur demonstrates quite elaborately in the seventh chapter of his *The Rule of Metaphor*.

Deleuze then turns to discuss the sixth criterion of the structure, the empty square—or, what comes to the same thing, the "object=x"—defining it as that which allows movement within a structure. It is the point of convergence of series, which animates them, distributes and redistributes the terms among them, displaces them and makes them communicate. As such, the empty case seems as a special instance of metaphor. Indeed, Deleuze claims that it is "*its own* metaphor, and *its own* metonymy" ("How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 184). Similarly, the object=x is an excess; always missing from its place, it is never where it is supposed to be or where it is searched for. It is the mobile empty square itself and, as Deleuze claims, "Games need the empty square, without which nothing would move forward or function" (Lacan, for instance, invokes the dummy-hand in bridge; "How do We Recognize Structuralism?" 185). Deleuze's example of the empty square/object=x in the realm of language is that of the portmanteau word—such as the "snark," both a shark and a snake, in *Alice in Wonderland*—not only two meanings at once but a nonsense circulating through the series and animating them (Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 186). As such, the portmanteau word seems to be a special case of metaphor, one where the conflicting meanings become, materially, one and the same word. However, beyond this important difference, portmanteau words are remarkably similar to metaphors, for they, too, are an instance of two serial meanings that are in conflict with one another and produce a circulation of sense within and between the series.

This helps elucidate something about the complex relationship between the portrait and the empty square behind it (or between Khaldun-Dov and the missing feathers). These empty spaces—silences, absences, all these things that are missing from their places in the novella—are unexpressed and inexpressible phenomena that are nonetheless present and around which everything turns and returns. However, the metaphor, in the form of the object=x that is circling around, never tries to make them present by pinning them down with a name, by adding words that will represent or describe them once and for all. Rather, it is only by never fully covering up the empty case, by never stopping it from circulating, that the metaphor nonetheless gives it expression and it expresses it precisely as empty and missing, as a silence that cannot be fully spoken. Creative metaphors are thus a refusal of (conceptual) speech that will fill out, once and for all, the empty case and stop its circulation. They are of the order of silence and they require it for their special movement, for their ability to create circulation and movement between different series—just like games need the empty case in order for movement and play to occur.

Importantly, it is in the empty square that Deleuze finds the hero of the structure—a certain form of the subject: "The subject is precisely the instance which follows [both chases and is missing from] the empty place […] it is less subject than subjected, subjected to the empty place." While it is often claimed that structuralism has done away with the subject, Deleuze insists rather that the structure does have a subject, it merely breaks it up and distributes it systematically, contesting its identity and making it constantly shift from one place to another. It is a nomad subject made of individuations or subjectifications ("How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 190).[140] Thus, even accidents are immanent to the structure—they are events that

[140] Compare: de Man's discussion of metaphors as the structure of the constitution of the self (particularly as described by Fichte), as well as its relation to the structure of judgment, in his "The Concept of Irony" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 173–75).

are internal to the structure itself precisely because of the empty case (Deleuze, "How Do We Recognize Structuralism?" 191).

In his discussion of the empty square in *The Logic of Sense*, this relationship between the empty square and the event is stated even more clearly. In Deleuze's words, "it is imprecise to oppose structure and event: the structure includes a register of ideal *events*, that is, an entire *history* internal to it" (*The Logic of Sense* 50). This is because the two series of the structure converge towards the paradoxical element, the empty square, which is their "differentiator." The empty square emits singularities—that is, events—and "endlessly redistributes them, while their transformations form a *history*" (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* 53). Thus, the paradoxical instance, the empty square, is the Event, whereas the metamorphoses or redistributions of singularities form a history and each combination or distribution is itself an event (Deleuze, *The Logic of Sense* 57). Consider the rectangle on the wall as an Event of this kind: it determine the events of its possible (or rather, virtual) meanings, the different combinations and distributions of meanings actualized at different times—the loss of the brother, the loss of the land, exile, brotherhood of fighters, the isolation of those who remained, etc.—and makes them communicate. Taken together, and from the perspective of their redistribution, these events of sense form a history. Indeed, as we have seen, the rectangle, with its whiter coat of paint, expresses the very passing of time over twenty years.

Ricœur extrapolates a similar claim from the history of the (structural) theory of metaphor:

> A phenomenon like metaphor has some systematic aspects and some historical aspects. For a word to have more than one meaning is, strictly speaking, a synchronistic fact—it is now, in the code, that it signifies several things. Consequently, we must align polysemy with synchrony. But the alteration of

> meaning that adds to the polysemy and in the past had contributed to building up current polysemy is a diachronistic fact. Thus, as innovation, metaphor is to be set among changes of meaning, and thus among diachronistic facts; yet as accepted deviation, it is aligned with polysemy, and thus belongs in the synchronistic realm. Once again, then, it is necessary to mediate too severe an opposition and to interrelate the structural and historical aspects. The word seems truly to stand at the crossroads of two orders of consideration, thanks to its capacity for acquiring new meanings and for retaining them without losing the old meanings. In its twofold character, this cumulative process seems to call for a panchronistic point of view (Ricœur 142).

In this sense, it is therefore not surprising that the discussion of metaphors and tropes in poststructiuralism, and especially in deconstruction, has centered around the relationship between concepts and metaphors—or, more precisely, between dead metaphors (or catachresis) and living ones. Both Derrida and de Man have discussed at length the impossibility of stabilizing the difference between the two, an attempt that has been the task of philosophy since Plato and Aristotle. However, this nature of metaphors as the very pivoting point between history and structure is the root of this very impossibility. Since metaphors are thoroughly historical events, both structural and free, they can never be extracted from either realm and should be instead studied in relation to this very nature. Unlike Derrida and de Man I am therefore optimistic, for this evental historical understanding allows for a certain political intervention in the use of metaphors and of language more broadly.

In his book on Proust, Deleuze writes that style—the very thing that multiplies worldviews in Deleuze's account—this style, is nothing other than metaphor. But metaphor, he qualifies, is metamorphosis. In this chapter, I tried to demonstrate how certain metaphors can be seen to affect metamorphosis, to *be* a metamorphosis (and not merely a reflection of one, as in

Aristotle's writing [Ricœur 13, 44–48]). This historical understanding allows for a certain political intervention in the use of metaphors and of language more broadly. The question is no minor one; it is nothing less than how to bring about an event and how to make it ongoing—what kind of metaphorical or theoretical engagement might promote that. The answer that I have proposed here is through a catachrestic re-use, through a selective repetition that adds nothing new, that does not aim at closing down the gap by an accurate naming, and that instead puts two series, two context, into a productive conflict. It is a form that does not aim to express a different discourse in my own terms but rather affect a change in both realms. Yes, this conflict might indeed die one day, be resolved or managed, become a dead or dormant metaphor; however, it can always be awakened, just like Dov is in this novella. Moreover, our ability to create new metaphors that count the political differently, that delineate new worlds and new worldviews and put them in conflict with one another to force a change in our perception and inspire interpretation, is never—could never be—limited.

CONCLUSIONS:
BAB AL-SHAMS, OR RETURNING MEANING TO MEANING

> *Nahilah told Yunes about the sobs they'd heard coming from the* moshav *the Yemenis had built over al-Birwa and about the mysterious rumors of children dying and disappearing. She said the Yemeni Jewesses would go out into the fields and lament like Arab women and that she'd started to fear for her children. "If the children of the Jews are disappearing, what will happen to ours?"*
>
> *—Elias Khoury, Gate of the Sun.*

The object of this study has been to survey different forms of conflicts between meanings in literatures of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in order to examine their relevance to political action and conflicted collective existence. In particular, I was concerned with finding models for political action that would maintain, rather then resolve, conflict, but while rendering it productive rather than destructive.

In Chapter One, I have examined the model of irony, which I have associated with the political forms of the state and of revolution in their common conception, finding this model inadequate for a communal life that sustains productive conflict, for it maintains the dichotomous structure of judgment even while rendering it never conclusive. In Chapter Two, I have explored the model of humor as a form of resistance—a model that I found to be offering useful forms of critique but lacking in terms of producing a communal life that is not dependent on the law or on power. Finally, in Chapters Three and Four, I have elaborated on the sympathetic model of satire, which I find the most beneficial in allowing for a conflicted community that productively sustains its conflicts without relying on the law, and which allows an ethical relation to the other that is unequivocally based on difference. In exploring each of these models, which also embody different forms of repetition and of time, the emphasis was placed on the ways in which the

literary and the poetic are part and parcel of politics and how they may expand the array of our political possibilities.

By way of conclusion, I would like to discuss here one recent example of the way literature and political action intertwine—the different manners by which they influence one another, materialize one another, and give one another meaning in ways that complicate the primacy of the one over the other. The example bellow, the example of the village and of the book who share the name *Bab al-Shams* (Gate of the Sun), further epitomizes the ways in which the literary is, and allows for, forms of political action and collectivity that do not disregard differences between "us" and "them," between occupiers and occupied—and even showcase more nuanced differences between the entire colonizing community in mandatory Palestine and the settles in the West Bank, or between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews. They allow a form of relation and joint political work that do not sacrifice the different histories and the different modes of our oppressions in coming to create new possible collectivities. This power of the literary is precisely what I have described, over the last two chapters, under the heading of sympathy and I hope that this final example would aid in elucidating how this literary practice contributes to the expansion of the repertoire of concrete political actions.

Bab al-Shams is the name given to the tent village that was set up by Palestinians east of Jerusalem (in an area Israel dubs Area E1) on Friday, January 11, 2013. The village was erected as an act of resistance to a planned Israeli settlement expansion in the area and as an anchor for future permanent settlement on this land, privately owned by Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, immediately declared the area a "closed military zone," ordering Israeli forces to surround the village and evict its inhabitants. Although the Israeli Supreme Court issued a temporary stay of the eviction, the government nonetheless claimed the tent village was

an imminent "security threat" and followed through with the eviction early Sunday morning (January 13, 2013), violently detaining many of the inhabitants. In the days to follow, as Palestinian activists attempted to return to this site they were, again, violently expelled from their land.

In their statement, the founders of the village proclaimed:

> We, the sons and daughters of Palestine from all throughout the land, announce the establishment of Bab al-Shams Village (Gate of the Sun). We the people, without permits from the occupation, without permission from anyone, sit here today because this is our land and it is our right to inhabit it. […] We will not remain silent as settlement expansion and confiscation of our land continues. Therefore we hereby establish the village of Bab al-Shams to proclaim our faith in direct action and popular resistance. We declare that the village will stand steadfast until the owners of this land will get their right to build on their land. […] For decades, Israel has established facts on the ground as the International Community remained silent in response to these violations. The time has come now to change the rules of the game, for us to establish facts on the ground—our own land.[141]

What is so interesting about this action? Indeed, as a non-violent direct action, the establishment of the tent village of Bab al-Shams follows the line of non-violent resistance that Palestinians in the West Bank have been implementing for several years now as part of what one may call "The Third Intifada." However, the uniqueness of this action lies in the fact that—as one of the leading activists in this protest, Mohammed Khatib, has said in an interview to *Haʾaretz*—the establishment of the village was "not a symbolic act" (Levinson, Khoury, and Reuters). Rather, it is a genuine action on the ground, a way of directly resisting the ongoing

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[141] For the full statement in English, as well as for further details about the establishment of the village of Bab al-Shams, see Deger and Robbins.

construction of settlements and the continuous theft of Palestinian land. Without undermining the significance of the many demonstrations against the Separation Wall that have been taking place regularly in villages throughout the West Bank for nearly a decade now, this action seems to me to take the current Palestinian freedom struggle a step further. It is no longer a symbolic march towards the Wall but rather an actual founding of a village, of a settlement, "establishing facts on the ground." It is an autonomous creation of a future reality, a future community, as the Palestinians envision it.

Secondly, as the above statement suggests, the establishment of Bab al-Shams self-consciously adopts some of the operation patterns of the Israeli settlements themselves—that is, an establishment of facts on the ground without seeking permission from the government (even if this government eventually intervenes in the settlement project, becoming the rubber stamp with which settlements are formally approved). This action therefore achieves two goals. First, it is no longer a re-action, a response, to the government. In fact, it is not working vis-à-vis the government or the state at all. Rather, it works in relation to the settlers' community, on the one hand, and in relation to the international community, on the other. As such it performs a community that relates to others and maintains conflict without any recourse to the law or to power. The inhabitants of Bab al-Shams created their desired future society, a civil society, right now and by themselves, and determined the political conditions in which they operated and which they, at the same time, produced. This is the Third Intifada. This establishment of facts on the ground does not necessarily aim at a governmental recognition that will make it into a permanent settlement but rather at the creation of a community that, in a sense, parallels the Jewish settlement community—perhaps even the Jewish settlement community in the broad sense, i.e., the Jewish community settling the entire land, between the river and the sea. After all,

establishing facts on the ground was not only the method used by settlers after the occupation of Palestinian lands in 1967; it was also used by Zionism at large, before and during 1948, in order to take hold of Palestine.

Moreover, this action also relates to the global (and regional) "Occupy" community, whose modus operandi is repeated here as well (perhaps indicating the need to rethink the practice and conceptualization of "Occupy," too). This is, after all, the ultimate "Occupy" action, not only because it describes itself as a popular resistance movement and as a direct action by squatting in this site, and not simply because it announces its intentions to hold various cultural activities as well as daily discussions of the Israeli settlement project, but rather because it is an action of a community working to regain its autonomy and its place by creating this very community, by reinventing and renaming it, and by the very act of taking place.

This occupation—like any other act of occupation as a form of political resistance, and even more emphatically so than any other "Occupy" action—exposes the fact that any occupation is a re-occupation, is itself a repetition. That is, it shows in action that there are no empty lands waiting to be redeemed. Rather, every space we occupy is, or was, already occupied by someone else and thus every time we occupy we merely occupy anew. Thus, this occupation of space is immediately and necessarily associated with the history of the Israeli occupation and brings to the surface its criminality and its reliance on force. It evokes and illuminates the tension between the occupation of space as a form of resistance in the E1 Area and the military occupation of the West Bank, as well as the tension between the occupation of ha-Shenayim Park in Jaffa during the summer of tent protests in Israel in 2011 and the historical colonization of Jaffa (as well as its current "crawling" occupation by way of gentrification). In this sense, the village's occupation of space also foregrounds the fact that our dispossessions and oppressions

are different and their histories vary. The tent village therefore showcases the fact that the regime itself had to occupy this space by force and undermine the way the regime divides us into different groups according to the different manners by which we are governed. Finally, the tent village further betrays the fundamental and long-forgotten understanding that this space always already collectively belongs to the people who live in it and not to the government, which simply took hold of it, and is still holding on to it, by force. As such, what the tent village exposes is the illusion of representation as such, the illusion that the government does indeed represent those whom it governs.

The Third Intifada, then, is not a reaction, not a rejection of the other or a response to a government (however brutal it may be), it does not play within the logic of representation, nor does it necessarily advance a bloody war. It is, rather, the creation of a community and of its place by way of taking place, the creation of a community that names itself by itself. And this name is extremely meaningful. The name of the village, Bab al-Shams, does not simply imply a celebration of some mystical, nationalistic Palestinian entity that is being rebuilt here, as one might think at first upon recognizing this allusion to Elias Khoury's novel of the same name, first published in 1998. Shams (meaning, sun), the female character whose name is echoed in the name of the mysterious cave Bab al-Shams in the novel, is not just another literary female figure serving as a symbol for the lost homeland. Rather, she is, and consequently so is the novel, the epitome of so much more. She is the very name of the plurality of meanings, stories, and truths in this region, and of the negotiations and disagreements between them. She is the name of the promise of a new, open civil society.

While weaving the love stories between Yunes and Nahilah and between Khalil and Shams out of patches of self-proclaimed fictions, Khoury's epos also strives to delineate the

historical and topological contours of *al-Jalil,* the northern region of Palestine. It re-writes them over, underneath, and alongside the topography of *ha-Galil*—the Hebrew name for the same region. In this region, the Galilee, many Palestinian villages and towns have been erased and replaced by new, Israeli villages and towns, bearing Hebrew names, and thus their history and very existence has been erased. In his epic re-writing, Khoury brings back to life the lost histories and topographies; however, in his novel, nothing holds in place for long and the contours of this story and this space are forever slipping away. The novel does not seem to take this instability as a failure. Quite to the contrary, this attempt to reconstruct the story and the space of Palestine always leaves it open, tied with its surroundings, as well as stubbornly avoids positing one truth—fixed, eternal, consistent—above others.

It is an epos of storytelling, of "was or was not," and the very negotiation between competing stories. In *Bab al-Shams*, there is never a single narrative: different stories intertwine, even when they contradict one another or testify to their own fictional nature; In *Bab al-Shams*, no character maintains its unity: Shams becomes other characters while they in turn become Shams, thereby showcasing the instability of identity as such and marking the option of undermining it, changing it, recreating it in a word, in a creative name.[142] Nor is there a clear dividing line between Jews and Arabs in this novel: the Palestinian woman in Gaza, for instance, is eventually exposed as a Jewish woman wishing to return to Germany, the land of her persecutors, in order to die in peace (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 435), whereas the Jewish woman living in the stolen home of Umm-Hassan in the Galilee is revealed to be from Beirut.[143]

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[142] The characters in the novel are torn into pieces and mingled together just like the names on the little scrapes of paper in Nahilah's basket (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 417).

[143] "'You're from Beirut?' she cried, the words tumbling out of her mouth and her eyes filling with tears. 'Listen, Sister,' the Jewish woman said. 'I'm from Beirut too, from Wadi Abu Jmil. You know Wadi Abu Jmil, the Jewish district in the center? They brought me from there when I was twelve. I left Beirut and

Symbols and metaphors—Shams, for instance—no longer hint at one, eternal truth hidden underneath them, but rather allow a plurality of meanings, ever changing and competing. They never signify merely one thing, never nicely meet one corresponding element, just as there is never a one-to-one compatibility between the map of *al-Jalil,* which is unfolded in the novel, and the contemporary map of *ha-Galil*. Instead of presenting the reader with one truth, multiple meanings ensure constant refraction and negotiation of what was and will be, even when the interlocutor is currently silent—in the book, the silent interlocutor is the dying Yunes, who Dr. Khalil tries to bring back to life by speaking to him about both their lives; in contemporary politics, it is the majority of Israeli-Jews, who do not acknowledge the *nakba*.

In this vein, Khalil, the narrator, claims that any utterance is a riddle or a euphemism—that is, a kind of metaphor, has at least two meanings—and therefore any utterance requires a translation, a writing anew.[144] More importantly, it is only through his love to the ever illusive

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came to this dreary, bleak land. Do you know the Ecole de l'Alliance Israélite? To the right of the school there's a three-story building that used to be owned by a Polish Jew named Elie Bron. I'm from there.' 'You're from Beirut?' Umm Hassan said in amazement. 'Yes, Beirut.' 'How did that happen?' 'What do you mean, how did that happen? I've no idea. You're living in Beirut and you've come here to cry? I'm the one who should be crying. Get up, my friend, and go. Send me to Beirut and take this wretched land back'" (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 108–109).

[144] Khalil says to his silent interlocutor, Yunes: "Everything needs translating. Everything that's said is a riddle or a euphemism that needs to be interpreted. Now I must reinterpret you from the beginning. I'll take apart your disjointed phrases to see what's inside them and will put you back together again to get at your truth. Can I get at your truth? What does your truth mean? I don't know, but I'll discover things that had never crossed my mind" (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 309).

And elsewhere: "You like words when they're like a knife's edge. You used to make fun of people's speech, of how instead of stating their opinions directly they take refuge in euphemisms and metaphors. 'Words must wound,' you'll say. But where do you want me to find you words that wound? All our words are circular. From the beginning, which is to say since Adam, our language has been circular. No matter how hard we try to break its circles, we find ourselves falling into new ones. So bear with me and play the game. Come, let's circle with our words. Let's circle around the sun [Shams], let's circle around the camp, let's circle around Galilee, let's circle around Nahilah and Shams and around all the names. Let's circle with names, let's circle without names. Let's circle and come back to the beginning. Come back with me to the beginning, so we can get to the opening of the story" (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 303–304).

Shams that he learns that sense is always multiple, even infinite (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 463). Hence, the name of the village, Bab al-Shams—just like the repetition of the modus operandi of the settlement, the occupation, of the land—indicates that Palestinians have not yet given up on the possibility of a conflictual conversation that rewrites history and space without fixing them in a single truth. This rewriting would only be possible, however, as long as those overlaying histories and topographies are written by a shared political imagination, based on this literature which already exists, on this metaphor of the gate left open to the sun, to Shams, who teaches us the multiplicity of meanings and stories, who teaches us the form of conflicted stories, truths and societies.

In his grateful letter to the founders of Bab al-Shams, the Lebanese author of this novel, Elias Khoury, wrote: "When you built your wonderful village you have returned[145] meaning to meaning. You became the sons of this land and its masters" (Khoury, "Letter to My People in the Village of Bab Al-Shams"). I believe this is nothing less than the greatest achievement of this tent village, which was unfortunately dissolved so soon: It gave a new, genuine meaning to the very notion of meaning. It gave to meaning the meaning of multiple meanings, of the action that takes place among people and not in reaction to governments, of an active discourse that, due to its multiple meanings, the government (or anyone else for that matter) is unable to manage and limit in a single truth. In an interview I conducted with Khoury a couple of months after the establishment of Bab al-Shams, he has also emphasized his astonishment over the ways in which

[145] The expression "you have returned" in this sentence is used in the sense of "you gave back," "you have restored." In the original Arabic, however, the author uses here the word *ʾaʿadatum*, which shares the same root as the words for return in the expression "right of return" (*ʿauda*) or in the title of Kanafani's novella "Returning to Haifa" (*ʿaʾid*). I therefore chose to modify the translation to reflect this connection, especially since the meaning of returning has been so central to the previous chapter.

literature came to life in this event (and while the literature itself was based on people's life experiences). He said,

> Normally literature imitates life—I mean, since Aristotle and mimesis and so on. Yet, suddenly, with the tent village, you see before you how reality is continuing—not only imitating, but continuing—literature and making it a real possibility. I felt that not only human beings become words but also words can become human beings. I think that this is the incarnation of what this literary journey means—the way reality and literature change roles, the way they mirror each other and invent one another. And, of course, I felt that they [the activists] made me, profoundly now, into a reader, because *they* were making the event. […] Politically speaking, I believe that these types of cultural events with political meanings are far more important than old politics (Khoury, as quoted in Mor, translated here from Hebrew).

This circular relation between life or politics and literature was already written into *Bab al-Shams* as an idea—it was a fictional novel based on interviews, memories and documents; it explicitly addressed the way our story-telling shapes our realities and our identities. The establishment of the village by the same name, however, turned this idea into practice and completed the circle. In this way, the relationship between literature and politics here becomes similar to the relationship Khoury finds between the land and the activists of Bab al-Shams, who are, according to him, "the sons of this land and its masters."

While the tent village of Bab al-Shams was short-lived, it was not an isolated occurrence. After its violent and rapid evacuation, more tent villages continued to sprout around the West Bank (such as Bab al-karama, Aḥfad Yunes, Ṣumud zeytun, and Kan'an). In these instances, too, the protestors used the tents to perform, even if only temporarily, the history and the current state of their dispossession, joining together against an oppressive regime in order to collectively claim their land and their right for self-rule. They too performed the future civil society that they

envisioned but without fixing it in a permanent settlement. Moreover, Palestinians have begun establishing this kind of villages even before the establishment of Bab al-Shams. In 2012, in between the ruins of ʾIkrit and Barʿam—two evacuated Palestinian villages in the north of Israel to which their former inhabitants are not permitted to return—the grandchildren of expelled Palestinians have raised temporary villages as a clear demand of, and a concrete attempt at, return. As far as I know, these villages still exist today. Visually, this resettlement has testified to the fact that it is not an accurate return, for the new inhabitants have settled next to the ruins of the old villages or even modified them. In that, these projects of community building, while not in direst dialogue with Israelis or with the Israeli left, have nonetheless consisted in a certain visual and performative dialogue with the Israeli tent protest of summer 2011 (and, to a lesser extent, of summer 2012).

On the Israeli side, the left—and I am particularly concerned here with the small Israeli post- and anti-Zionist left—has been prevented from participating in these projects, sometimes for technical reasons (not being able to enter certain areas of the West Bank), and mostly for political ones (avoiding normalization). However, within this group too, a certain parallel has occurred, again in a way that was patently literary and that was producing conflicted ties that are sympathetic without eliding differences. The instance I am referring to here is part of a certain political awakening of the young Mizrahi left in Israel, which—interestingly enough—is solidifying around nothing other but a poetry group, named *ʿArs Poeṭiḳa*. The name of the group clearly plays on the term *ars poetica* (*ʾars poeṭiḳa*, in Hebrew), but the letter *ʾalef* at the beginning of the word *ʾars* is replaced with the letter *ʿayn,* thus creating the word *ʿars*—an Arabic word which means "pimp" and which is used in Hebrew slang as a derogatory term for Mizrahi Jews (and particularly Mizrahi men). Over the last four years, the poetry group *ʿArs*

Poeṭiḳa has produced many biting political poems, which are read almost like manifestos, about the situation of Mizrahi Jews in Israel. Many of their poems, however, also refer to the Israeli occupation of Palestine and the conditions of Palestinians under this occupation.

Here, I would like to focus on one poem, by the poet Shlomi Hatuka, which begins with a quotation from Khoury's *Bab al-Shams* and thereby nicely ties the Mizrahi struggle in Israel to the Palestinian struggle, without subordinating the one to the other or equating the two. His poem, "With Open Eyes" (*Beʿeynayyim peḳuḥot*), begins with an epigraph that quotes the last sentence from the epigraph of this concluding chapter: "If the children of the Jews are disappearing, what will happen to ours?" (Khoury, *Gate of the Sun* 490; Hatuka 68).

Khoury himself already dealt with the complexity of the situation of Mizrahi Jews in Israel and the devastating consequences of the Zionist settler colonial project for them throughout his novel. I have mentioned before the scene in which the woman from Beirut, Ella Dweik, meets Umm-Hassan when, like Said and Safiyya in "Returning to Haifa," Umm-Hassan returns to her stolen home and finds Ella Dweik living in it. Khoury's portrayal of Ella Dweik's frustration and sympathetic attitude seems like it might be somewhat based on Kanafani's treatment of Miriam, but it adds the additional complication of the Mizrahi hardship in being torn from an Arab context and placed into the foreign Zionist project. The conversation between the two women makes clear that Ella Dweik, too, feels uprooted and displaced, even if her situation is not the same as that of Umm-Hassan. With the sentence in epigraph, which Nahilah says to her husband, Yunes, after hearing Jewish Yemeni women lamenting the lose of their children, Khoury addresses a specific controversy around Mizrahi Jews that haunts Israel to this day. It is the affair of the stolen Yemeni children, who were taken from their families in the early days of the State. Until this day, Israel has not recognized this theft and its results for hundreds of

families (some say the practice was so widespread that one of every eight Yemeni children was abducted).[146] In so doing, Khoury has already drawn a profound and complex connection between the situation of Mizrahi Jews in Israel and that of Palestinians.

Shlomi Hatuka is the first on the Israeli side to respond to this call for conversation in writing. Consider the beginning of Hatuka's poem, "With Open Eyes":

> "If the children of the Jews are disappearing, what will happen to ours?"
> —Elias Khoury, Gate of the Sun.

> And if that has been done to our children, what is being done to their children...
> And if that has been done to our parents, what is being done to their parents...
> And if that has been done to our uncles, what is being done
> to their uncles...
>
> And if we calculate the money
> when walking to the grocery store,
> if for us this short walk turns
> into soul-searching,
> into rage,
> what do their steps turn into?
> It has happened before that I had left my home a loving person
> and arrived
> a hating one.
>
> And if we are being expelled from our homes
> as though we do not belong to them and they to us,
> as though we have never roamed them
> like breath in the body

[146] On the stolen Yemeni children affair, see, for instance: Madmoni-Gerber, *Israeli Media and the Framing of Internal Conflict*; Madmoni-Gerber, "The Yemenite Baby Affair"; "Yemenite Children Affair"; Katiee.

("as though I have not hung the stones of our home
as a necklace on my chest"),
what is done to them
to their homes [...]
(Hatuka, 68, the translation is mine)

In his poem, Hatuka does not resort to describing the hardships of Palestinians. Instead, he chooses to reverse Khoury's formula in order to ask: if this is what Israel has done and is doing to Mizrahi families, born in Arab and Muslim countries yet belonging to the Jewish collective, what is it doing to Palestinian ones? He does so merely be elaborating on the difficult conditions of Mizrahi Jews in Israel, of his own personal and family experiences, without making any claims of knowledge about the experiences of Palestinians. However, he consistently adds to these descriptions the speculation of how much worse the situation must be for Palestinians.

This affective speculative poetics in Hatuka's poem, which is very similar to Nahilah's affective speculations about the suffering of Yemeni Jewish women in Khoury's novel, is what I have been describing in this study as sympathy. Like Ravikovitch, Hatuka and Khoury use their own experiences as minorities in their countries[147] to speculate, through poetry and prose, about the situations of others, but without ever making assumptions about what these experiences really are. Instead, both clear up space, by raising questions and leaving blank spaces—and in Khoury's case, also by the commitment to the plurality of narratives and meanings and by self-

[147] It is important to highlight here that Elias Khoury is a Christian Lebanese, not a Palestinian. His experience as a Christian Lebanese has nonetheless led him to become deeply involved in the Palestinian struggle—in politics, in actual war, and in writing. He has visited and lived in Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon and fought along the Palestinian forces during the Lebanese Civil War. His writings address both the Lebanese Civil War and the Palestinian *nakba* and struggle, sometimes separately and sometimes by weaving them together.

consciously exposing every story as precisely that, as a fiction—and thus allow this very consideration, the fictional speculation about others. As Hatuka's poem demonstrates, this kind of affective speculation such as Khoury does sometime cross the line and awakens similar considerations in others.

Moreover, as mentioned, this literary practices and interactions are not left at the textual level alone. Khoury's vision came to life, in a sense, with the establishment of Bab al-Shams, the tent village. Hatuka's vision, bringing the oppression of Palestinians into the renewed Mizrahi struggle in Israel, is part of a political movement and is read not merely as a poem but also as a manifesto.[148] As I am writing these words, the most burning questions in this Mizrahi struggle have to do with the place of the Palestinian cause within it and with the different ways in which it should relate to Palestinian struggles. The interesting thing, for me, is that the discussions around these questions, as well as current political initiatives amongst Mizrahi Jews for advancing Palestinian causes and connecting with Palestinians are also being done in the same form of speculation. The possibility of a joint struggle, in the traditional sense, has been gradually closed off with the process of separation initiated by Israel, on the one hand, and with the rise of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, which increasingly perceives joint struggle as a form of normalization, on the other. This context of separation, however, is not enough to explain the change in attitudes because it is, for instance, less applicable to Palestinians citizens of Israel. This turn to a form of parallel struggles is expressed in and advances by certain forms of literature. It no longer convenes the struggle around an abstract leftist program, in which the identity position of the participants does not matter, but rather around a concrete agenda, while not losing touch with the needs, difficulties and agendas

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[148] The poem has been published in the newspaper *Haʾaretz* and ignited a lively public debate. Additionally, like many of this group's poems, it is been read out load in political poetry events.

of others and their struggles. This sympathetic literary type of struggle speaks for no one else but at the same time is not isolated within a particular identity. Rather, it speculatively and sympathetically relates to others in a conflictual community that is nothing other than literary.

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