**Tracing Symbolic Discourses of Steadfastness and Resistance:
Collective Memory, Social Practice and Palestinian (Trans)Nationalism**

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Abstract:

This thesis considers a theoretical framework of *symbolic discourse* and its relationship to a Palestinian national - and transnational - idiom. Through examining, elucidating, and deconstructing recurrent discursive motifs as they appear in sociological studies of "collective memory" and social practice, the theoretical possibility of a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* is advanced as a "filter" through which social practice is perceived, political possibilities are mediated, and "culture production" generated. The later third of the thesis examines this symbolic discourse as it manifests itself in a nascent, transnational, and sub-cultural medium: Palestinian hip-hop. The argument contends that this artistic medium – and the *symbolic discourses* it carries – serves as a site for individual, collective, and transnational Palestinian subjectivities to be affirmed, empowered and galvanized.

A Statement of Purpose

This thesis is about making connections: connecting, explaining and elucidating recurrent thematic patterns in the relevant literature, and extending them to new areas of inquiry. Through tirelessly engaging with a broad scope of material in order to find a "new angle" within this subject of interest to incorporate into my overall project, the idea dawned on me to incorporate a bit of what I know best – music. Additionally, it dawned to incorporate another "experiential connection" of sorts, the experience of Palestinian-Americans. Rather by chance, I found a way to connect both in addressing the rising creative, political engagement of Palestinian-American youth, specifically their contributions to what has now become a nascent transnational artistic medium: Palestinian hip-hop. What I find so fascinating about this emerging "sub-genre" is its level of connectedness to the Palestinian national idiom and the *symbolic discourses* elucidated herein, while at the same time transcending both to empower new forms of hybridized, reterritorialized subjectivities, to directly challenge the conventional wisdom, and the enduring ethno-territorial conceptions of the nation-state. Indeed, there is *much* more to be said about the sociological and transnational implications of Palestinian hip-hop than what is elucidated here.

I only wish now that this idea had dawned on me earlier in the thesis-preparing process, as it quickly becomes apparent that social and anthropological scholarship on the three-way intersection of diaspora, transnational youth culture, and Palestinian-Americans *in general* is a synthesis which is both under-researched and theoretically under-harvested.

Indeed, if I were to continue research on the themes herein, I would surely consider the prospect of appropriately narrowing my focus and expanding on a sociological understanding of the Palestinian-American youth community in the United States. As is discussed herein, a growing trend within this community is an increasing "diasporic" engagement and subjectivity towards Palestine and Palestinian issues, most clearly illustrated in the growing number of young Palestinian-American artists and musicians – some of whom have never been to Palestine/Israel – for whom the Palestinian cause is increasingly a catalyzing calling. These young people engage explicitly and sincerely with Palestine in their art, music and communities, directly through the Internet or other forms telecommunication and activism. At the same time, these individuals increasingly also contextualize the implications and "lessons" of the Palestinian yearning for

"social justice" within their own lives and towards their own personal and communal adversities faced in the United States. Indeed, I believe that in this increasingly engaged nascent community, the call for "research on Palestine and Palestinians… which seek[s] to identify and explore experiences [and, I would add, possibilities] associated with diasporas that can in turn subvert narrations of the nation" may be indeed be realized. [1]

Concerning "objectivity" and "advocacy"

First, this is not a thesis on the larger Palestine-Israel conflict, nor does it in any way purport to address the "battleground" polemical issues of the conflict that are so sadly and unjustly hedged with anxiety. It is also not at all the purpose of this thesis to present an advocacy paper for the cause of Palestinian self-determination, nor advance a "pro-Palestinian" argument or agenda. Such charges would be not only extremely mistaken but also completely unjustified. The only position directly advocated in this paper is my own: a humanistic call for greater *critical* engagement in understanding the emerging dynamics of contentious conflicts in order diffuse the contention and address the human issues involved. The themes elucidated herein – *symbolic discourses* giving shape and meaning to social and national possibility, as well as "transnational" cultural expression – offer meaningful insights for a deeper understanding of *non-Western*, *stateless* and *diasporic* nationalisms which not only receive little coverage in Euro-centric studies of nationalism, but are often *so* misunderstood and essentialized when critical understanding is needed most.

I have sought in this project to engage in a critical academic examination of the themes herein as they relate to *Palestinians* and *Palestinian* nationalism that is neither disinterested nor "romanticizing" in ethos. Though I suspect some of the subject material addressed will be inevitably perhaps read by some as "not objective" or even biased, it is important to note that what is being examined here are *symbolic discourses* as they relate to *Palestinian* national discourse, the *Palestinian* narrative, and the transnational possibilities of these themes as they relate to *Palestinian* identities. Therefore, for example, when discussing the prickly-pear cactus (*sabir*) as it appears as an iconic symbol of expressing indigeneity in Palestinian discourse, I hardly find it necessary to also explicate how the same cactus (referred to as the *tsabar* or "sabra"

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[1] Dan Rabinowitz, "Bi-nationalism, Globalization, Diasporism: Palestine/Israel and the Discourse of Transnationalism in Anthropology," in *Critical Inquiry* 26 (Summer 2000): 772.

cactus in Hebrew, denoting "native born") *also* stands as an iconic symbol expressing *Jewish* indigenousness in Palestine. Ironically, <u>*neither*</u> claim is actually "*symbolically* accurate," as the cactus itself is completely *non*-indigenous to the region, and was imported from Mexico sometime in the 18th century.[2] That there are competing claims, competing symbols, and competing discourses in Palestine-Israel is a given. The chief concern addressed herein is neither the verification of the historical narrative from which symbolic discourses arise, nor providing each and every counter-discourse and counter-claim in pursuit of "balance." Again, the focus of this thesis is *Palestinian discourse*, its inner workings and possibilities, *not* its competing (though dominating) oppositional counter-discourses.

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[2] Bardenstein, Carol. "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine." *Ebidiyat* 8, (1998), 14

PREFACE

<u>The Personal, Political, and Transnational Economy of "Radical Chic"</u>

I begin this thesis by attempting to foreshadow the symbolic possibilities of the same theme with which the thesis ends – that is, *Palestinian transnationalism.* I do so not merely to prime the reader for what will eventually follow and the trajectory of this project, but also to illustrate the possibilities and contradictions that can present themselves when approaching "transnationalism," as well as the cautionary fact that we cannot accept symbols and symbolic discourses at face value. In so doing, I hope to demarcate the distinction – as well as force the reader to question it as well – between what such discursive "transnationalism" *is not*, and what it *could be*.

Within mainstream, public discourse, perhaps the most iconic and readily identifiable symbol of the internationalization of the "cause" of Palestinian nationalism is the *kufiya* (or otherwise transliterated as *kaffiyeh*) – the partially checkered and uniquely patterned headdress which is today often also worn as a scarf. Since roughly the late-1960s (though its more local, symbolic meaning dates back to the mid-1930s) the *kufiya* has gained international currency in the West as either an emblem of some form of "solidarity" with the Palestinian cause, or increasingly as an example of so-called "radical chic."

Today, for example, the *kufiya* is sold and marketed as an "anti-War woven scarf" by "hip" American retail chain Urban Outfitters, increasingly adorning the "rebel rock aristocracy" and other "counter-culture" elites who further set the bar for fashion; the *kufiya* has even been notoriously spotted in Iraq, not only adorning both Iraqi "insurgents" (hardly a bounded group, to be sure) but also by US military forces as they mingle with Iraqi children. These and more examples of the *kufiya* appearing in popular "Western" culture have been documented and chronicled in several forums, notably, for example, by culture-studies sociologist and Middle East expert Ted Swedenburg (whose scholarly work is significantly incorporated into this project) on his "*kufiya*spotting" blog entries.[3]

Yet, while Swedenburg's blog posts on the subject seem to reflect a sense of humorous irony of the phenomenon, others, particularly some in the Palestinian community, have justifiably been somewhat angered by the growing trend of co modification of a symbol which to them very

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[3] Ted Swedenburg. "Kufiyaspotting" on *Hawgsblog*. http://swedenburg.blogspot.com/search/label/kufiya (Accessed May 31, 2007)

much represents the unrealized national aspirations of an entire people, as well as the enduring will of many Palestinians for justice, peace and self-determination. When I attended the Palestine Film Festival last month in London, a particularly emotive short film was shown titled *Our Kuffiyah in London.*[4] The film was simply a collage of *kufiyas* the filmmaker had encountered on the streets of London, both in shops and worn by a plethora of Londoners, in a rainbow of colors and a multitude of styles and variations. Yet, the soundtrack and narration of the film hardly expressed jubilation on the apparent omnipresence of the *kufiya*, but rather an extremely personal reflection on how the filmmaker's Palestinian grandparents would react at the scarf's insensitive commercialization and commodification of adversity.

Figure 1: a sample *kufiya* (or "anti-war woven scarf") as gracing the Urban Outfitters' "Early Fall" catalog.

Indeed, we can surely say that the *kufiya*'s ascendance in the fashion world presents a paradigmatic example of the growing contradictions and ironies of globalization and late capitalism. Yet, at the same time, the *kufiya* remains a highly powerful and salient symbol of vigilance, steadfastness, and resistance (the very same symbolic tropes to be central in this thesis) and tied firmly to the national Palestinian idiom. Indeed, the *kufiya* retains this symbolic capital

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[4] Dalia al-Kury. dir., *Our Kuffiyyah in London* (London: 2007), film.

and is a carrier of these discursive motifs, across national frontiers, for Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike, from the Occupied Territories to Palestine, Michigan. As such, we can rightfully say that the *kufiya*, as transnational symbol, is a carrier of symbolic discourse which also works to reinforce a Palestinian national idiom. Yet, at the same time, it is not merely the national(ist) connotations of the *kufiya* which engenders the desire among "hybridized" Palestinian-Americans, for example, to wear one, but also the threads symbolic discourse that have been infused in its symbology.

On this score, Swedenburg has detailed a "social history" of the *kufiya,* similarly emphasizing the "transnational relationality" of its appropriation.[5] According to Swedenburg, "the *kufiya* is neither as "natural" in the West Bank nor as "unnatural" in downtown New York as it might appear," but also that "the relation between style and politics is a continuum rather than an opposition." Though the *kufiya*'s symbolic roots lie in the 1936 Revolt in British Mandate Palestine (as a "heroic symbol of struggle in Palestinian nationalist iconography" whose unifying capacity is played up over its more accurate subaltern character) Swedenburg traces the *kufiya*'s symbology from its association with the Palestinian *fallah* (peasant) as a national signifier, to its revival as a symbol of solidarity with the *fedayeen* and the guerilla struggle for "national liberation" after the 1967 war, through to its transformation and resemanticization in the course of the first Intifada.

Crucial for our purposes here in considering "transnationalism," and the transnationality of symbolic discourse, Swedenburg considers how "we might view the *kufiya* as an image, moving across the boundaries of time and space, remaking identities; as a flash – at a moment of rupture - which communicates across the generations and offers dreams of collectivity."[6] As the *kufiya* increasingly appeared and appears in "Western fashion," rather than look for the *illegitimacy* of the *kufiya*'s appropriation, Swedenburg urges us to "theorize how jolts of recognition and transgression might shoot across national and cultural boundaries, especially the imaginary yet seemingly unbreachable divide separating East and West."[7] Swedenburg even goes further to suggest that what may on the surface appear as the most superficial appropriation of the *kufiya* as "radical chic," in fact, is not always completely divorced from context: "the

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[5] Ted Swedenburg. "Seeing Double: Palestinian-American Histories of the Kufiya," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 31, no. 4 (1992),
[6] ibid, 570
[7] ibid, 570-71

kufiya's appearance in US urban subcultures represented a mild provocation, an ironic embrace of a forbidden image. To put it on was not so much a gesture of identification or 'romantic alignment'… with the Palestinians as a critical statement about the orchestrated hysteria and vilification surrounding all things Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim."[8] Thus, in differing degrees, symbolic discourse can *often* in fact be somewhat "relational," perhaps even "transnationally relational."

I mention all of this in relation to the *kufiya* here in order to try to illustrate at the start some of the themes as well as cautions to both the reader and myself in engaging with the material in this project. First, when engaging with symbolism and symbolic discourses we must not fixate on the symbol itself and take its meaning at face value, but must try to understand how and under what circumstances such discourse holds connotative power and salience and how that connotative value operates and retains salience in people's lives to describe circumstances, affect personal and political choices, and form world-views.

The deeper question thus is not who appropriates certain symbolism, to what ends, and with what effectiveness, but how symbolic discourses contribute to greater political, social, and sub-cultural discourses, and can thus add significant contour to both "nationalizing projects" as well as a sense of "collective identity" and collective memory. It isn't the symbol itself but how that symbol is effective in connoting what lies underneath and thus can have enduring salience - a salience which can cut across inter-personal boundaries as well as transnational borders. As such, the important distinction here is that it is not the *kufiya itself* which can be understood as a symbol of resistance and struggle relational to Palestine, but how the discourse which lies underneath that symbol, for a large number its wearers, remains a potent symbol around the world of steadfastness, resilience, and resistance associated with Palestinian self-determination. As we approach the idea of *symbolic discourse*, it is important to highlight how such symbols retain power, being adaptable and malleable to contingencies of the present in and across national boundaries, and thus act as powerful "sites of rearticulation."

Connecting with this, Swedenburg closes his piece by advancing the notion of "double vision," where the social history of the *kufiya* in Palestine and its appropriation by Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike in the United States are "connected not through equivalence but through difference and dislocation, attraction and repulsion; as cultures bound together by

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[8] ibid, 571

networks of economy, migration, information, exploitation and violence… Rather than rest or focus on a single centered narrative, double vision shuttles constantly between *two distinct yet overlapping narratives.*"[9]

It is this sense of "overlapping" which the notion of "transnationalism" can in part embody, and which we will address more directly the end of this project: where a soon-to-be-elaborated "symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance" – exemplified here in the symbology of the *kufiya* – significantly crosses transnational boundaries between Palestinians in the Occupied Territories, Israel, and the Diaspora, specifically the United States. However, as we will see through the sub-cultural discourse of Palestinian hip-hop in each of these three locales, this symbolic discourse is "migrating as well as rooting"[10] and adapts itself to altogether different contexts while retaining essential symbolic value within the national idiom. As such, it is similarly understood across national borders and boundaries, and becomes a basis for a "transnational relationality" between Diaspora and "national center."

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[9] ibid. 572-573.
[10] ibid, 573

INTRODUCTION

The Argument and Outline of the Paper

As one critically engages with the sociological, political, and historical material on the evolutions of Palestinian nationalism, it becomes striking the extent to which the recurrent thematic threads of "steadfastness" and "resistance" (or "struggle") appear ubiquitously throughout not only histories of Palestinian nationalism and identity, but also in ethnographic studies on Palestinians both in and outside the Occupied Territories.[11] The key question how, why, and to what extent such "themes" have acted as contingencies impacting upon a sense of collective and "national" Palestinian identity – manifested also on the most personal, individual levels? How has a collective understanding, and appropriation, and application of these themes shaped social, political and cultural possibility? Conversely, how have such themes been transformed in the process?

Rather than accept the simple formulation that "where there is power, there is resistance" and that "resistance" as such is borne only out of the relative severity of structural conditions and structural violence, the argument under consideration emphasizes the role of human agency and experience in shaping both thresholds tolerance to strain, as well as modalities and forms of resistance. In this understanding, human actors, as well as the discourses they create and appropriate, are not merely "carriers of structures" but at the same time "generators of them."[12] As Eric Selbin similarly notes, "people's thoughts and actions – even if haphazard or spontaneous – are the mediating link between structural conditions. Structural conditions, moreover, do not

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[11] As appropriated historically as political and social ideology see Rosemary Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries* (London: Zed Press, 1979); "Sources of Palestinian Nationalism: A Study of a Palestinian Camp in Lebanon" in *Journal of Palestine Studies* 6, no. 4 (Summer, 1977): 17-40. For more overtly political appropriation historically, see Quandt, Jabber and Lesch, *The Politics of Palestinian Nationalism*, (Berkeley: UC Berkeley Press, 1973). For more contemporary historicizations, see Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Reconstruction of Palestinian Nationalism: Between Revolution and Statehood* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); and Edward Said, *The Politics of Dispossession*, (London: Verso, 1994); For the intersection of "resistance" and culture, see Said and Barsamian, *Culture and Resistance* (Boston: South End Press, 2003), 159-211. Other highly relevant material addressing these themes – especially in their social application – will be covered in the coming pages.

[12] Susane Jonas, *The Battle for Guatemala: Rebels, Death Squads and US Power* (Boulder, Westview press, 1991), 4; quoted in Eric Selbin, "Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In," in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. John Foran (London: Routledge, 1997), 124

unconditionally dictate what people do; instead, they certain limits on people's actions or demarcate a certain range of possibilities."[13] As it is argued here, under periods of prolonged, protracted and often traumatic conflict – as that which the Palestinians have faced – there emerges a powerful and thick *discourse of resistance* which is most starkly carried in symbolic representation and works to both frame and mediate collective, social, political and individual subjectivities and agency. Reciprocally, this discourse is always structured by a "collective memory" of the past as well as exigencies of the present. It thus remains malleable to transformation from both above and below. With respect to the Palestinian case, this manifests itself in what I call a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance*.

Indeed, within this *discourse* particular to Palestinian nationalism, symbols of "resistance" and "steadfastness" are endowed with particular import to the national project, and also significantly add shape and contour to national consciousness and collective, intra-personal identity. Furthermore, through significant "fertilization" of this discourse both from above and below, and as a result of recurring, and periodically severe strain, such discourse increasingly gains further symbolic currency. However, despite such matured salience, this discourse can become less hegemonic at certain periods (this was the case during the Oslo "peace process," as will be elaborated upon), but given significant contingencies and collective trauma, a "discourse of resistance" can once again attempt reclaim hegemony and become a constitutive element of popular political choices as well as a discursive framework for the articulation of identity and (trans) national culture- production.

Testing this hypothesis centrally involves approaching a deeper sociological understanding of nature of Palestinian collective identity. Incorporating a multi-disciplinary approach in analysis, and fusing recent ethnographic research with the relevant theoretical discourse, how has a sense of Palestinian collective identity been shaped and impacted upon by both the prolonged structural violence of occupation and a responsive discourse of "resistance" and "steadfastness"? Reciprocally, how has this discourse itself been shaped to meet exigencies of the present?

What this thesis presents is a broad examination of illustrative examples of this discourse, its social manifestations, and the contending claims for its political appropriation in advancing the cause of "national liberation." As shall be shown, this discourse is indeed salient in and across

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[13] Eric Selbin. "Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back In," in *Theorizing Revolutions*, ed. John Foran (London: Routledge, 1997), 126

national geographies - from pernicious center to diasporic, transnational periphery – and therefore forms a foundational framework for not only Palestinian nationalism, but also "Palestinian transnationalism," a theoretical possibility to be described at some length towards the end of the thesis.

"Symbolic Discourse"

But let us take a step back and unpack exactly what we mean by a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance*. The concept as a whole is probably most akin to John Foran's notion of "political cultures of resistance and opposition."[14] As Foran elaborates, "political cultures of opposition are a product of, and in turn have an impact on, a range of material and discursive elements: from the historical experiences that shape subjectivity and arouse emotions… [to] cultural idioms to formally articulated ideologies, and through the organizations and networks of social actors."[15] Drawing from Foran, Eric Selbin similarly understands "popular culture" as a carrier of a discourse of resistance. Selbin draws on Mukerji and Schudson's definition of *culture* as "folk beliefs, practices and objects rooted in local traditions, and mass beliefs, [as well as] *practices and objects generated in political and commercial centers. It includes elite cultural forms that have been popularized as well as popular forms that have been elevated to museum tradition*."[16] It is here also where the *symbolic* value of "popular political culture" is also asserted as a form of "symbolic politics":

> The capacity of a people to create enshrine, manipulate, and discard symbols is central to the conception of culture. Those symbols which can integrate the past with near universal overtones, are of particular importance and power. Those in power endeavor to invoke/create symbols which will maintain their status; those arrayed against them seek to use symbols – sometimes the very same symbols – to overturn them. Thus popular culture, beliefs and practices held by a wide array of those in any given society, becomes a battleground.[17]

This notion of a "symbolic politics" of "popular political cultures of resistance" then forms a

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[14] John Foran. "Discourses and Social Forces: The Role of Culture and Cultural Studies in Understanding Revolutions." in Theorizing Revolutions, John Foran (ed.) London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 203-226. 219
[15] Ibid, 219
[16] Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, "Introduction: Rethinking Popular Culture," pp. 1-61 in Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson, editors, *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 3-4. Cited in Selbin, 130.
[17] Selbin, 129

central point where a *discourse of resistance* can emerge, expressing the Gramscian notion of "repertoires of resistance"[18] and through what Selbin calls "idea streams," "transmitted via people across time and space" and thus can coalesce around an implicit

> understanding of the population's perception of the options that are available and seem plausible to them; these options constitute "repertoires of collective action" and/or a "'tool-kit' of symbols, stories, rituals and world-views." which provides actors with resources necessary for constructing "strategies of action" for dealing with their society.[19]

Selbin's conceptualization of implicit (I would even add "unacknowledged") "popular perceptions," transmitted through "idea streams" most closely matches our appropriation of "discourse": less rigid and formalized than any possible form of "ideology" and without the essentializing connotations which comes with the employment of the term "culture." In such an understanding, there are many "idea streams" or discourses which impact upon "popular perception" – both explicit and implicit. But what is of consequence here is how these discourses manifest themselves both in people's conscious and unconscious social practice, and how such "idea streams" and discourses mediate and frame social and possibility. Thus, a *discourse* in this sense is understood in a loosely Foucaultian sense as one of multiple "filters" through which not only common perceptions, social and political possibilities are framed, but whose construction is also contingent and wed to individual and collective ingenuity. This also fits with Apter's similar appropriation of discourse in addressing political violence: "discourse starts with events which serve as a basis for more reasoned interpretation. Such interpretation is a process. It is when events are incorporated into interpretive discourses embodied in discourse communities that [resistance] not only builds on itself, but becomes both self-validating and self-sustaining."[20]

Lastly, because this *discourse* is significantly transmitted, manifested, and personified

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[18] See Stuart Hall, "Metaphors of transformation," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies.* dds. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 294-295: "The relations between a subordinate and a dominate cultural formation, wherever they fall in this spectrum are always intensely active, always oppositional in a structural sense… Their outcome is not given but made. The subordinate class brings to this 'theatre of struggle' a repertoire of strategies and responses – ways of coping as well as ways of resisting. Each 'strategy' in the repertoire mobilizes certain material, social [and symbolic] elements: it constructs these into the supports for the different ways the class lives, [negotiates,] and resists its continuing subordination. Not all the strategies are of equal weight; not all are potentially counter-hegemonic."

[19] Selbin, 125. Respectively also, Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution* (Reading, MA.: Addison-Wesley, 1978), 143; and Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," pp. 273-86 in *American Sociological Review,* volume 51, number 2 (April 1986), 273.

[20] David E. Apter, "Political Violence in Analytical Perspective," in *The Legitimation of Violence.* (London: MacMillan 1997)

through a "symbolic politics" and symbolic practice like that described above (as will be shown) I refer to this medium as a *symbolic discourse*. Indeed, as Apter notes, the "power of discourse" rests in its "symbolic capital." Let us now turn to this as it manifests itself in the Palestinian case – as a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance*.

Steadfastness (*summud*) and Resistance

Though the propagated notion of Palestinian nationalism originating solely as a response to the advance of Zionism has been largely universally discredited and laid to rest[21] this does not mean that the evolutions of Palestinian national consciousness have not been profoundly shaped by the contingencies of opposition, changing categories and perceptions of "resistance." A more "balanced" reading of Palestinian nationalism holds that its development should be seen as a result of both its confrontation with Zionism/Israel and the proliferation of a nationalist discourse by Palestinian political and social elites.[22] Yet this negates a wide middle ground where "popular discourse" chiefly operates and where identities have been steeped not simply in binary vats of conflict and political consciousness imposed from above, but also in the "popular political cultures" and "popular discourses" that are informed by these powerful forces, but are themselves constitutive of building and shaping collective identity, guiding and framing popular perceptions, practices and possibilities.

Paradigmatically illustrative of this conceptualization is the concept of *summud* (steadfastness) which has become not only a uniquely Palestinian trope in the "national idiom" but has also become a constitutive component of both "resistance" and empowering Palestinian identity. As Rashid Khalidi notes in his seminal treatise on Palestinian nationalism and identity, because the Palestinian sense of "national identity" has "been fashioned without the benefit of the powerful machinery of the nation-state to propagate it," as with other similarly "unsuccessful" national identities, "Palestinians have asserted their identity without the trappings of an independent state and against powerful countervailing currents."[23] As a result of this, Khalidi describes the notion of a "narrative of crushing failure" being transformed as a "narrative of identity as triumph," as "heroic perseverance against impossible odds" in order to preserve strong

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[21] See for example, Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity,* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *Palestinians: the making of a people* (Cambridge, Mass: HUP, 1994).
[22] Khalidi, op. cit. Schulz, op. cit.
[23] Khalidi, 194

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national sentiment.[24] Profoundly illustrative of this is the concept of *summud*. As Khalidi describes, "the word was ubiquitous in Palestinian narrations both of the various stages of the fighting in Lebanon from the late 60s until 1982, and of the resistance to the occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip from 1967 until the Intifada began in 1987."[25] But the connotations, implications and interpretations of this concept transcend this brief historicization. As we will subsequently describe in further detail, *summud* connotes the above sense of national empowerment and is be understood as praxis on a personal level, as both the practice of "resisting-by-existing," a concept both drawn from and shaping a *symbolic discourse of resistance*, as well as a collective sense of "steadfastness" being a central component of national identity.

A Restatement and Outline of the Paper

In critically engaging this theoretical discourse and connecting it directly with relevant ethnographic work, a central question remains: How has a sense of Palestinian collective identity been *enabled* or *nuanced*, compromised or strengthened, if at all, by a longstanding and evolved discourse of steadfastness and resistance? How has this discourse impacted social, political and cultural practice? And how has this discourse itself been transformed as a result of structural contingencies, elite discourses, and more organic grassroots processes?

Indeed, we should stress again here that such a "symbolic discourse" does not just operate in an abstract understanding of "discourse," nor merely politically as "official discourse," nor as "ideology" in a more formal ideological sense, but is significantly manifested and reproduced in collective, social, personal and political practices. Illustrating how such a "symbolic discourse" of resistance and steadfastness can be manifested and personified on a societal level, social anthropologist Julie Peteet, in an ethnographic study of Palestinian refugee communities in Lebanon, details "the way in which resistance figures so prominently in the contemporary production and reproduction of Palestinian identity." Peteet delineates how "the process of human displacement, resistance to it, and implications for identity… are locally configured and experienced," how "identities can shape social movements and yet are themselves, in the process of this interaction, sites of rearticulation." According to Peteet's conclusions, "the specific

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[24] ibid, 195
[25] Khalidi, 263 n. 35

parameters and content of identity were not given but were continuously emergent, in this instance, through resistant practices that could transform individual and collective identities."[26]

In Chapter One, I further address and illustrate examples of Palestinian "symbolic discourse," their historical underpinnings, and the related theoretical issue of collective memory. As shall be shown, certain symbols both express, and are firmly rooted in, the tremendous sense of communal and national loss stemming from the Palestinian *Nakba*. However, in all of these cases, these symbols have been significantly re-endowed with more utilitarian meanings, re-appropriated, or otherwise juxtaposed to fit contingencies of the present, where "steadfastness" and "resistance" remain significant symbolic connotations. I also discuss these themes in relation to "collective memory" and "social memory" as it relates a rich body of sociological literature relating to moments of upheaval in the Palestinian "national narrative" – notably the 1936 Arab Revolt and the first Intifada, beginning in 1987.. While the first directly concerns collective memory of a moment of significant rebellion, what is of interest is how "collective memory" of the event, as well as its symbology were and remain wed to a symbolic discourse of resistance which frames the event to meet varying exigencies of the present. The second point of examination concerns how collective memory of a *recent* popular uprising in this sense remains engrained in the collective consciousness of a nation and forms a powerful contour for Palestinian collective identity, youth identity, as well as social and political possibility.

In Chapter Two, I attempt to broadly illustrate how a *symbolic discourse of resistance and steadfastness* forms a medium through which social (and national) identities and practices are shaped and around which political claims are framed. An additional contention is that, given significant societal strain, trauma, and the recession of potential alternatives – such a discourse can retain (or regain) hegemony in social and political discourse at large, and can therefore be largely instrumental in guiding political and social possibilities. In order to illustrate this, I begin by showing how symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance impact upon forms of social practice, specifically issues of collective identity, gender, domestic practice, and rites of passage.

I then describe briefly the trajectory of "de-hegemonization" of this discourse and its implications with the onset of the Oslo "peace process." Though the main focus of this project is how a symbolic discourse of resistance can shape social and "cultural" practices and norms, I

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[26] Julie Peteet, "Refugees, Resistance, and Identity." in *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere*, eds. John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000), 183-184.

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additionally turn to the political realm and attempt to broadly sketch the implications of this process in the political realm, where the discourse of steadfastness and resistance re-attained political currency in the face of the second *intifada* and an escalation of occupation both during and after the Oslo processThough the main focus of this project is how a symbolic discourse of resistance can shape social and "cultural" practices and norms, I additionally turn to the political realm and attempt to broadly sketch the implications of this process in the political realm, where the discourse of steadfastness and resistance re-attained political currency in the face of the second *intifada* and an escalation of occupation both during and after the Oslo process.

As will be shown, the notion of a discursive "war of position" – in combination with significant structural and political factors – can be illustrative in deconstructing the victory of Hamas in relation to a discourse of resistance attempting to once again regain social, political and cultural hegemony. Lastly, at the close of the chapter, I return to the issue of "cultural production" to address the rising youth hip-hop movement in the Occupied Territories, illustrating how alternative appropriations of "symbolic discourse of resistance" are applied and thus illustrate the (re)emergent cleavages within the larger social polity.

In Chapter Three, I discuss the possibilities subsumed under a conceptualization of "Palestinian transnationalism" by looking at how an aforementioned *symbolic discourse of resistance and steadfastness* particular to young Palestinians spans transnational boundaries and acts as a basis for a rearticulation and recontextualization of the discourse to meet the realities of the present – irregardless of place and hybrid nationality. This is no more clearly illustrated than in the creative medium of hip-hop where Palestinian, Palestinian-Israeli and Palestinian-American artists all use the same metaphors and symbolic motifs connoting steadfastness and resistance – not only to forcefully address their collective struggle as Palestinians, but also to illustrate the particular (and often individual) struggles facing them in altogether different circumstances.

I close the chapter – and the paper as a whole – with the conclusion that we should rethink our understanding of "transnationalism" to incorporate and emphasize what Stein and Swedenburg term "transnational relationality" – that is, "forms of contact, community, and mutual contingency that span checkpoints, walls and histories of interstate enmity and that circulate with the commodity form and the Internet through increasingly global channels of commerce and culture." As such, this approach still "insist[s] on the continuing importance and

reemergence of the nation-state as an ideological-political form in the midst of globalizing processes, a tension that is particularly acute in the case of Palestinians and their struggle for liberation, the still unrealized aim of which remains the nation-state." It is indeed within this theoretical understanding where I employ the term "Palestinian transnationalism" as not only a vehicle for re-articulating and re-contextualizing symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance for new forms of transnational, hybridized subjectivities, but also as a means to transform the *symbolic discourse* around *steadfastness* and *resistance* to incorporate and emphasize these possibilities of "transnational relationality" in subverting ethno-national, and territorially exclusivist conceptions of the nation-state on both sides of the Green Line.

CHAPTER 1

<u>**Collective Memory, Symbolic Representation, and Instrumental Nostalgia:**</u>
<u>**Forming Symbolic Discourses from Catastrophe and Uprising**</u>

One of the more ascendant theoretical fields in social anthropology in recent decades has been *collective memory* – how cultures, communities, and societies develop a common discourse of shared, collective "memories" which both bridges and transcends discourses of individual memory and historical narrative. As such, an understanding of "collective memory," can be seen as an extremely salient contingency adding contour to – or in certain cases, *shaping* – collective and national identity. Nowhere is this conceptualization more starkly illustrated than in the "collective memory" of events of profound rupture, catastrophe, and tragedy – how these events are "remembered" by communities or whole "nations" who remain profoundly affected by such events and their aftermath.

In the course of this chapter, I will briefly outline some key theoretical underpinnings of "collective memory" in contemporary social anthropology, specifically those which relate to moments of rupture and upheaval. I will then proceed to apply this theoretical understanding, and elucidate the appropriate discursive themes (*steadfastness* and *resistance*) as they appear in the relevant literature addressing "collective memory" of three key events in the Palestinian national idiom: the Palestinian *Nakba* (or *al-nakbah*, "the cataclysm" or "catastrophe") of 1948, the "Arab Revolt" of 1936, and the (First) Palestinian Intifada, beginning in 1987. As will be shown, a "collective memory" of all three of these events remain both extremely significant as points of rupture in the Palestinian national narrative, as well as central to a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* from which symbols of these events are endowed with significant symbolic capital. Again, as the argument of this thesis goes, it is through this *discourse* that social practice is partially framed, political possibilities perceived, and where individual and collective identities are significantly shaped, negotiated and re-articulated.

In this context, I understand "*symbolic discourse*" as both being *constructed from,* and reciprocally *framing* "collective memory." This framework is somewhat similar to Eric Selbin's conception of "popular culture" as a point of *convergence* of "symbolic politics" and "collective memory." According to Selbin, "popular political culture" represents "the historically created

idioms and symbols which shape the capacity of actors" to perceive and conceive of "the options that are available and seem plausible to them." As "collective memory" is thus a constitutive part of this discursive system, it works in a fashion "similar to ideology, [giving] shape to people's lives, providing not only a base from which individuals can look back and explain their experiences and actions, but also a platform on which to build and guide the future."[27]

In a similar sense, as Edward Said writes, "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which the past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning."[28] Indeed, as we shall see, the "social" and "cultural" memory of these events, manifested in both historical and contemporary Palestinian discourse, presents a paradigmatic case of how collective memory is "maintained" as such, and likewise "endowed with political meaning" in contextualizing and negotiating exigencies of the present. Particular to the Palestinian case though is the extent to which collective memory of these events are almost *necessarily* remembered with such force and salience is a direct result of highly impacting structural conditions of the present and, in a more symbolic sense, as a guard against existential threat. Selbin notes how "resistance movements conceive of and understand their struggles as continuing some long process of struggle that many societies hold in their collective memory."[29] For Palestinians, this is obviously not a difficult concept to grasp as their struggle as a stateless people for self-determination has been ongoing and never realized.

But "collective memory" does not form itself in a vacuum, reactive only to structural contingencies, however harsh or complex. There are crucial mediums, of which the level of *discourse* is at least one, often constructed mutually by "top-down" and "bottom-up" forces alike. As we will see, a "collective memory" of these key events – mobilized through a rich symbology – helps form a certain thematic discourse which both contextualizes collective memory and instrumentalizes its implications to fit present circumstances.

As Helena Lindholm Schulz poignantly observes, "composing the main narrative of Palestinian identity" there exist two "central poles": one around a discourse of "suffering" and victimization, and another around a discourse of "struggle" and resistance. However, although "these concepts appear paradoxical… [these] basic notions function in an interacting process, reinforcing a common basis for politics and action. Loss and poverty pave the way for a

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[27] Selbin, op. cit. 125, 131-132
[28] Edward W. Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place." *Critical Inquiry* 26, no. 2 (Winter, 2000), 185
[29] Selbin, op. cit., 131

particular form of strength."[30] Thus, it is no surprise then that a thick symbolic discourse around this discursive thread has emerged and remains salient in framing and negotiating political and social exigencies of the present.

Rather than look at these three events chronologically, I will begin with the *Nakba* of 1948, which exists in the Palestinian national narrative as the paramount event forming a *collective memory of dispossession* and thus forms the chief "symbolic nexus" *against* which a discourse of steadfastness contrasted.[31] I then turn to the "collective memory" of two chief moments from which a discourse of *resistance* has been formed and framed – the Revolt of 1936-39 and the First Intifada (1987-1993). What will be shown is that the symbolic discourse of resistance rooted in the 1936 revolt, itself the object of significant refashioning in both official and popular nationalist discourse, was also subsequently reconfigured and transformed during the first *Intifada* to fit changing realities and new collective conceptions of what "resistance" came to mean and signify.

Theories of Collective Memory

Maurice Halbwachs, likely the godfather of the concept "collective memory" and its contemporary appropriation in the social sciences, asserted that memory is inherently "collective" in its very essence. Halbwachs argued that memory is essentially both constructed by social, group contingencies, as well as shared and passed on through the group, or modern society as a whole. In other words, memories are both *acquired* as well as *framed and recollected* through the medium of society. According to Halbwachs, even "individual" forms of memory, such as reminiscence or nostalgia, are all ultimately shaped and guided by common historical experience. The crucial point here is that "collective memory" implies a "shared memory" *about* (not necessarily *of*) those historical events, norms, and perceptions as they converge and coalesce in commonality for the entire group. As such, "collective memory" provides a *social framework* where individual memories are conceived, shaped, and interpreted.[32]

This overtly "society-oriented" conception of collective memory has been criticized by

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[30] Schulz, *Palestinian Diaspora*, 118

[31] One should mention here that there have been other such events, notably and highly significantly the losses of the 1967 war, signaling the beginning of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza strip, as well as the Israeli invasion and ensuing occupation of southern Lebanon in 1982, but these and other events do not retain nearly as high the symbolic currency of the *Nakba* in the Palestinian national idiom.

[32] Maurice Halbwachs. *The Collective Memories*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 41-51.

some, such as Maurice Bloch who has emphasized the *reciprocal* relationship between autobiographical and collective memory – "collective memory" being shaped significantly by subjective, cognitive interpretations.[33]   Similarly, Laurence Kirmayer has addressed how both individual and collective memory of *traumatic* events are articulated through narrative, while being crucially mediated and negotiated through "landscapes of memory" – social or cultural circumstances which can trigger both recollection and/or re-articulation. Kirmayer additionally stresses the need to look beyond the more purely psychological explanations of how traumatic memories are internally mediated, and towards how shared, socially constructed "landscapes of memory," provide not only a social context for recollection and remembrance, but a crucial forum for re-contextualization and re-articulation for *both* the individual and the group. According to Kirmayer, memories are most vividly accessed and developed when they fit appropriate cultural, social templates and have a "receptive audience." This idea of a "receptive audience" becomes of high significance when we look at the Palestinian case below.[34]

Lastly, and of high relevance for our discussion here, is Pierre Nora's conceptualization of "sites of memory," emphasizing the symbolic salience of *place* and *symbols of place* in forming and encapsulating collective memory. According to Nora, "[sites of memory]… block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial… [sites of memory] only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications."[35] And Nora more explicitly defines, a *site of memory* is "any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community."[36] As we will see, such an understanding of symbolic "sites of memory" is highly relevant for a discussion of "collective memory" and the Palestinian national idiom.

Addressing Collective Memories of Dispossession

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[33] Maurice Bloch, "Autobiographical Memory and the Historical Memory of the More Distant Past," in *How We Think They Think: Anthropological Approaches to Cognition, Memory, and Literacy* (Boulder: Westview, 1998).

[34] Laurence J. Kirmayer "Landscapes of Memory: Trauma, Narrative, and Disociation." In *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory,* eds. M. Lambek and P. Antze (London: Routledge, 1996), 191

[35] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Memoire"* *Representations* 26 (1989): 19-20.

[36] Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman eds *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* 1: *conflicts and divisions*. (New York: CUP, 1996), xvii

Departing now from the purely theoretical realm, as Edward Said observes, "for Palestinians 1948 is remembered as the year of the *Nakba*, or catastrophe, when 750,000 of us who were living there – two thirds of the population – were driven out, our property taken, hundreds of villages destroyed, an entire society obliterated."[37] Indeed, as Swedenburg similarly summarizes, "the 1947-48 war, whose outcome was the founding of the state of Israel, also resulted in the expulsion of some 770,000 Palestinians from their homes. The new state subsequently destroyed or judaified 374 Palestinian towns and villages which had been emptied of their inhabitants."[38]

Similar to Said's description of the significance of the event, Ahmed Sa'adi (2002) describes how, for Palestinians, the *Nakba* represents "among many other things, the loss of the homeland, and the disintegration of society, the frustration of national aspirations, and the beginning of a hasty process of destruction of their culture."[39] Indeed, it quickly becomes clear that salient component of contemporary Palestinian identity hinges on a "collective memory" of loss and dispersion of which the *Nakba* is the chief emblem: both as a collective experience of dispossession and exile, as well as an event which is perceived as profoundly informing the social contingencies of the present. On this note, Sa'adi similarly stresses "the way in which Al-Nakbah has become a constitutive element of Palestinian identity," "connect[ing] all Palestinians to a specific point in time that has become for them an "eternal present."[40] Perhaps Julie Peteet puts it best as describing the *Nakba* as one of many "common denominators" – albeit an "overwhelmingly pivotal" one – which have impacted upon any Palestinian sense of shared, "collective memory."[41] It is also here where, as Helena Schulz notes, "fragmentation, loss of homeland and denial have prompted an *identity of 'suffering'*, an identification created by the anxieties and injustices happening to the Palestinians because of external forces. In this process, *a homeland discourse*, a process of remembering what has been lost is an important

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[37] Said, "Invention, Memory, and Place," 185

[38] Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant…" 18; See also Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem,* 1947-1949 (Cambridge: CUP, 1987); Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge, CUP, 2004), 123-141; Avi Schlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin, 2000), 28-53.

[39] Ahmad H. Sa'adi, "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity," in *Israel Studies* 7, no. 2 (2002): 175.

[40] Ibid, 177.

[41] Peteet, "Refugees, Resistance and Identity," 188-189. More generally, these "common denominators" include "origin in and continuing attachment to the space and particular places of Palestine; the collective loss and trauma of exile (or occupation); outrage over the injustice of dispossession, misrecognition, and international complicity the idea of return, and the concept and practice of resistance" (190).

component."[42] Indeed, it is this "homeland discourse" from where a "discourse of steadfastness" takes shape.

Echoing a common critique of the purely "social" conceptualization of "collective memory" which addresses only the "inter-subjective realm," and where "belonging to an imagined community is reproduced and bolstered through invented traditions, commemorations, etc" Sa'adi emphasizes how there are also highly significant and concurrent "bottom-up processes which are generated through localized experiences and sentiments."[43] In other words, there is often a tendency – especially when appropriating Halbwach's framework – to treat "social memory" or "collective memory" as blanket social/cultural discourses while not giving significant attention to how "collective memory" is *personified*, *reenacted*, and therefore *shaped* through individuals in the present.

Further, because Palestinians since the *Nakba* have been not only dispersed, but have also been severely lacking in the institutionalized mechanisms and resources (i.e. a state, freedom of movement), many Palestinians "have had to resort to different venues of identity reconstruction" where interpersonal, communal means of narration and articulation, as well as collective use of symbolism, have been crucial to the articulation of "collective memory" of the *Nakba* and other moments of collective trauma. [44] This recalls Kirmayer's notion of "social templates" and a "receptive audience" in order for fully productive "landscapes of memory" for recollection and re-articulation.

Yet because of this relative disparity on the part of Palestinians mentioned above, "the question of identity among Palestinians has become intimately connected to the 'restoration of the individual's subjectivity'; that is, a national narrative has been constructed through life stories, documents, and viewpoints of individuals."[45] In other words, the *Nakba* as "collective event" is most profoundly "remembered" through narrative at the *local*, *communal* level, often centering on individual life-stories which are almost divorced from the larger context of the Nakba as "National Event." For example, Salim Tamari describes the nature of collective remembrance at various commemorations in Israel/Palestine taking place on the *Nakba*'s 50th anniversary:

> a dominant component of most testimonials was their overriding sense of localism. An
> event remembered and recounted was often depicted as singular: something that

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[42] Schulz, *Palestinian Diaspora,* 2
[43] Sa'adi, 176
[44] ibid, 176
[45] ibid, 176

happened in this town or that village, devoid of the wider context of the general onslaught on Palestine that was raging countrywide. The narrators were obviously acutely cognizant of the collective tragedy that befell the country and their people. Significantly, however, this realization was neither reflected in the protocols of narration nor evident in the patterns of the stories uttered. The overall picture and the wider networks that influenced the lives, behavior and fates of combatants and onlookers alike were largely absent.[46]

This theme also echoes the aforementioned sentiments of Maurice Bloch where "a narrative is not stored as a narrative but as a complex representation of a sequence of events like the sequence of events that happen to oneself."[47] All the same, it is important to note here that such "life stories," even when together forming a "shared narrative" do not by themselves necessarily coalesce in a salient "collective memory" unless they are fundamentally grounded in a *collective conception* of what Pierre Nora has termed "sites of memory" which negotiate the past with the present. In the case of the Palestinian *Nakba*, such "sites of memory" present themselves both spatially and symbolically. These two forms of "sites of memory," which work to compose both a "collective memory" of the *Nakba*, as well as contributing to a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness*, will be discussed below.

Geography and Spatiality

Indeed, *territoriality* and *geography* have a huge role to play here, being understood as both "a socially constructed and maintained sense of place," as well as playing an "extraordinary and constitutive role… in human affairs."[48] Because so many Palestinians' spatial environment has come to be defined by the *Nakba* itself (i.e. their living or being born in diaspora), their *lack* of the appropriate "sites of memory" form a "landscape of memory" (Kirmayer) which is defined by a pervasive sense of "placelessness." This sense can of course be further underscored by impacting territorial, social and cultural conditions. As Peteet poignantly observes, "in exile, the notion of the familiar becomes strained. The terrain, both geophysical and social, have to be relearned and navigated."[49] This is also reflected in Schulz's description, whereby

the dispersal (*shatat)* and *fragmentation* of the Arab population of Palestine have served as *uniting* factors behind a modern Palestinian national identity, illuminating the facet of

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[46] Salim Tamari. "Bourgeois Nostalgia and the Abandoned City." In *Mixed Towns, Trapped Communities: Historical Narratives, Spatial Dynamics, Gender Relations and Cultural Encounters in Palestinian Israeli Towns.* Daniel Monterescu and Dan Rabinowitz eds. (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 36
[47] Bloch, 122.
[48] Said, "Invention, Memory, Place," 180.
[49] Peteet, "Refugees, Resistance, and Identity," 189

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absence of territory as a weighty component in creations of ethnic and national identities in exile. Deterritorialized communities seek their identity in the territory, the Homeland Lost, which they can only see from a distance, if at all. *The focal point of identity and politics is a place lost.[50]*

Thus, we should emphasize here how the *lack* of *spatial* "sites of memory" can provide a framework for social *cohesion* and (national) identity by providing common or similar symbolic and spatial reference points. Further, as the *Nakba* is understood as being both personal and shared, individual and collective, and rooted both in geography of the past and of the present, shared personal narratives and present contexts remain salient in maintaining "collective memory" of the event.

Symbolic "Sites of Memory": Connoting Steadfastness and Resistance

Because of the collective sense of *dislocation* associated with the *Nakba*, "collective memory" of place is significantly "remembered" through symbolic representation: imbuing objects with symbolic, mnemonic value which are both individualized and "collectivized," thus making them salient "sites of memory." As we will see, in all of these symbolic signifiers, there are also the common discursive themes of *rootedness, steadfastness,* and even *resistance* which either flow directly from the symbology commemorating the *Nakba* or have subsequently been fused with that symbology through the medium of symbolic discourse and continuing "collective" adversities.

As Yezid Sayigh notes, "the experience of al-nakba made for a distinct Palestinianness, but not necessarily for Palestinianism." In other words, other contingencies and moments of rupture – as well as their corresponding narratives and discourses – would be operational in infusing and connecting a "collective memory" of such moments with forms of symbolic discourse: "The re-emergence of distinctly Palestinian nationalist politics depended primarily on the progress made by the scattered Palestinian communities in rebuilding their 'sociological space', that is, reviving their social networks, value systems and norms, and *cultural symbols*." [51]

Likely the most "individualized" symbolic "site of memory" commemorating the *Nakba* is the ***house key*** – symbolizing (and "proving") both the territoriality of identity which remains denied, as well as a sense of collective "steadfastness" towards the *idea* (and *right*) of return. As

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[50] Schulz, *Palestinian Diaspora,* 2

[51] Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement, 1949-1993* (Oxford: OUP, 1997), 666.

Sa'adi writes, "the house key has become the last symbol of home, a reminder that, before Al-Nakbah, Palestinians had a different life – a life where the home stood at its center as a haven to which one could return. The house key is also a symbol for the return – the return not only to the house that was left behind but also a return to normality, to a life filled with dignity and warmth."[52] As such, the house key remains a potent "site of memory" as it is both treasured and experienced at the individual level, but also shared and understood at the "collective level," reinforcing the "collective memory" of the event and its meaning in the present.

Additional symbols, similarly imbued as a collective "site of memory," are various trees – orange, olive and also cactus – symbolizing both "rootedness" and *steadfastness*. Additionally, these symbols have often been also both juxtaposed and imbued as symbols of *resistance*, therefore acting as paradigmatic illustrations of the pervasive discourse being elucidated in this paper. As Swedenburg writes, "lacking the formal institutional apparatuses… necessary to establish territorial historicity, Palestinians confirm their obscured presence imaginatively. Rural imagery is one means of enabling their efforts to dig in on the land that remains to them."[53] This tendency towards rural imagery is also further emphasized in the present, where confiscation, imposed desertification, and "de-development" of Palestinian land in the Occupied Territories is endemic. [54] As Swedenburg poignantly observes, "the economy of repression produces the emotional charge of rural national symbols."[55]

With this in mind, we turn to the **pickle-pear cactus,** "symbolizing the transformation of Palestine" that the *Nakba* represents in the Palestinian national idiom. Sa'adi notes how, in pre-*Nakba* illustrations, "cactus trees were located in their natural milieu," serving "as hedges to identify village borders." However, "in later paintings, the cactus tree was severed from its natural habitation and placed in a flowerpot. This 'forced migration' is presented as agonizing." Thus, in the shifting representation of the cactus tree it has thus been re-caste as a "site of memory," where it has metaphorically "proven to be *resistant* to death and forgetting." [56] And as Swedenburg similarly writes,

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[52] Sa'adi, 181.
[53] Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," in *Anthropological Quarterly* 63 (Jan 1990: 1), 22
[54] For "de-development," see Sara Roy, *Failing Peace*, (London: Pluto, 2007), 33-34; also, Sara Roy, "The Crisis Within: The Struggle for Palestinian Society," in *Critique: Journal for Critical Studies of the Middle East* 17 (2000), 5-30. Briefly, Roy defines this as "the deliberate, systematic and progressive dismemberment of an indigenous economy" through "expropriation and dispossession; integration and externalization, and deinstitutionalization (33)."
[55] Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant," 22.
[56] Sa'adi, 194

> Through this collective endeavor of retrieval, the cactus is transformed from something that evokes pathos into the bearer of hope, from the site of an erasure into an indelible trace. For the cactus, villagers say, springs back to life even after Israeli settlers attempt to eliminate it by burning it to the ground. The moral: the Arab presence simply cannot be buried. The cactus signifies Arab survival, the ineradicable mark of the Palestinian farmer--and by metonymic extension, the nation--in the land.[57]

We see here forcefully how "steadfastness" (*sammud)* is thus associated with the symbology of the cactus, remaining "steadfast" where Palestinians were not able to do so. This also further illustrates Rashid Khalidi's aforementioned notion of transforming narratives of failure into narratives of triumph, and the centrality of this construal to the Palestinian national idiom.

Notably, Sa'adi also describes the possible transnational value of this symbol in the fact that many dispersed Palestinians have "come into possession of his or her own portable cactus tree placed in a flowerpot, which can be taken wherever one travels." This points to the ability of a "collective memory" of the *Nakba* remaining malleable to an unstable – and for many Palestinians, dislocated – present. In Sa'adi's words, this illustrates the capacity of symbology "to reclaim new terrains, to acquire new meanings and representations."   The fact that Palestinians live in scattered communities, "lacking the institutions that produce official narrative and icons of commemoration," these personalized symbols act as salient, collective-yet-personal "sites of memory" being imbued with the legacy of the past appearing in the present. [58]

Many of these themes also resonate in the work of Carol Bardenstein, who has similarly highlighted the ways in which memory and memories are articulated, mobilized through symbolic representation to create "configurations of collective memory" impacting Palestinian collective (national) consciousness.[59] In her piece "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness," Bardenstein examines these and other "hyper-saturated and contested symbols" which are mobilized in symbolic commemoration of the *Nakba:* Chiefly among them, trees and the prickly-pear cactus. Similarly to Sa'adi, Bardenstein describes how such symbolic "sites of memory" are "incorporated and activated within *a discourse of the present.*"[60] Bardenstein stresses how the "uprootedness" of trees has come to be symbolic for the *Nakba* and it's place in the "collective memory" of the Palestinian national idiom. The result of an "urgent compulsion to lay symbolic claim" on territorial symbols such as trees, the motif of "uprootedness," thus "appears and

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[57] Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant," 22.
[58] Sa'adi, 194-195.
[59] Bardenstein, Carol. "Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine." *Ebidiyat* 8, (1998) pp. 1-36
[60] ibid, 1, emphasis added.

reappears almost as a fixation with each backward glance towards the lost homeland." Thus olive and orange trees connote a salient sense of *nostalgia* for a "place lost":

> Representations of symbols of indigenousness and rootedness figure conspicuously in Palestinian fiction and personal accounts, but probably most markedly in a large copus of poetry, often in the form of wistful and nostalgic longings for the 'lost homeland." Proustian recollections brought on by the smell of an orange grove in blossom, or of an olive tree, conjured up repeatedly, revive and re-articulate the memory of Palestinian rootedness in a Palestine before displacement and dispersion.[61]

It is in this sense where Bardenstein proceeds to address the concept of *nostalgia* - its theoretical underpinnings, as well as its applicability and instrumentality in Palestinian discourses of "steadfastness" and "resistance."

Bardenstein presents a false dichotomy between viewing *nostalgia* as an "escapist response to the 'real world in the present'… [lulling] people into passivity," and its potential to "[play] an enabling role in the construction of collective memory in ways that can be mobilized for resistance or other forms of engagement with the immediate present." Advancing the later, instrumentalist view, Bardenstein cites Halbwachs' assertion of the "enabling capacity of nostalgia,"

> *seeing it as a functional and intermittent response to a present that might be constraining, difficult or unbearable.* [Halbwachs] stressed the importance of nostalgic remembering and recollection in tying people to 'collective frameworks of social reference points which allow memories to be coordinated in time and space.' He insisted that this process was rooted in the experienced present and that it enabled those engaging in it to consider possibilities than their present conditions, i.e. to contemplate and possibly enact change.[62]

Bardenstein argues that "Palestinian nostalgic representations would appear to articulate variably *both* wistful longings and sentimental recollection on the one hand, and a "remorseless dissatisfaction' *at times inclining toward active resistance on the other.*"[63] She then turns to the various symbolic "sites of memory" described above, though critically emphasizing the later effect – the instrumental ability of "nostalgia" to incline toward active resistance in mediating contingencies of the present:

> **The orange grove** is emblematic of homeland/Palestine itself, and functions as a vivid, private homeland of the mind, carried around both as a painful reminder of loss and as

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[61] Ibid, 19.
[62] ibid, 20.
[63] Ibid, 21.

consolation and inspiration in the face of that loss. (21)

In Palestinian discourse, we find **the prickly-pear cactus** further developed in the direction of the assertion of defiant memory, and as a symbol of becoming a fighter and joining the Palestinian resistance. (25)

The olive tree appears frequently in visual representations as emblematic of Palestinian rootedness and of the revered quality of *samud* or steadfastness, an insistence upon remaining, a defiant refusal to be uprooted. (29)

Note that in all three of these examples, implicitly or explicitly, at least one of our central themes of *steadfastness* or *resistance* is present. But regardless, it is *the instrumental capacity of nostalgia*, noted by Bardenstein above, which can mobilize the symbology of these motifs to connote the an "inclination towards resistance." But this mobilization does not occur merely as a result of "constraining, difficult, or unbearable" circumstances, but is also mediated by symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance, negotiating both the meaning of the symbology, and also its application.

As I argue, it is through symbolic discourse where "bitter nostalgic memory" is partially both conceived and where "articulations of discontent with the status quo" are configured.[64] Indeed, such *instrumental nostalgia* as Bardenstein describes cannot not in and of itself trigger personal or collective action, but must be understood relationally to the prevailing discourse around "steadfastness" and collective experience of "resistance." Indeed, it is a reciprocal process: "collective memory" informs *symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness*, and so too do these discourses impact upon "collective memory" to mediate and rationalize personal and collective action in response to structural strain and adversity. This train of thought will be further elaborated as we discuss "collective memory" of moments of uprising and revolt and how these *transform* symbolic discourse in the next section.

Addressing Collective Memories of Revolt and Uprising

In the previous section we detailed how the most profound moment of tragic upheaval in the Palestinian narrative – the *Nakba* – has been "collectively" and "socially remembered": through (a) personal and communal narrative, (b) rich cultural, social and personal symbology and (c) the impacting realities affecting Palestinians in the present - both in the Occupied

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[64] ibid, 31.

Territories and in a scattered diaspora. Yet also, within a "collective memory" of dispossession, symbolic "sites of memory" are also endowed and infused with powerful connotations of indigenousness and *steadfastness*. These connotative elements, through their application, both exemplify and contribute to our notion of *discourses of steadfastness and resistance* as they work discursively to counter pervasive threads of Israeli discourse which implicitly denies these claims.

In the following section, I address how a more pronounced thread this discourse directly elevates the "resistance-laden" elements of "collective memory" in two key events – the 1936 Revolt and the first *Intifada*. Like the *Nakba*, both of these moments of upheaval have their own symbology to encapsulate social meaning. Taken as a continuum, this "resistance thread" of "collective memory" could arguably be understood as acting as a reactive foil to the "collective memory of dispossession and displacement" described above, as well as against impacting present-day circumstances.

As Ted Swedenbug writes of his comprehensive research on "collective memory" and the 1936 Revolt, the event "stands as an heroic symbol of struggle in Palestinian nationalist iconography."[65] However, as Swedenburg uncovers, "despite the revolt's continuing symbolic importance as the first massive Palestinian mobilization on a national scale, Palestinian accounts tend to play down its subaltern character and to represent it as a national struggle that united the entire population without regard to class, sectarian or regional differences."[66] In other words, within both "popular memory" and "official" national remembrance of the uprising, its unifying capacity was played up, and it's subaltern, insurrectionary character played down.

Yet, one should be careful here not to infer that this is only a result of the imposition of official discourse on the Revolt from above. Indeed, as Swedenburg writes, "only by taking into account the pressures of Israeli military occupation on Palestinian identity and the West's ideological disfiguration of Palestinian history could I begin to make sense of the gaps and silences, the romanticizations and embellishments, that pervaded the recollections of revolt veterans."[67] Swedenburg goes on to trace the ways the reworking, reconstruction, and remolding of the Revolt and its characteristics were adapted in the face of subsequent adversities and impacted upon by competing discourses. This finding also reflects Elizabeth Jelin's conception

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[65] Ted Swedenburg, "Seeing Double: Palestinian-American Histories of the Kufiya," Michigan Quarterly Review 31, no. 4 (1992), 559.
[66] Ibid.
[67] ibid

of "collective memory" as "the part of history that can be integrated into a current value system; the rest is ignored, forgotten, although at times it may be reclaimed and remembered."[68]

Indeed, it is this "current value system" where symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance hold significant currency in both filtering and mediating exigencies of the present. Thus, we see here a profoundly illustrative example of how a significantly impacting social context – an oppressive military occupation – can act as a contingency shaping the contours of how an event is framed in the "collective imagination" and "social memory" of a society facing considerable strain in order to further the cause of *unity* in alleviating that strain. Because this shift in emphasis of "collective memory" of the revolt was neither altogether "popular" nor "official" medium of symbolic discourse can be said to play a crucial in mediating "collective memory" and exigencies of the present.

Narratives of Revolt

In explaining this function *symbolic discourse* which I have been attempting to describe, Swedenburg appropriates Gramsci's notion of "common sense" to explain the communal rationality and social function of memory in this context, as composed of "those elements that people use to make the compromises necessary to live under a system of domination and those elements by which they attempt to oppose or resist that ruling order."[69] However, this is hardly a binary model, but a "a contradictory web of submission and resistance" where "the presence and relative weight of each element within common sense varies according to the particular circumstances of dominance and subordination."[70] Indeed, it is exactly within the "particular circumstances of dominance and subordination" where a "*discourse* of steadfastness and resistance" informs and *further* weights on the rationality of "resistance," "submission" and/or "accommodation." In other words, it isn't merely an escalation of dominance or predation which will necessitate a resistant response in a one-size-fits-all blueprint, but also to what extent historical experience and nature of the discourse which it informs mediates and inspires possibility, collective and individual agency.

Indeed, Swedenburg partially concurs with this view when he states that "Palestinian

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[68] Elizabeth Jelin, "The Politics of Memory: The Human Rights Movement and the Construction of Democracy in Argentina," in *Latin American Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (Spring 1994), quoted in Selbin, op. cit., 50
[69] Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2003), 76
[70] ibid, 77

commonsense memories must be viewed in relation to Israeli dominant discourses and practices which attempt to erase, discredit, and marginalize the Palestinian past." Yet, as I would argue, "Palestinian commonsense memories" must also be viewed in relation to evolved and evolving *Palestinian "dominant discourses,"* of which the discourse of "steadfastness and resistance" we are describing herein remains highly significant. In short, *discourse* is not exclusive to power and domination, but also embodied and wielded by those *responding* to power and domination.

Further, such discourse is *not necessarily* manifested and/or embodied in the "official," nationalist form of that discourse, but remains more expansive than any national idiom or its assertion. As I argue, when a "symbolic discourse of resistance" as such is cultivated enough and imbued with enough historical experience as a result of prolonged, protracted struggle, the symbolic discourse itself can attain hegemony – if the realities of conflict accommodate it – and the "political" or "official" discourse will have to remain subservient to it. This insight will be elaborated in the following chapter as it has manifested itself in the social and political arenas.

Implicitly, Swedenburg notes this possibility as well. Although "in general, commonsense memory that opposes the Zionist narrative is framed within the broadly hegemonic discourse of Palestinian nationalism"; and although "contemporary struggles against military occupation and colonization have helped foster a substantial zone of agreement between popular and official nationalist views of the past," "subaltern interviewees did not simply mimic the given historical narratives." Instead, they often appropriated "particular inflections and emphases that sometimes verged on the oppositional," exhibiting an "oppositional memory" or "memory as *resistance,*."[71] This "oppositional memory" often incorporated the "subaltern," class-based character of the Revolt which had been significantly glossed over by the official discourse. According to Swedenburg, there is indeed a "commonsense memory that was resistant to official Palestinian national discourse." Though it was usually "couched in the idiom of nationalism, the accepted framework within which to conduct political discussion," many interviewees used "nationalist categories to make negative judgments about the elite… Such expressions of dissidence fractured official discourse from within by turning it against itself. This form of resistant discourse also frequently involved the articulation of nationalism and local peasant, clan, or village idioms, which worked together to produce populist inflections" and "emphasized

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[71] ibid, 110.

popular contributions to the revolt."[72] Indeed, as Swedenburg summarizes, "the terrain of common sense of the past manifested a considerable state of play and was a zone where one found re-appropriations and re-accentuations of official discourse and 'strange composites' of the dominant and the subaltern."[73]

To elucidate one more crucial element of Swedenburg's research on the 1936 Revolt which will transition well to our discussion of the evolution of the Palestinian "symbolic discourse of resistance" through the 1987 *Intifada* is to mention the idea of "the Palestinian peasant as a national signifier." In Swedenburg's piece of the same name, the role of the Palestinian peasant (*fallah*) is highlighted as both being central to the uprising, and as an iconic figure symbolizing many of the common tropes associated with the idiom of Palestinian nationalism. The fact that the *fallah* is imbued with so much symbolic currency, according to Swedenburg, stems from his "symbolic fitness as a vehicle of resistance to specific Israeli practices: (1) the conquest of Palestinian land, (2) the "preservation-dissolution" of Palestinian villages, and (3) the denial of the legitimacy of Palestinian nationalism."[74] Thus, the role of the *fallah* in Palestinian *symbolic discourse* as a whole presents both a paradigmatic example and component of how a *symbolic discourse of resistance and steadfastness* both shapes symbology, as well as how that symbology is socially perceived.

Swedenburg notes that "through the peasant as signifier of militancy, the Palestinian people have been invested with… a 'struggle identity.'"[75] As such, with the formation of the PLO in the mid1960s, because the PLO guerilla of the period most exemplified this sense of a 'struggle' he became "the historical heir of the peasant rebel of 1936-39."[76] Recall also our discussion in the Preface of the *kufiya* and its symbolic connotations, stemming chiefly from the Revolt of 1936. It is no surprise then that when the PLO guerilla movement claimed its place as "historical heir," it also donned the *kufiya*, thereby not only re-articulating the symbolism of the Revolt, but also re-forming and reframing its symbolic deployment in a new present. As Swedenburg writes, "The *kufiya*… once again became [a] national symbol in the mid-sixties, with the rise of the *fedayeen*, the Palestinian guerilla fighter… The adoption of the peasant and his

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[72] ibid, 110.
[73] ibid, 77.
[74] Swedenburg, "The Palestinian Peasant as National Signifier," 18
[75] ibid. Note that Swedenburg is again quoting Rosemary Sayigh's notion of "struggle identity" which we have described in the introduction. See R. Sayigh, op. cit.
[76] ibid.

black-and-white checkered kufiya as nationalist signifiers represented an attempt to recall earlier struggles and to give the national movement a popular dimension."[77]   Therefore, as we have discussed above relational to other symbols, the symbology of the *kufiya* once again became emblematic of a symbolic discourse – recalling collective, social memories of an earlier moment of upheaval and resistance with the possibilities of a new one.

But again, the *kufiya*'s place in a symbolic discourse begins with the *fallah*, and it is in that sense where the *fallah* is also highly imbued with the associated symbolic field of "steadfastness" (*samud*). Swedenburg first chronicles how in the late 1960s, "Palestinian poets, artists, and cultural workers have fashioned the *fallah* into a symbol of *sumud* ("steadfastness"): staying on the land despite the pressures of occupation and expropriation… The figure of the Palestinian peasant has become the epitome of what it means to be *samid*, to stay put, anchored to the earth with stubborn determination. Palestinians fight colonization by stressing their rootedness in and love for the soil."[78]   Again, we see here, like with the symbology associated with the cactus described above how "rootedness" and "steadfastness" are appropriated *as vehicles of resistance*, and how a symbolic discourse of both of these motifs – steadfastness *and* resistance – work reciprocally in harvesting a "symbolic field" of images which are connected with both a collective memory of loss and of defiance.

"Resistance" Redefined and Symbolic Discourses Reshaped

Turning back momentarily to the *kufiya* we can see through *it's* symbolic evolution and appropriation, the evolution of *resistance discourse* – how social and political agency on the part of *jil al-intifada* (the intifada generation) transformed popular conceptions of what *resistance* came to embody and entail. Additionally, we can see through the evolutions of "collective memory" relational to the Intifada among its participants how a symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance has been informed by this moment of upheaval, transformed by the social experience which the intifada came to mean in the larger Palestinian national idiom.

As Swedenburg notes, before the intifada in the mid-eighties, "the *kufiya* signified either rural identity (when put on by older men) or – if donned as a scarf by urban youths – solidarity with the leadership and the *fedayeen* vanguard 'outside' Palestine who, it was hoped, would

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[77] "Seeing Double," 567.
[78] "The Palestinian Peasant," op. cit.

liberate Palestinians living under occupation."[79] Yet as the intifada unfolded, and the so-called "Children of the Stones" (*atfal al-hijara*) asserted themselves, the *kufiya* took on new meanings, as *resistance* itself was being redefined and renegotiated. As youthful activists and *shabab* (young people) wore the *kufiya* to hide their identities when confronting Israeli soldiers or while engaging in other *intifada*-related activities, the *kufiya* became "resemanticized" from a symbol of solidarity with a vanguard-led resistance, to a potent symbol of a new form of youthful, localized "national solidarity and activism."[80] But the *kufiya* is only emblematic of the larger "resemanticization" of *symbolic discourse,* particularly that forming around popular conceptions of "resistance" and "steadfastness":

> The activists of the intifada have caused a shift in the notion of political struggle, so that it is no longer a vanguard activity. Struggle now involves such actions as rock-throwing, demonstrating, organizing strikes, constructing barricades, growing vegetables in the backyard, setting up alternative schools, clinics and police, and so on. These are all activities in which women and children can, and do, play as prominent a role as adult men. Ownership of the concept of struggle has been partially transferred from the armed vanguard and the PLO leadership outside to the popular organizations of the Occupied Territories inside. The masses, formerly led, now precede the leadership.[81]

While the social implications of this shift as they unfolded will be more directly addressed in the following chapter, what I want to address here is how that shift and moment of rupture has figured in the collective and social memory of the Intifada, and as such looming large in the *discourse of steadfastness and resistance* which today still looms large in the present period of political and social transformation in Occupied Palestine.

This is exactly the issue addressed John Collins' book *Occupied Memory*, where he confronts the "temporal, cognitive, and narrative space"[82] forming a collective memory of the intifada among its participants, *jil al-intifada* ("the intifada generation") as they grapple with its impact on a personal level and confront new forms of adversity and crisis in the mid-1990s.[83] Just as Swedenburg elucidated in his study of the collective memory of the 1936 Revolt, collective memory of the Intifada is both framed and remembered through the adversities of continuing occupation – a "permanent state of emergency." Again, it is within this structural

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[79] "Seeing Double," 568
[80] ibid, 568-569
[81] "The Palestinian Peasant," 28
[82] John Collins, *Occupied by Memory: The Intifada Generation and the Palestininian State of Emergency* (New York: NYU Press), 11-12.
[83] Ibid, 12

context where a *discourse of resistance* becomes instrumental.

Collins notes "the *overdetermination* of memory by immediate events" where "powerful 'moral chronologies'" negatively contrast recent political and social developments "with the early period of the uprising, which is remembered as a time of optimism, democratic resistance and pure motives."[84] It is in this sense then, I argue, where a discourse of resistance and steadfastness becomes redefined. As Collins recounts in the words of Palestinian lawyer Jonathan Katta: "Perhaps this is the definition of truly revolutionary action: not that it takes up the gun or is violent, but that it refuses to accept the givens of traditional wisdom, the limits within which everyone feels they must operate."[85] If we understand "collective memory" of the intifada to be imbued with this sort of ethos, where the possibilities of *resistance* and *steadfastness* are seen to be expanded and renewed with symbolic meaning and significance, it becomes clear that a *discourse* of steadfastness and resistance as such is expansive beyond the official, top-down *appropriation* of that discourse.

Secondly, and more directly addressing our theoretical framework, Collins also describes a "discursive field through which young Palestinians were invested with powerful political, social and cultural meaning during the intifada."[86] In his understanding of "generation as discourse," Collins delineates a historicization of generations as they appear in the Palestinian narrative: *jil al-intifada* being "preceded by the *jil-al-thawra* (the generation that grew up under the Palestinian revolution of the late 1960s) and the *jil al-nakba* (the generation formed by the experience of dispossession in 1948.)"[87] Following Sayigh's aforementioned notion of "struggle identity," it becomes arguable that through a discourse that each of these generations is "judged" in some fashion relational to a *discourse of steadfastness and resistance*. Further, it is within Collins' notion of "generation as possibility," where "possibilities" for regenerating and actualizing resistance and steadfastness both loom large and are defining. Indeed, as Collins understands "generation" as "describing processes through which social identities and political projects are symbolically produced, reproduced and transformed,"[88] it becomes clear that a discursive understanding of generation can operate reciprocally with a symbolic discourse of resistance and steadfastness – each forming "discursive fields" interacting and informing each other.

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[84] ibid., 9
[85] ibid., 36
[86] ibid.,, 7
[87] ibid., 11; See also R. Sayigh, op. cit. (1979), 11
[88] ibid., 13

Indeed, there is no better illustration of the interplay of these discourses than the "collective memory" of the intifada in contemporary Palestinian discourse – political, social, and cultural – where the "children of the stones" act discursively as a "symbolic nexus" between discourses on generation, nationalism, resistance, and memory converge. As such, for members of the *jil al-intifada*, memories of the intifada are both viewed through that discourse and as contributory to the evolution of that discourse. Indeed, as Collins writes, "For most of the young people I interviewed, to remember the intifada is to remember a time during which they and their age-mates came to see themselves as the vanguard of the national struggle against Israeli occupation. To put it another way, the uprising was the crucible in which the political 'birth' of their generation – and, by extension, the rebirth of the nation as a whole – took place."[89]

On an even larger, societal and cultural level then, the extent to which *jil al-intifada* – especially the iconic "children of the stones" – have gained pride of place alongside the aforementioned *fallah* as both a "national signifier," and as a symbol of resistance, further shows not only the centrality of a symbolic discourse of resistance, but how "collective memory" of the intifada also reciprocally shapes the discourse as well. As Collins writes on "popular memory," "what matters is the ways in which people *produce the past* through a dynamic engagement with the present (and even the future.) This production involves a range of discourses, official and popular, dominant and oppositional, individual and collective."[90] As I have been stressing, the notion of a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance,* which both operates with, and is at the same time impacting upon "collective memory," is one such discourse, and forms a medium for dynamic engagement with the present.

CHAPTER 2

Discourses of *Steadfastness* and *Resistance* Applied through Social Practice

Between memory and a suitcase,
there is no other solution but struggle
-- Mahmoud Darwish[91]

In the previous chapter we saw how conceptions of a "collective memory" of key events

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[89] ibid., 36
[90] ibid., 22
[91] Quoted in Schulz, *Palestinian Diaspora*, 118.

of rupture and upheaval in the Palestinian historical narrative are culturally preserved in symbolic "sites of memory," as well as re-articulated and remembered in a way which both frames and is framed by impacting exigencies of the present. As was elaborated upon, this understanding of "collective memory" – and its corresponding symbology and cultural production – both contribute to and are collectively viewed through a pervasive *symbolic discourse of resistance and steadfastness*, which resides in what Foran and Selbin refer to as "popular political culture."

In this chapter, we will look at some examples within the internal dynamics of Palestinian social and political culture, elaborated upon by social-anthropologists and political scientists in the field, where this *discourse* is identified as being applied and negotiated through social practice. The main emphasis here is on the social realm, where I focus mainly on research conducted during, and in the aftermath of, the first Intifada. As we will see, in both the Occupied Territories and in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, symbolic discourses of resistance was both forcefully appropriated as *praxis*: as identity-empowering discourses through which national, communal identities were strengthened. Additionally, it is here at the "center" of symbolic discourse production, where symbolic *discourses of steadfastness and resistance* were themselves significantly transformed, generating tremendous symbolic capital which to this day spans transnational boundaries as being integral symbolic tropes of Palestinian identity.

Useful to consider here is Allison Brysk's conceptualization of "symbolic politics" and how this concept impacts upon social and political dynamics: How "symbolically mobilized political actors can create new political opportunities by revealing, challenging, and changing narratives about interests and identities." The concept of symbolic politics thus "expands the treatment of change offered by 'political culture'… suggesting several channels for the transformation of beliefs into behavior."[92] Indeed, this further illustrates why a conceptualization of a "political culture of resistance" is too broad and essentializing to describe particular "channels," which are best described as "threads" of *discourse* existing *within* a "popular political culture." As I argue, such an understanding of "symbolic politics" is central to an illustration of how *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* frame and impact upon social and political possibilities facing Palestinians both in the Occupied Territories and in the diaspora.

We will recall that the last chapter closed with a description of the first intifada as a moment of upheaval, which in turn enlarged the possibilities of what popular conceptions of

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[92] Allison Brysk, "'Hearts and Minds': Bringing Symbolic Politics Back In," pp. 559-85 in *Polity* 27, no. 4 (Summer 1995): 561, 562-563. Also quoted in Selbin, op. cit. 131-132.

resistance and *steadfastness* could entail. This, therefore, stands as a key moment of reshaping for the *discourse* coalescing around *resistance* and *steadfastness* – where historical experience, expressed by a "collective memory" of these events, informs and guides "channels" of popular discourse. The beginning of the first Intifada was a time not only when such discourses were being transformed, their possibilities and forms redefined, but also a point at which these discourses retained *hegemony* within the Palestinian "national project."   However, such discursive hegemony was neither imposed nor fully maintained from above, but was both propelled and appropriated by the spontaneous and massive swell of collective sentiment which the Intifada represented. Thus, especially in this period, these discursive threads fully embodied John Collins' description of *discourse*, as "the notion that all communication, from everyday speech to the most complex discursive structures, is necessarily shaped, limited, and rendered possible by a preexisting discursive universe."[93] Yet, at the same time, a *symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness* worked not only to shape and produce, but to *transform* what Selbin describes as "the population's perception of the options that are available and seem plausible to them… [constituting] 'repertoires of collective action' and/or a 'tool-kit' of symbols, stories, rituals and world-views"[94] As I argue, an understanding of *discourse* in this sense is far more pervasive – as a *discourse* and not merely an "ideology" – and thus also manifests itself in many diverse areas of social practice, contributing fundamentally to individual and collective perceptions of "collective" and "national identity."

The emphasis in this chapter then is on *social practice* in order to show how the salience of such symbolic discourses extends beyond their more visible appropriation in political discourse by national and political elites. Though many observers of Palestinian nationalism accurately observe how symbolic discourses of resistance are "employed in order to legitimize the claims of clashing segments of the elite,"[95] there is also a more social, organic and pervasive process through which *symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness* impact upon social dynamics and popular conceptions of "collective identity." In other words, though this discourse is certainly drawn from, and even in part disseminated "from above," it is also re-articulated,

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[93] Collins, op. cit. 36
[94] Selbin, op. cit. 125
[95] Helena Lindholm Schulz. "The 'Al-Aqsa Intifada' As a Result of Politics of Transition." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2002): 23: "Different discursive strategies were employed in order to legitimze the claims of clashing segments of the elite. In those discourses the notions of revolution, resistance and intifada were deeply entrenched."

transformed, and given *social meaning* "from below" through everyday forms of social practice. It thus this "social" appropriation of this discourse which is thus our chief focus.

All the same, at the close of the chapter and peripherally throughout, I will also address shifting political appropriations and manifestations of this discourse in order to contextualize what is described herein with more contemporary political circumstances. As will be described, a "de-hegemonization" of this discourse during the post-Intifada years of the Oslo "peace process" had a profound impact on areas of Palestinian cultural production and internal social dynamics, especially in the Occupied Territories. Yet, at the same time, the structural underpinnings of occupation which continued and even further consolidated themselves during these years, eventually provided a structural foundation for the re-ascendance of a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance*, punctuated most clearly in the eruption of the Second Intifada and its ensuing aftermath.

Lastly, I close the chapter with some more recent examples of the evolutions of this discourse as they appear in the cultural arena, which will transition well with some of the "transnational" themes to be covered in the final chapter. What is emphasized here is the increased malleability and "contestability" of our conception of symbolic discourse. Although in the present period, such discourses remain *non*-hegemonic, they still form powerful discursive "lenses" through which political, social and cultural language is perceived and expressed.

Situating *Steadfastness*, *Resistance* and Palestinian Identity

As I contend, *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* can be a salient force sand constitutive elements impacting upon Palestinian identity formation, self-perception and articulation on both an individual and group level. Ultimately, this process is both a result of decades of protracted conflict and strain, as well as a product of communal and individual assertions of agency in pursuit of "national liberation" and alleviation of deprivation.

In anthropologist Julie Peteet's research with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon she recounts a moment where one man spits with contempt, "Arafat?! Arafat is *not* a Palestinian! A Palestinian is one who struggles." The man proceeds to identity "Christina" – a foreign woman who had worked in Palestinian refugee camps for years – as more embodying this sense of "struggle" than Arafat during this period (1995), and therefore more "Palestinian." Indeed, Peteet's findings throughout her research similarly highlight "the way in which resistance figures

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so prominently in the contemporary production and reproduction of Palestinian identity," pointing to the assertive role of *agency* in identity formation, as well as "specific historic junctures" and spatiality in locating the *negotiability* of identity in the present.[96] This idea recalls themes discussed last chapter in understanding "collective memory" as re-articulating and re-contextualizing itself in "exigencies of the present."

Within this framework, individual and collective perceptions of identity stand as "a cultural *product* of peoples' socio-spatial location and their practices within a shifting field of power relations that is historically and culturally specific."[97] Historical and spatial elements are thus emphasized as being crucially constitutive of collective identity over "'the cultural' because culturally specific frames for understanding identity can… gloss over the complexity of agency and history." This emphasizes the reciprocal relationship we have been describing throughout between (national) identity and a "discourse community" by drawing attention to "the way identities can shape social movements and yet are themselves, in the process of this interaction, sites of rearticulation." In addition, because "the very form of identity used as a mobilizing frame can be transformed during the course of social movement participation," the social movement itself, and the *discourse* informing it, can also be transformed and reshaped.[98]

Peteet illustrates this by showing how the symbolic retention of "local identities" (i.e. localized *Palestinian* identities by virtue of being exiled *from* those locales) became, in forms of cultural production, a cognizant acts of *resistance*. Thus not only a means by which identity can be "sustained, reaffirmed, or… take on new contours," but also a means by which the *discourse* around "resistance" is similarly framed. As Peteet writes, "evoking Palestinian national identity in definitions of self and community is central to resisting a project in which nonrecognition was pivotal."[99] As such, the practice of *retention* of this identity formed a central site where "the Palestinian resistance movement was organized, mobilized, and, in the process, reconfigured."[100] In short, we see how the assertion of identity in the "everyday spaces of violence" became

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[96] Peteet, Julie. "Refugees, Resistance, and Identity." In *Globalizations and Social Movements: Culture, Power, and the Transnational Public Sphere*, John A. Guidry, Michael D. Kennedy, and Mayer N. Zald eds. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2000, pp. 183-209, p. 183-184.
[97] Ibid, 184.
[98] Ibid, This notion of "discourse community" to describe "social movements" being sites of convergence for diverse discourses is elaborated in Apter – Reference. Peteet too further describes "the notion that social movements mobilize around *certain assumed to be given aspects* of identity." As it is argued here, it is through the medium of discourse where these "aspects" come into play as "assumed to be given."
[99] Ibid, 185
[100] Ibid, 184.

understood and framed as a form of "resistance." Reciprocally as well, such "resistance" further reinforced a Palestinian identity on both individual and communal levels.

It is also this form of resistance to non-recognition which is perceived as "collectivizing" Palestinian communities in a framework around collective aspirations, a common sense of entitlement for rights to sovereignty, forming what Rashid Khalidi calls the "incipient sense of community-as-nation."[101] This notion of "resisting-by-existing" (as I call it) is further subsumed under the concept of *sumud* (steadfastness) which Peteet describes here as "central to self-definition" for Palestinians both in exile and in the Occupied Territories. Though being a more objectively "defensive" form of "resistance," the concept of *sumud* is heavily endowed with resistance-laden connotations, to the point where, essentially, "steadfastness" _is_ resistance:

> steadfastness as a category for interpreting one's own actions and those of others during times of crisis underwrote a cultural and political recoding of action as resistance, even the passive action of staying put. Steadfastness takes on a connotation of survival for Palestinians, who see themselves as victims of neo-colonial movement in which their displacement defined the possibility of the project. *Sumud* registers a refusal to acquiesce.[102]

Again, we see here how "practicing" *sumud* as a form of personal and collective practice can be understood as "performing" collective identity. During the Intifada, when "the relationship between formal political activism and the informal that drew in the domestic sphere, mothers, the elderly, youth, and children," became stronger and more pronounced, this was both the logical *result* of putting *symbolic discourse* into practice, but was also a vehicle for transforming the *discourse* around *resistance* through collective experience. [103]

It is also here where we should again make a crucial distinction between "the resistance movement" (i.e. the "official," public expression of Palestinian national struggle) and the social practice of discourses of steadfastness and resistance. As Peteet writes, "the 'resistance movement' refers to institutional, organized resistance under the PLO umbrella. But resistance also embodied a far more pervasive and deeper meaning. *Struggle* refers to the later kind of resistance, which extends beyond the boundaries of the PLO. Everyday existence was perceived as enacting resistance as a form of *struggle*."[104] What Peteet defines here as "struggle" – as we have discussed previously – directly draws from a symbolic discourse of resistance, but extends

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[101] Khalidi, 28.
[102] ibid, 196
[103] ibid, 196
[104] ibid, 195

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its application to personal, social and cultural life, and thus acts as a constitutive element of personal and communal identity.

One woman whom Peteet interviews describes how "without struggle – without the resistance movement – we don't know who we are. It was through struggling that we found our identity."[105] In other words, it is not so much a sense of "participation" in the "movement" which gives this contour to personal and collective identity, but "through struggling" and applying a discourse of steadfastness to everyday practice which affirms *both* participation and "collective identity." Indeed, as Peteet elaborates, "militancy and struggle were such a part of one's identity that to withdraw was to lose stature as a 'true' Palestinian. In the camps, I often heard people referred to as true Palestinians by virtue of their political activism, particularly but not always necessarily, in the form of militancy."[106] Thus to "*struggle,*" even if it meant performing the menial aspects of daily life, "became identity endowing and affirming."[107]

This idea of cognitive self-perception as empowerment is also evidenced in the fact that Palestinians in the refugee camps would never refer to themselves as "refugees" but always as "Returners." According to Peteet, "the distinction hinges on action as well as belonging. The 'returner' implies a political commitment that underwrites agency, for return is contingent upon political participation. Such a deployment of terms defines present time and space as liminal and *fixes identity to the practice of resistance*."[108] Thus, it is through the appropriation of a *symbolic discourse of resistance* through which such a semantic construal is both understood and through which this self-identification acquires salient symbolic currency.

"Inscriptions of Violence" as Identity-Affirming Symbols of Resistance

Peteet also addresses the discursive theme of *resistance* as it has come to function as a constitutive component of Palestinian *youth* identity in the Occupied Territories: how physical violence synonymous with the occupation became ritualized as a rite of passage during the years of the First Intifada. Drawing on research conducted in the West Bank, Peteet shows how "a Palestinian construal of the practice of violence as a rite of passage into manhood… galvanizes political consciousness and agency" and therefore functions as "a creative and dynamic act of

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[105] 193
[106] 195
[107] ibid
[108] ibid, 196, emphasis added.

resistance." However, though "ritualized physical violence as a transformative experience… galvanizes one set of participants to unsettle power arrangements… it both reaffirms and transforms internal Palestinian forms of power."[109] Peteet details how beatings and detention of male youth served as a symbolic marker attainment of an emasculated Palestinian identity "enmeshed in a dialogic of power and transformation."[110] Thus, routine beatings of Palestinian youth stood as "rituals of resistance"[111] demarcating a symbolic assertion of both a gendered male coming of age, as well as resistance to the ongoing occupation.

The practice is described as forming an unfortunate, ritualized "terrain of cultural resistance to domination" through the "inscription" of power on the bodies of Palestinian youth. Here then, "the body" becomes a key vessel through which not only power is inscribed, but also a symbolic discourse of resistance: "To the Palestinians, the battered body, with its bruises and broken limbs, is the symbolic embodiment of a 20th century history of subordination and powerlessness – of 'what we have to endure' – but also of their determination to resist and to struggle for national independence."[112] This idea of symbolic inversion – here on the inter-personal arena of the body – recalls and personifies Khalidi's description of the Palestinian national idiom itself perpetually "narrating failure as triumph." As "a representation created with the intent of humiliating," its meaning is thus "reversed into one of honor, manhood, and moral superiority." However, as Peteet mentions, we have to state clearly that such a lucid observation does not imply that Palestinian youths during the Intifada "make light of physical violence," but to understand how the experience is understood, contextualized and re-articulated, both collectively and individually." Further, the physical "inscriptions" from such beatings also stand as a "commentary on suffering" as well as, I would add, a "commentary on *resistance*." Thus not only standing as "powerful statements belying claims of a benign occupation," but also powerful statements of refusal, non-submission, and empowerment, as well as the extent to which "resistance" on the part of young people is viewed as a threat. Similar to the distinction between "refugee" and "returner" described above, Peteet observes this discursive inversion of violence - its reproduction as a form of symbolic capital - being a "trick," reversing "the social order of meaning and lead[ing] to political agency. To let bodily violence stand as constitutive of an

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[109] Julie Peteet. "Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian 'Intifada': A Cultural Politics of Violence," *American Ethnologist* 21, no. 1. (Feb., 1994), 31
[110] ibid.
[111] Stuart Hall, *Rituals of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 2002)
[112] Peteet, "Male Gender," 38

inferior and submitting social position and subjectivity without interpretation and challenge would be to submit to the dominant performers' meaning."[113]

Resistance, Identity and Domestic Practice

Another arena where the reciprocal relationship between a symbolic discourse of resistance and social practice is illustrated is in the domestic practice of mothering. As Peteet describes, a stark contradiction presented itself in how "a pronounced discourse of mothers as national icons intersected with a particularly situated maternal practice" which partially constrained women to the domestic realm.[114] Though "women as icons of the nation, a widespread image in Palestinian literature, art, and political rhetoric, is a cultural construct, its message was recoded by women as a self-affirming political agency that they deployed to press for rights."[115] In this process, motherhood and the domestic realm became a "site of resistance" in a way which appropriated the larger "resistance discourse," but transcended its hitherto "official" application to press for gender equality and empowerment within the greater social community. In doing so, mothers increasingly "acted in reference to culturally dominant and highly charged symbols of maternal sentiment and behavior," yet "subverted the space and meaning traditionally associated with maternal practice." [116]

As would be expected in a situation of ensuing societal strain, and where the discourse of *steadfastness* carried powerful connotations, "reproductive capabilities were increasingly connected to larger communal political concerns by an official discourse that cast mothers as repositories of a nationalist reproductive potential as sacrificial icons."[117] Yet, as Peteet uncovers, it was *not* out of a perceived "national need" for which reproductive decisions were made by Palestinian women, but because it was an aspect of "struggle" that affirmed not only communal participation, but individual identity as well. By "conceptualizing and categorizing fertility and reproduction" in the terms of a larger *symbolic discourse of steadfastness* which was directly relational to affirming one's identity, mothers not only "cultivated a sense of contribution

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[113] ibid, 45
[114] Julie Peteet, "Icons and Militants: Mothering in the Danger Zone," *Signs* 23, No. 1. (Autumn,1997),103.
[115] Ibid, 104
[116] ibid.
[117] ibid, 111.

and commitment to the national struggle," but also "[crafted] an agential location for themselves in a movement that did not directly recruit them or position them as crucial actors, but simply celebrated their reproductive potential." Further, as a burgeoning women's movement *within* the Intifada sought to "influence policy such that gender difference is recognized in the concept of citizenship as the basis for organizing and distributing entitlements and rights," the symbolic connotations of motherhood became simultaneously "culturally accommodating and politically resistant," as Palestinian mothers increasingly used their "cultural" standing to advance gender-based and class-based political claims.

In sum, what Peteet's research shows is how the *perception of practicing* "resistance," however formally or informally institutionalized, "transfigures… the way of being a Palestinian in the world, particularly in relation to others in the world of exile or occupation. Empowerment, personal and collective, was the key component of this transformation."[118] Thus, we see here how not only a sense of empowerment was born out of a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance*, but also how "empowerment" reciprocally worked to "transfigure" the discourse around "struggle" as affirming individual and collective identity. The process thus directly affected collective, transforming perceptions of "what it meant" to be Palestinian and how one was thought to properly "perform" "being Palestinian" through everyday practice. Though I have elaborated on Peteet's findings in some detail, it remains central one of our main themes: of how a *symbolic discourse* and *practice* of that discourse can give central shape and contour to conceptions of collective and national identity.

Negotiating Discourses of Resistance with Discourses of "Morality" and "Unity"

The assertion of women's rights within the Intifada – drawing from a *discourse of resistance* to push its application beyond existing social and political boundaries – gradually became *incorporated* into the possibilities of that discourse. But at the same time, this also brought to the fore deepening fault-lines and divergent cleavages within the Palestinian national movement. Most significantly, the Intifada saw the emergence of a new Islamist politics – most visibly embodied in the Hamas movement (*Harakat al-Muqawama al-Islamiyya*) formed in 1987 as a political outgrowth of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had hitherto limited its activities to

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[118] Peteet, "Refugees, Resistance, and Identity," 198

pursuing a "culturalist agenda" which abstained from political involvement.[119]

A useful theory to deploy here to describe this emergent dynamic is Gramsci's concept of *hegemony*: where power is "not the provenance of a static ruling class, but theorized as transactional, a joint construction, without a fixed or permanent location, inherently unstable and constantly shifting."[120] The struggle for hegemony *within* the uprising articulated itself on a variety of fronts. Attempting to harness the grassroots surge which the Intifada represented, there emerged a "war of position" between competing interests within the Palestinian national movement over the both the *ends and means* in advancing claims of self-determination. As such, this "war of position" was also waged through – and for – appropriating *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* in making those claims. As a central aspect of Gramsci's conceptualization is that *hegemony* is necessarily contested on a wide array of domains – political, economic, social – such a "war of position" was most visibly waged in the arena of *culture* during the Intifada-period, when a symbolic discourse of resistance was both highly charged and catalyzing, as well as highly flexible and subject to differing appropriations.[121] As such, a symbolic discourse of resistance came into significant contact and conflict with other symbolic discourses – notably those subsumed around socially conservative conceptions of "morality" and "unity."

The most illustrative example of this struggle was a contentious "*hijab* campaign" launched by Islamist groups in Gaza which "re-invented" the *hijab* as both a "moralistic" symbol of unity and solidarity.[122] As Rema Hammami describes, though the campaign was eventually diluted by the "official" leadership committees of the Intifada (UNLU), the episode marked "the first time during the intifada that an issue once relegated to the arena of religious behavior had been mobilized as a nationalist issue."[123] But let us examine this episode in further detail as it

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[119] See Khaled Hroub, *Hamas: A Beginner's Guide*, (London: Pluto, 2006); *Hamas: Political Thought and Practice*, (Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 2000); Graham Usher, "What Kind of Nation?" in *Political Islam: essays from Middle East Report*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Glen Robinson, *Building a Palestinian State: the incomplete revolution*, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1993).

[120] This summary of Gramsci taken from Stein and Swedenburg, op. cit. 8-9. See also Anne Showstack Sassoon, "Hegemony, War of Position and Political Intervention," in Approaches to Gramsci, ed. Anne Showstack Sassoon (London: Writers and Readers, 1982), 111. For Gramsci in his own words, see Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1970).

[121] Lawrence Grossberg, "History, Politics, and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge 1996), 158.

[122] Rema Hammani. "From Immodesty to Collaboration: Hamas, the Women's Movement, and National Identity in the Intifada" in *Political Islam,* op. cit.

[123] ibid, 194

serves as an extremely illustrative example of how a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* conflicted with other threads of symbolic discourse claiming its appropriation, the cleavages of which still remain significantly contentious and charged today.

Hammami chronicles how at the onset of the Intifada, Islamist groups began to lay claim and drew from the *symbolic discourse of resistance* propelling the Intifada to enforce the wearing of the *hijab*, not so much as religious imposition, but as a symbol of solidarity with nationalist aspirations, "as necessary social discipline to sustain the intifada." As such, the newly formed Hamas movement was able to "conflate its social ideology with Palestinian nationalism" and attempt to "capture the direction and vision of the intifada" in Gaza.[124] For a time at the start of the Intifada, because Islamist movements in Gaza established a strong cultural influence "through a mixture of consent and coercion," few women refused to wear the *hijab* as "female individualism came to be represented as a threat to the uprising rather than a means to sustain it."[125] Additionally, it was through this campaign where the Islamist movement (specifically Hamas) was first able to *symbolically* "popularize the notion that its version of social morality is fundamental to Palestinian nationalism and national identity."[126] Further, this also more broadly advanced the trend of shifting the application of symbolic discourses of resistance "away from activism focused solely on confronting the external enemy of the occupation to activism simultaneously focused on 'cleansing' Palestinian society of elements deemed to make it vulnerable to that enemy."

"For at least a year," writes Hammami, "women [in Gaza] were left to confront a phantom – what seemed to be a generalized social impulse rather than a clear policy decision by a political faction." This social impulse manifested itself in the form of violent intimidation – most often by male youth – and forced many women to renegotiate their activism confronting the occupation relative to the imposition of patriarchal social constraints. [127]

We will recall the layers of "invented tradition" associated with the *kufiya* discussed previously as symbolically connoting both "resistance" and "unity" despite more ambiguous historical facts. In a similar way, the symbolic significance of the *hijab* as "unifying" or as a symbol of "morality" was a relatively "invented tradition" in Gaza as well. Indeed, the

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[124] ibid
[125] ibid, 197, 195
[126] ibid, 203
[127] ibid, 194, 203

symbology, appropriations and reinventions associated with the *hijab* in Gaza have been ongoing. Before the Intifada, the *hijab* was relatively absent in public culture in Gaza as, historically, "the Nasirist discourse of religiosity promoted the creation of modern Arab nationalist subjectivities. Islam was part of history and a source of Arab identity, but not the basis of a modern social or political order." However, in the 1970's a growing Islamist movement in Gaza

> endowed the *hijab* with new meanings of piety and, implicitly, political affiliation. In order to assert these new significations, they elaborated new forms of *hijab*… Women affiliated with the movement started wearing long, plain tailored overcoats they called *shari'a* dress, thus making them symbolic forms of adherence to their understanding of the textual tradition of Islam. While supposedly a return to authentic Islamic tradition, this is an invented tradition in both form and meaning. Unlike other forms of dress and headcovering mentioned above, here the *hijab* is a fundamentally symbolic form supposed to discipline women's bodies as part of a larger project of disciplining women's subjectivities.[128]

In this period, with Gazan society experiencing larger degrees of economic strain and unemployment, Hamas and the Muslim Brotherhood "offered a model of society and social behavior relevant to the problems of the majority of poor Gaza residents," and thus gained significant ground in the social realm.[129] All the same, even for many women already wearing the *hijab*, the campaign of reinventing it as a conflating symbol of morality and unity, in addition to enforcing such "hijabization" by way of young boys harassing Gazan women, created an intimidating atmosphere which sowed anxiety and fear among many women rather than social unity. In this process, the original, "religious" arguments proscribing the *hijab* were obfuscated by a new form of solidarity signification. As Hammami writes,

> The hijab was promoted (and to a great extent became understood) as a sign of women's political commitment to the intifada… By this logic, bareheaded women were considered vain and frivolous or, at worst, anti-nationalist. Another argument was that the headscarf was a form of cultural struggle, an assertion of national heritage.[130]

Consequently, a *symbolic discourse of resistance* was significantly overshadowed by a *symbolic discourse of "solidarity" and "morality."* Indeed, it was only after informal enforcement of the *hijab* campaign snowballed out of control when the UNLU stepped in to issue a leaflet condemning the forced imposition of the *hijab* on Gaza women. However, beginning with the

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[128] ibid, 196
[129] ibid, 197
[130] ibid, 199

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phrase "Let bygones be bygones," the leaflet was hardly self-critical of the internecine, culturally reactionary current within the uprising. At the same time, by sponsoring statements in the form of graffiti such as, "Those caught throwing stones at women will be treated as collaborators," and "women have a great role in the intifada and we must respect them,"[131] the UNLU successfully diffused the situation and "in a matter of days women seemed to have the power of the intifada on their side."[132]

In drawing conclusions on this episode, Hammami notes how the UNLU intervention was too late, and thus was "incapable of reversing the overall effect of the campaign, which had already succeeded in positioning women's dress and behavior as appropriate subjects of political discipline, as sites for the reproduction of the social and… physical integrity of the intifada."[133] Because a symbolic discourse of resistance was obfuscated by a *symbolic discourse of morality and unity*, the traces of a nascent women's movement exhibiting the same sense of empowerment described by Peteet in the West Bank and Lebanese refugee camps during the same period were firmly sidelined.

At the same time, this process unfolded in part as a result of an already forceful moralistic discourse imposed from above during the Intifada. As Hammami describes, a form of "official nationalist culture of the intifada" banned forms of extravagance or activities deemed "frivolous" at a time when "solidarity" was perceived as paramount. Thus,

> the hijab campaign took up the moralism of the discourse of the intifada while quietly subverting it. Moral discourse was mobilized against women. Nationalist correctness shifted from secular Puritanism to a discourse of moral rectitude that included modes of behavior loosely associated with religion.[134]

Ultimately, what we see though this elaborated case study is how, during periods of profound politicization and social mobilization, a *symbolic discourse of resistance* can interact with competing and/or "contributory" symbolic discourses wielded by varying social and cultural interests. In the case of Gaza during the Intifada, discourses of "morality" and "unity" were seen by an influential elite (both nationalist and Islamist) as a crucial *means of resistance*. That said, the Palestinian women's movement - itself drawing from a *symbolic discourse of resistance* to empower itself and further the advancement of women's rights – became further catalyzed after

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[131] ibid, 201
[132] ibid, 201
[133] ibid, 201
[134] ibid, 203

the *hijab* affair to organize around securing a social agenda within both the Intifada and the national liberation movement as a whole.[135]

Discursive "de-hegemonization," Re-Emergence, and Political Capitalization

With the creation of the Palestinian National Authority as a result of the Oslo "peace process," both the moralizing discourse of the Intifada and the larger *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* became "de-hegemonized". With regard to the tension between progressively-minded Palestinians and conservative elements, there was for a time, "a general but superficial social openness."[136] Indeed, this was found within a larger sense of profound optimism throughout Palestinian mainstream that some degree of fulfillment of national aspirations, an alleviation of social, political and economic strain, would be achieved. As we will discuss at the close of this chapter, such hopes would remain unfulfilled, leading to the forceful resurfacing of these competing discourses in contending the cultural and social make-up of any future Palestinian polity.

Again, because it is not the purpose of this thesis to historicize, detail and elaborate specific junctures in the Palestine-Israel conflict, but to elucidate broad discursive themes over broad swaths of temporal and spatial territory, I will not delve into a deep elaboration of the political and social complexities and consequences of the Oslo process. What I want to briefly and broadly sketch are the social and cultural dynamics as they relate to our project of tracing the symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance.

As Bir Zeit university professor of sociology Lisa Taraki has noted, the beginning of the 1990s marked a "the beginning of the unraveling of the national project" where an emergent "new middle-class" was "amenable to the growing impulse of 'societal normalization.'" Concurrently, a "new ethos" emerged including a "naturalization and legitimation of social disparities and expressions of rank and hierarchy." [137] This picture is also reaffirmed by Harvard professor of political science Sara Roy, who notes that the Oslo process both marked and enabled

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[135] ibid, 205-206
[136] ibid, 206
[137] Lisa Taraki, "Internal Dynamics: Palestinian Society and Polity since Oslo," talk given at 2006 Annual Palestine Center Conference*, The Palestine Question since Oslo: Current Options and Future Strategies*, October 26, 2006.

a massive acceleration of her concept of "de-development."[138] As Roy writes, "contrary to accepted belief, the Oslo process did considerable damage to Palestinian life and introduced new and pernicious realities – economic, political and social – that set the stage for future and devastating Palestinian decline, effectively precluding any possibility for meaningful reform."[139]

At the same time, a de-radicalized political discourse of "normality" retained discursive hegemony from above, over the previously hegemonic discourse of resistance which propelled the Intifada, and was temporarily sustained in large part by sincere popular optimism for a just settlement. As Stein and Swedenburg note,

> With the onset of "peace" talks, the "Intifada culture" of struggle, sacrifice, austerity, and seriousness gradually lifted, and repressed forms of everyday culture (re)emerged. Weddings were extravagantly celebrated; pop bands that had disbanded during the Intifada re-appeared. New sites of cultural consumption sprang up, although selectively and often meeting with resistance catering to the growing Palestinian middle class… As part of its state-building efforts, the Palestinian Authority fostered new national media institutions that enabled the creation and dissemination of novel or submerged cultural forms… [140]

However, as the process unfolded, there were growing and significant contradictions between the promise of "state building" and development on one hand, and a deepening occupation on the other. As UC Berkeley professor Bishara Doumani notes, "during its life, the Oslo process created a reality where basic needs came to supercede political activism, economic growth, national identity, collective consciousness and popular resistance, features long characteristic of Palestinian life."[141]

Consequentially, as the Second Intifada erupted in October of 2000 and starkly exposed these contradicitions, Palestinian society once again returned to "struggle atmosphere" and thus a symbolic discourse of resistance became once again relevant – specifically the elements of that discourse gleaned from a "collective memory" of the First Intifada. As Helena Lindholm Schulz

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[138] Sara Roy, *Failing Peace, Gaza and the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* (London: Pluto, 2007), 36: "**De-development** refers to a process that undermines the ability of an economy to grow and expand by preventing it from accessing and utilizing critical inputs needed to promote internal growth beyond a specific structural level. Unlike underdevelopment, which may distort but not forestall development entirely, de-development precludes, over the long term, the possibility of any kind of developmental process, even a disarticulated one, by destroying the economy's capacity to produce."

[139] Ibid, 7

[140] Stein and Swedenburg, 12

[141] Hroub, 86

notes, "the 'New Intifada' drew on *the rich symbolic capital of the Intifada in the late 80s.*"[142]

However, unlike the first Intifada, as Swedenburg and Stein note, "the second uprising produced an *interiorization* of the social, as families and individuals incarcerated in the domestic sphere turned to television, video games, and the Internet as modes of entertainment and communication between communities separated by the (re)occupation, trends that intensified after the military incursion in March 2002."[143] It is in this simultaneously deteriorating and imploding social context where a deep and profound social and political vacuum opened, and where new social, political and cultural appropriations and invocations of *a symbolic discourse of resistance* re-emerged, further re-exposing fault lines within the Palestinian polity.

It is also in this context where a politically ascendant Hamas movement has appropriated and re-asserted this discourse, gaining significant ground through an extensive network of grassroots social programs and positioning itself as the sole viable alternative to a disgraced Fatah movement perceived as incapable of satisfying the most elementary needs of Palestinian citizenry and presiding over a "subcontracted" occupation.

Contrary to the myopic and surface appraisal of the Hamas repeated throughout mainstream (and even academic) discourse, although its character is grounded in a form of classical Islamist politics rooted in the Muslim Brotherhood, in practice the movement is better characterized as a *social and political movement* with an Islamist hue, advancing a form conservative, moralistic "culturalist politics."[144] Further, the political grounding and demands of the movement are profoundly bound to and draw primarily from resistance to the occupation, and *not* in fact out of a "religiosity of resistance." As has been shown in the brief period since Hamas' 2006 electoral victory in the Legislative Assembly, its popularity lies not in its religious or moralistic overtones, but its effective social services programs, its perceived "incorruptibility" relative to Fatah and its firm rhetoric in resistance to the ongoing occupation. In other words, the ascendance of the Hamas movement is emblematic *not* of a "shift" of Palestinian society towards political Islam, but rather partially how a symbolic discourse of resistance has re-emerged to guide political possibilities in the face of increasing structural strain.

As Palestinian political scientist Khaled Hroub describes, Palestinians "see Hamas as a

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[142] Helena Lindholm Schulz. "The 'Al-Aqsa Intifada' As a Result of Politics of Transition." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (Fall 2002) 21, emphasis added.
[143] Hroub, 13
[144] Usher, op. cit.

multidimensional movement that is involved in wide scale social, cultural, and charitable activities… Hamas is seen as the natural product of unnatural circumstances: the Israeli occupation under which the Palestinian people live… Hamas thus is a response, a link in the chain of cause and effect arising from the cruel circumstances of life under occupation."[145] Further, in a more general sense,

> the increase in popular support for any Palestinian political movement is commensurate, in a very basic sense with its capacity to serve as an outlet for resistance against the occupation and with its ability to secure a minimally reasonable level of satisfaction of Palestinian rights. Hence, the fluctuations in the balance of power among Palestinian movements and in their share of public support basically are contingent on how well they embody the state of resistance. However, it also depends on how realistic that resistance is and the Palestinian people's assessment of whether the "revolutionary project" espoused by a movement can be realized.[146]

Because Hamas most effectively incorporated and embodied the "symbolic discourse" of steadfastness and resistance described herein at a time when such a discourse was once again in high demand, this was a significant contribution to the movement's political ascendance in addition to its effective social projects.

This view is echoed by Graham Usher, who notes that "Palestinians' support for Hamas is not the result of their mass turn to faith, but the fruit of two interrelated crises of PLO nationalist ideology and practice. One is a political crisis of representation, aggravated by an increasingly unaccountable, autocratic, and inadequate national leadership. The other is an ideological crisis over the social agenda and content of any future Palestinian polity."[147] Yet it should be emphasized that any "social agenda and content of any future Palestinian polity" is completely contingent upon the conditions imposed by a continuing occupation. As Rabinowitz has poignantly observed, "national projects are scarcely viable without the legal substrate, the economic sustainability, and the focus of identity and solidarity that territory and its control provide."[148]

Though there is much more to say about the complexities and social dynamic of the Hamas movement and its ascendance, the key point for what follows is to return to the "war of position" being waged *culturally* _within_ the Palestinian social polity over appropriation and

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[145] Hroub, 2000, 5
[146] Ibid, 5-6
[147] Usher, op. cit., 350
[148] Rabinowitz, "Post-National Palestine," 759

embodiment of a symbolic discourse of resistance, as well as the direction of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination. As Stein and Swedenburg note, attention to popular political culture, cultural production and consumption often "yields a fuller chronicle of politics and power than political economy or diplomatic history models alone can provide."[149] Indeed, with the de-legitimation and erosion of the political center as a result of the failures of the Oslo "peace process," such cultural appropriations have varied widely from a "popular culture of 'martyrdom operations'" to a non-violent and creative Palestinian youth "culture of hip hop," not only in the Occupied Territories but within Israel as well, "raising such issues as Jewish Israeli racism, unemployment, and endemic poverty."[150]

Recalling the draconian "morally unifying" imposition of the *hijab* described earlier, young Palestinian hip-hop artists, representing a growing "hip hop culture of resistance," have similarly been subjected to harassment for "bringing un-Islamic Western behavior into Gaza."[151] For example, one of the more notable Palestinian hip-hop groups, the Palestinian Rapperz (PR) from Gaza, has even been attacked while on stage and beaten up over such disagreements.[152] Yet, as PR member al-Huwaisi describes, Palestinian hip-hop in Gaza also receives significant support from the community: "People were confused at first. But in the first concert we performed, the reaction was incredible – people of all ages were listening enthusiastically."[153] As PR member Mohammed al Farra describes, "our reality in Gaza is about suffering. Gaza is like a big prison, and we get our message across with rap music."[154] Rather than adopting hip-hop as a tool for "Westernizing" Palestinian culture, Palestinian rappers have appropriated the musical form as an expressive vehicle for not only their marginality but also as a form of *resistance*. As the director of a recent documentary on the Palestinian hip-hop phenomenon, Jackie Sollums notes that hip-hop has become a "form of creative nonviolent resistance against the military occupation," an "expression of Palestinian identity in the face of Israeli oppression."[155] Indeed, as the Palestinian-Israeli group DAM proclaims, "This is the new Intifada / The lyrics are the

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[149] Stein and Swedenburg, 12
[150] ibid, 12-13
[151] Tim McGirk, "Taking the Rap," *Time Magazine Online*, Thursday, Feb. 22, 2007 http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1592612,00.html (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[152] ibid
[153] ibid
[154] ibid
[155] "Hip Hop film looks at Palestinian music scene." *The Arab American News*. Dearborn, Mi: Jul 9, 2004. Vol. 20, Iss 60; pg. 8.

stones."[156]

Yet, at the same time, hip-hop is also a powerful medium of self-critical commentary on Palestinian internal dynamics, confronting drug use, apathy, and most significantly, women's rights. Additionally, the creative medium of hip-hop has allowed young Palestinian women to participate and freely express their opinions and struggles. For example, the DAM song "Al Huriye Unt'a" (Freedom for My Sisters) prominently features MC Safa' Hathoot from the all-female group Arapyat:

> These words go out to all our mothers and sisters
> Who get lost in our customs, primitive and stupid customs
> It's in our faces but we never choose to face it
> This is for you, wherever you are
> Prisoner, choked, cut off from your dreams and ambitions
> Keep your head up sister, just keep your head up
>
> She puts us on our feet and we just step on her rights
> Day-by-day, she continues living the same way
> She is the first one to wake up and the last one to sleep
> This is for you, the woman, the mother of the house
> This is from me, the man.
> The one who builds walls of limitation around you
> To the historical stories that never change.
> Back in the old days, we would bury women alive
> And now today, we bury their minds.[157]

Thus, we see here how a dynamic artistic medium, growing steadily within Palestinian youth culture, appropriates and extends a symbolic discourse of resistance to vocalize political and social sentiment – directed both externally at the continuing occupation, but also internally at forms of patriarchical social practice. Thus, in the same way which Palestinian women in an earlier era redefined the domestic practice of motherhood by applying the symbolic discourse of resistance to empower their social and cultural standing, Palestinian youth (male *and* female) similarly utilize the "internationally recognized" symbolic discourse of resistance enshrined at the foundations of "hip-hop culture" to similarly empower individual and collective identities. Such forms of creative expression thus highlight "the way creative resistance serves not only as a

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[156] Omar Attum, "The Lyrics are the Stones," *Egypt Today*, May 2007, http://www.egypttoday.com/article.aspx?ArticleID=7397 (Accessed May31, 2007)
[157] All of DAM's lyrics are available online, translated into English: http://www.dampalestine.com

powerful educational tool but also as a source of strength and community."[158]

Indeed, there is much more to be said about this. As we will see in the following chapter, symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance as they manifest themselves in a nascent *transnational* Palestinian hip-hop youth culture transcend and span international borders. As such, the cultural production and artistic medium of Palestinian hip-hop acts as a vehicle for symbolic discourse, similarly defining and refining individual and collective perceptions of Palestinian identity, and illustrating a salient discursive thread integral to conceptualizing "Palestinian transnationalism."

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[158] Danny Hakim. "Drawing a Rap Refrain From a U.N. Resolution." p.2. The New York Times. New York, NY: Jul 8,2004. pg. E.1

CHAPTER 3

Illustrating the Transnationality of Symbolic Discourse through Palestinian Hip-Hop

We want a generation of giants

-- DAM, "*Mali Hiriye*" (I Don't Have Freedom)

As Palestinian-American hip-hop artist Will Youmans writes, "Art amplifies voices on the margins."[159]   And indeed, as Homi Bhabha has observed, it is the "ambivalent margin of the nation-space" where the ambivalences of the "national narrative" pronounce themselves and present opportunities for transformation and possibility. For Bhabha, "the nation" defines itself in part through "a form of cultural *elaboration*… an agency of *ambivalent* narration that holds culture at its most productive position, as a force for 'subordination, fracturing, diffusing, reproducing as much as producing, creating, forcing, [and] guiding.'"[160]

In the previous chapter we closed with one such site of ambivalence: young Palestinian hip-hop artists in Gaza defiantly pushing the boundaries of "appropriate" cultural production (for some) in order to express themselves in a medium which for them, best harnesses their passion and their rage, their marginality and discontent within straining and often traumatic social circumstances. Like the mothers and *shabab* during first Intifada period described earlier, these youth draw from the same, though evolved, *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* and apply that discourse to new forms of social practice - empowering themselves and those around them in a way which both re-articulates and re-contextualizes a collective and "national" Palestinian identity.

Yet, this symbolic discourse – as well as this nascent art trend which it partially informs – is not confined to Palestinians in Occupied Territories, but instead spans transnational frontiers, and is similarly appropriated and articulated by Palestinian hip-hop artists from Lidd, Israel to Oakland, California.   In the process, the *symbolic discourse* around "steadfastness" and

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[159] Will Youmans, "Hip Hop for Palestine," *Counterpunch*. Oct. 1/2, Accessed May 26, http://www.counterpunch.org/youmans10012005.html
[160] Homi Bhabha, *Narrating the Nation*, p. 2-4. Edward Said, *The World, The Text and The Critic* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1983), p. 171.: Further, "In this sense, then, the ambivalent, antagonistic perspective of nation as narration will establish the cultural boundaries of the nation so that they may be acknowledged as 'containing' thresholds of meaning that must be crossed, erased, and translated in the process of cultural production." (Ibid, 4)

"resistance" is also being not only re-articulated, but reshaped and transformed. Further, as "transnational" discourses, their relationship to "Palestinian culture" and the "national idiom" is also being re-articulated and re-contextualized. As Bhabha further notes,

> The 'locality' of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as 'other' in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new 'people' in relation to the body politic, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation. [161]

Thus, in this chapter, I seek to emphasize how *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* – having become a constituent element of a "popular political culture" described throughout this thesis – form themselves as *transnational discourses* and also serve as salient discursive elements in an understanding of what I call "Palestinian transnationalism." Within this conceptualization, these discursive motifs implicitly and explicitly inform a basis for re-articulation and re-affirmation of both individual and collective forms of "Palestinian identity," molding themselves to varying contexts regardless of spatial location and hybrid "national" identities. This is no more clearly illustrated than in the creative, trans-cultural medium of hip-hop where Palestinian, Palestinian-Israeli and Palestinian-American artists all to some degree draw from the same *symbolic discourses* to not only forcefully address their collective identity as Palestinians, but also to illustrate the particular (and often individual) struggles facing them in altogether different circumstances.

I begin the chapter with a very brief theoretical overview of, and the relationships between, "transnationalism," "territoriality," "diaspora," and "popular culture," both generally and in relation to Palestinians in the transnational spatialities considered here –Israel, the Occupied Territories, and the United States. I then turn specifically to the (sub)cultural artistic medium of hip-hop to elucidate how our notion of *symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness* in relation to Palestinian "collective identity" appear *transnationally* as "connecting," and affirming solidarities between Palestinians in these three localities. Lastly, I close the chapter by drawing theoretical conclusions on the need to "rethink" *transnationalism* in a way which incorporates the concept of "transnational relationality," and also the need to "rethink" and re-shape conceptions of "resistance" and "steadfastness" in a way which firmly

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[161] Ibid, 4

pushes forward the "transnationality" of these discursive threads. By doing so, I argue, new possibilities emerge for "subverting" the enduring and exclusivist narrations of the nation which continue to breed violence and division within and across Green Lines, Separation Walls, and "imagined geographies."

Introducing Theoretical Underpinnings and Problematics

Conceptualizing what we mean by "transnationalism" necessarily involves the issue of *territoriality* and trend of *de-territorialization* within the world-system at large: the idea of a deflation of the "nation-state paradigm" through the inter-related process of globalization. Some theorists, such as Arjun Appadurai, have championed the notion of "thinking ourselves beyond the nation-state,"[162] and have argued that with the growing ascendance of transnational, hybridized identities, there is a growing divergence between not only conceptions of *nation* and *state,* but also between *sovereignty* and *territoriality*. For Appadurai, "deterritorialization," and therefore "transnationalism," signals an increasing "production of locality," creating new "context[s] of alterity," and thus being increasingly "at odds with the projects of the nation-state."[163]

Yet, for groups of disenfranchised, stateless peoples whose demands for sovereignty necessarily emanate from territorial-based claims – such as Palestinians – this theoretical framework is of little consequence. As social anthropologist Dan Rabinowitz has noted, for "a dependent, disenfranchised, rather amorphous Palestinian community incarcerated in a fragmented, dismembered, discontinuous terrain" and embroiled in "a nation-building frenzy… with ethno-territorialism at its zenith," there is the powerful argument that "the new horizons of transnationalism and postnationalism are theoretical, abstract and irrelevant."[164] However, this is not to say that "deterritorialization" is not significant and even highly relevant for such stateless peoples as the Palestinians: "deterritorialization is not meant to announce the end of territorial claims or their legitimacy. It does suggest, however, that personal identity, cultural affiliation,

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[162] Arjun Appadurai, "Patriotism and It's Futures," 1993 in: Public Culture 5:3, pp. 411-429
[163] Appaurai, Arjun (1996) Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography in *The Geography of Identity*. Ed. Patricia Yaeger Ann-Arbor: Michigan, 1996. 40-58.
[164] Dan Rabinowitz, "Postnational Palestine/Israel? Globalization, Diaspora, Transnationalism, and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," *Critical Inquiry* 26, No. 4. (Summer, 2000), 763, 767, 772.

people's sense of belonging, heritage, solidarity, and destiny are changing and can in fact be imagined and detached from bounded place." Indeed, Appadurai too emphasizes the increasing salience of cultural or ethnic-based identities and solidarities in what he terms *"culturalism"* – that is, the "conscious mobilization of cultural differences in the service of a larger national and transnational politics."[165]

Thus, the primary arenas where the concepts of "transnationalism" and "deterritorialization" come into play for groups such as the Palestinians is in both the *diaspora* and the *borderzone*. Following Swedenburg and Levie's definition for both terms, I deploy "diaspora" here as

> the doubled relationship or dual loyalty that [groups of] migrants, exiles, and refugees have to places - their connections to the space they currently occupy and their continuing involvement with "back home." Diasporic populations frequently occupy no singular cultural space but are enmeshed in circuits of social, economic, and cultural ties encompassing both the mother country and the country of settlement.[166]

The term "borderzone" is applied here to describe the locality of Palestinian citizens of Israel and is defined by Swedenburg and Levie as

> [a site] of creative cultural creolization, places where criss-crossed identities are forged out of the debris of corroded, formerly (would be) homogenous identities, zones where the residents often refuse the geopolitical univocality of the lines… Yet borders, like diasporas, are not just places of imaginative interminglings and happy hybridity for us to celebrate. They are equally minefields, mobile territories of constant clashes with the Eurocenter's imposition of cultural fixity.[167]

As this definition suggests, many of the insights elucidated with reference to "diaspora" are applicable as well to those Palestinians living in the "borderzone" of Israel. For instance, Clifford's assertion that "nationalism in the diaspora setting is… a strategy of resistance by the marginalized," [168] is true, as I argue, not only for diasporic Palestinians from Iraq to the United States, but also Palestinian citizens of Israel. Indeed, this statement may be even *more* true for Palestinians in the *borderzone* than Palestinians in the diaspora. But are such nationalist assertions in either locale dependent *only* the result of marginalization? Or do they not also

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[165] 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, p. 15; See also Stuart Hall The Question of Cultural Identity. In S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew (eds.) *Modernity and Its Futures*. Cambridge: Polity Press. P 274-316. Hall, Stuart (1992)
[166] Swedenburg and Levie, 14
[167] Lavie and Swedenburg, 15-16
[168] James Clifford, "Diasporas," *Cultural Anthropology* 9 (1994)

fundamentally connected to the "epicenter" of the national idiom?

Indeed, the larger question here is, how do we understand the relationship between diaspora/borderzone and the articulation of collective and national identity in the case of diaspora/borderzone Palestinians? What salient threads of discourse inform upon both "culturalist" assertions of Palestinian self-identity, as well as assertions of ethno-national solidarity and "collective identity"? Further, how do we understand, as Schulz puts it "the impact of the fact of transnationalization on Palestinian lives and experiences" in these locales?" And "to what extent do Palestinians in exile create identities not solely shaped by the context of remembering, longing and struggling, but also crafted by new contexts and the potentials of forming new homes in host societies"?[169] Of course, these are larger questions which will certainly not be answered here, but are critical nonetheless in situating the larger issues involved.

Thus, acknowledging the significant "transnational" and "culturalist" trends described above, one consequence has been a growing "diasporic subjectivity" which fundamentally "challenges the nexus between identity and place."[170] Though the Palestinian diaspora has historically been viewed with some disfavor by it's "nationalizing project," there has for some time been an increasing assertion of "diasporic subjectivities" which is becoming more legitimate and relevant.[171] For Palestinians, this is largely a result of the fact that, as Rabinowtiz describes, "the Palestinian diaspora is recent, forced, and directly personal. The memories of loss of life and limb, of broken families, of ruined and deserted properties, and of humiliating, forced exile are carried by living persons and their immediate kin."[172] How then do we describe the increasing and increasingly dynamic relationship between diaspora and a "home" which does not exist – between a transnational, hybrid identity and a necessarily ethno-territorial one – while still acknowledging the dynamic of transnationalism?

As Julie Peteet has argued, "fragmentation, with its multiple geographic and cultural sites of exile, has fostered in Palestinians transnational identities and increasingly a sense that the future will be less one of identifying oneself as other and more a seeking of common ground on a variety of levels of affiliation."[173] This points to the relevance of *common discourses* in providing both implicit and explit "levels of affiliation." To situate here the argument of this

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[169] Schulz, Palestinian Diaspora, 4
[170] Rabinowitz, "Postnational Palestine/Israel," 768
[171] ibid, 771
[172] Rabinowitz, "Postnational Palestine/Israel,"768
[173] Peteet, "Refugees, Resistance, and Identity," 185.

thesis, one such discourse – or set of discourses – is our notion of a *symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance.* Peteet also significantly affirms this idea, and I isolate it here because of it's crucial importance for what follows:

> One could argue that the 'struggle' component in Palestinian identity, a way of being and acting on the world, is hardly a narrow national issue. *Struggle* in this instance references a continuing mobilization against local manifestations of a global form of colonialism with its dislocating impulse.[174]

It is also here where we return to the arena of "popular culture," through which this discourse most creatively operates and provides both possibility and illustrative material for analysis. Peteet notes in an earlier study of graffiti during the first Intifada how,

> they were not monolithic voices… but polysemic ones that acted to record history and to form and transform relationships…. Graffiti simultaneously affirmed community and resistance, debated tradition, envisioned competing futures, indexed historical events and processes, and inscribed memory. They provided political commentary as well as issuing directives for confronting occupation and transforming oneself in the process.[175]

The exact description Peteet gives for graffiti during the first Intifada can today be said for Palestinian hip-hop – both being necessarily steeped in, as well as drawing from, a symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance in the process of creating new forms of cultural production. Though Palestinian hip-hop does not have the communal omnipresence which such graffiti did, in its dissemination and transnational acceptance, it is perhaps today similarly relevant. And while Intifada graffiti were a "silent narrative accompanying acts of resistance yet were themselves an act of resistance," the dynamic rumbling beats and rhythms of Palestinian hip-hop, fused with articulate-yet-determined words of discontent is LOUD, and reverberates from Ramallah to New York and beyond.

The Transnationality of Hip-Hop: Discourses of Marginalization and Resistance

It has often been said by a wide array of sociologists, political scientists, and cultural critics that certain musical genres, especially at points of their "counter-cultural" ascendance, represent an expressive "discourse of the marginalized." Yet today, as many of these genres have

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[174] ibid
[175] Julie Peteet. "The Writing on the Walls: The Graffiti of the Intifada." *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (1996: 2), 141

been grossly commercialized and consumed by "popular" culture, they still remain powerful artistic mediums for expressions of discontent, marginalization and resistance. Though contemporary artists in the West like P-Diddy now rap mostly about high-life excess, up-and-coming artists like Somali refugee K'Naan write rhymes about life as a child soldier, and Sri Lankan Tamil phenom M.I.A. fuses personal adversities with motifs from her upbringing as the child of a Tamil Tiger leader. The point here is that as an artistic medium, hip-hop retains its universal value and relevance as a vehicle for creative expressions of adversity and marginalization. Indeed, it is clear that globally, hip-hop remains a powerful "voice of the unheard."

So how does this relate to Palestinians, much less the argument of the paper? As I argue, part of the explanation for the recent, transnational ascendance of Palestinian hip-hop is that it combines *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* that have become engrained with the Palestinian national idiom, and fused elements of this discourse with the transnational musical "medium of marginalization" embodied in hip-hop. Thus, examining the discursive elements of Palestinian hip-hop provides an example of how such symbolic discourses are re-articulated transnationally and thus an artistic vehicle for shaping aspects of this discourse on a transnational scale.

As Joseph Massad asks in relation to the historic and cultural role of song in Palestinian nationalism, "Are these songs part of a culture industry… that defines popular sentiment and generates political commitments or are these images and metaphors they deploy expressions of such sentiment?"[176] In the case of Palestinian hip-hop, I would argue against this either/or dichotomy and suggest that, in drawing from symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness which have been the product of multiple contingencies (both from "above" and "below") Palestinian hip-hop artists both draw from and subvert a "culture industry" in a way which expresses both this discourse and the Palestinian national idiom – while in the process transcending both. As Massad notes, popular music has had a profound impact on "popular memory and political agency," while at the same time being expressive of both. Like the "struggle atmosphere" we discussed last chapter, Massad notes that Palestinian popular music "parallels the history of the struggle itself," and is "not only reflected popular sentiments but… also instrumental in generating such sentiments," and recording "the feelings and aspirations of a

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[176] Massad, 175.

dispossessed people without access to official state channels and forms for writing official histories." [177]

However, our main purpose here is not so much the reciprocal relationship between hip-hop and "popular sentiments," but how Palestinian hip-hop can act as an amplification of discourses of steadfastness and resistance which impacts upon individual and collective conceptions of Palestinian identity. Following longtime sociologist specializing in music and culture Simon Frith, "the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience – a musical experience, an aesthetic experience – that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity." [178] For Frith, "music seems to be a key to identity because it offers, so intensely, a sense of both self and others, of the subjective in the collective." [179] In what follows, I attempt to emphasize this theme as I elucidate how Palestinian discourses of steadfastness and resistance are embodied in Palestinian hip-hop, thus providing a medium through which discourse shapes individual, collective, and national identity. Further, as this discourse – and it's artistic vehicle here– is increasingly "transnational" in character, I broadly and selectively profile Palestinian hip-hop in three locales: Israel, the Occupied Territories and the United States.

"Born Here" – Palestinian hip-hop in Israel

As the self proclaimed and widely acknowledged "Sugarhill gang of Palestine," the group DAM are largely seen as the main protagonists of Palestinian hip-hop. [180] Their name holds a triple meaning: an acronym meaning "Da Arabic MC's," the word "blood" in Hebrew, and

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[177] For example, songs in the late 1950s expressed a sense of confidence as a result of pan-Arabism and the Nasserist revolution, while post-1967 songs were recognizably steeped in a general sense of loss and despair, though also expressing ressiliance and determination in support of the *fedayeen* guerila movement. For example, such song titles included, "*Ya Jamahir al-Ard al-Muhtallah*" (O masses of the occupied land), "*La Tihzanu*" (Do not be sad), "*Ana Samid*" (I remain steadfast), "Kalashnikov," "*Fida'iya*," and "*'Ahd Allah Ma Nirhal*" (By God we shall not depart). (Massad, 188).

[178] Simon Frith. "Music and Identity" in *Questions of Cultural Identity* ed. Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1996), 109

[179] ibid, 110.

[180] Sugarhill Gang are widely acknowledged as the first hip-hop group, hailing from New York in 1979. DAM referred to themselves in this manor in Stefan Franzen, "DAM – Palestinian hip-hop: We Are the Sugar Hill Gang of Palestine!" *Quintara*. September 12, 2006, http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-310/_nr-367/i.html?PHPSESSID=5 (Accessed May 31, 2007). See also Massad, op. cit. 194

"eternity" in Arabic.[181]   DAM hail from Lidd, just east of Tel Aviv and are citizens of Israel. However, rather than accept their official designation as "Arabs of Israel" or "Israeli Arabs," members of DAM firmly assert their Palestinian identity as do many other Palestinian citizens of Israel. As Lavie and Swedenburg describe, "living in the border is frequently to experience the feeling of being trapped in an impossible in-between."[182] DAM's music doesn't just describe this in-between, it challenges it and re-appropriates it as an empowering, *transnational* "third space."[183]

Like their hip-hop forebears in the United States, DAM's lyrics are drenching with social commentary, describing sub-level living conditions and the "ghetto-ization" of Palestinian communities in Israel. As Massad writes, their songs reflect "the disunity of the Palestinian population within [Israel], especially as regards the religious and class divisions fostered by Israeli policies.   While the music largely borrows from American hip-hop, produced by synthesizers and percussion, it is punctuated by Arab musical phrases and rhythms." Further, "their political choice of rap also testifies to the parallels they see between the racially oppressive society from which African American rappers emerge and their own conditions" in Israel.[184]

But DAM doesn't just rap about social and political issues facing the Palestinian minority in Israel, they also champion women's rights, non-violence, and speak out against drug use and apathy. Most prominently though, DAM simply describes "being Palestinian" in an "ethnic democracy" such as Israel.[185]   Their music draws on both Western influenced "beats" and production as well as more traditional instruments from Arab culture such as the *oud* and *tabla*. Likewise, their lyrics are rapped and sung in a mix of Arabic, Hebrew and English. The track

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[181] There have been some differing translations. Massad, for example, cites "dam" as meaning "lasting" or "persisting" in Arabic (188). Other accounts have said that "dam" means "blood" in *both* Hebrew and Arabic. However, here I rely on the translation members of the group give in various interviews, as well as other articles. Concerning the appropriation "blood" as a metaphor, DAM member Tamer Nafar notes, "when you say blood,' most people think of violence. Not me, I see the other side of the coin. Blood is what allows life to continue in the first place. If you combine the two you have "eternal blood," meaning that politics can never eradicate what makes us human. "DAM: The Musical Intifada," *Ma'an News Agency,* February 20, 2007. http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=19712 (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[182] Lavie and Swedenburg, 16
[183] ibid. Quoting Rushdie, Lavie and Swedenburg define the concept of a "third time-space" as "an imaginary homeland where the 'fragmentation of identity' is conceived not 'as a kind of pure anarchic liberalism or voluntarism, but... as a recognition of the importance of the alienation of the Self in the construction of forms of solidarity.'" Similarly, Trinh defines a "third time-space" as "one of creativity and affirmation and community, despite political skepticism. In it, subjects who are fragments of collectivities-that-were return to a desired identity and cultural heritage.'" See T. Minh-ha Trinh, *When the Moon Waxes Red,* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 187.
[184] Massad, 188
[185] For descriptions of "ethnic democracy" as applied to Israel see Smooha and Hanf (1992), Samy Smooha (2002 'The model of ethnic democracy: Israel as a Jewish and democratic state',. Nations and Nationalism 8(4):423-431

"Born Here," for example, was produced with both Arabic and Hebrew versions. As DAM have said, ""Arabs already know how they live - we have to educate Israelis on what's going on."[186]

> Our neighborhood is embarrassed not dressed in silk
> (If the fear remains within us)
> A bride without a veil waiting for her turn to beautify
> (ethnic cleansing is knocking at our doors)
> Time has passed her by and forgotten her
> …
> Her hope has become a prisoner to the separation wall
> Every bird will break free from its cage take off and fly
> (I was born here and here I will stay)

The self-produced video for the song begins with the group's car being searched and erupts into a riot-like scene, composed of real footage from Lod of the group and friends confronting police.[187] As Massad has noted, "the theme of the jealousy felt by exiled Palestinians for migrating birds, who return to Palestine though the Palestinians cannot, is ubiquitous in literary and artistic forms of the period."[188] Here though, the bird appears caged, unable to fly *within* the Palestine of one's birth. We see here also the theme of *steadfastness* in the song's title and final line: "I was born here and here I will stay." Finally, the "separation wall" mentioned here is not only a reference to the massive wall being constructed in the West Bank, but also another "separation wall" in Lidd separating predominantly Arab communities from affluent Jewish communities. Indeed, DAM is constantly stressing this point: that their struggle is inherently one and the same as Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. As DAM member Tamer Nafar elaborates:

> We always compare it to a bullet. When somebody shoots you in the shoulder you don't only feel pain only on the shoulder. The main pain is in the shoulder, but you might feel pain in your legs. It's a different pain. A different struggle. But the cause of the pain is the same bullet. So this is what connects us. How do we describe it? Well, they have physical occupation like tanks and soldiers, we have it less here, we have cops here all over the place. Borders, yes we have borders on the Arabic ghettos but we don't stand for 6-8 hours, its something like 10 minutes, but it's a border. The wall - we have it here in Lid, not between country and country but between neighborhoods – between Arabic ghetto and Jewish neighborhood. And its not nine meters, its six, something like that. So I'd say we are on the same target. The difference is that on the daily life, they suffer much more physically, but if you look at it deep inside we suffer from mental occupation, we cannot see our enemy, we grew up not knowing who we are and who to fight, but

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[186] Rob Winder, "Rival rappers reflect Mid-East conflict," *BBC News online*, November 26, 2004 BBC News http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4039399.stm (Accessed May 31, 2007)

[188] Massad, 183

ourselves.[189]

Nafer touches here on an important theme described by Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker, where although the State of Israel granted full formal citizenship to Palestinians who remained after the "War of Independence" in 1948, the discursive labeling of Palestinian Arabs with "the new idiom *Israeli Arabs*" was emblematic of "a web of a multifaceted hegemonic process" that has continued since the state's inception. The invention of the category "Israeli Arabs" thus

> evidenced a deliberate design. A clear reflection of the politics of culture via language, it intentionally misrecognized the group's affinity with the linkage to Palestine as a territorial unit, thus facilitating the erasure of the term Palestine from the Hebrew vocabulary. The term puts "Israel" in the fore, constructing it as a defining feature of "its" Arabs. The Palestinians, already uprooted in the physical sense of the word, were also transformed into a group bereft of history.[190]

With this in mind, we can see how the assertion of "Palestinian" identity is a form of a "politics of recognition" where social, cultural and historical recognition of Palestinians as a group entitled to social and cultural recognition is seen as denied. For the members of DAM, the contradictions of the "Israeli Democracy" necessarily imply non-recognition and marginalization of their Palestinian identity that extends beyond the "savage inequalities"[191] of ghettoized Palestinian Arab neighborhoods:

> We have Jewish neighbors who we get along with. But just imagine you want to go to a club and they won't let you in because you're an Arab. If you want to build something, they tear it down. I go to buy some milk and behind the counter stands the shopkeeper's son who is a soldier in the military… At school you have to learn poems about Zionist heroes. I go to the only music store in town to buy desperately needed samplers – and discover that the shop owner is one of the people who expropriated my grandfather. If I want to mail my album to you in Europe, I have to put a stamp with Begin's face on the parcel. We're subjected to daily brainwashing that severs the umbilical cord between us and our culture.

For DAM – as for many Palestinian citizens of Israel – the assertion of their Palestinian identity affirms their sense of place, belonging and entitlement in a position of multi-faceted marginalization Thus, *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and rootedness* remain an integral

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[189] Norah Barrows-Friedman, DAM interview on KPFA, Berkley. *Flashpoints.* Thursday, January 18th, 2007. Transcribed by the author. Available: http://www.kpfa.org/archives/index.php?arch=18255

[190] Dan Rabinowitz and Khawla Abu-Baker, *Coffins on our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 2006), 43-44

and salient components of individual and collective identity for many Palestinians of Israel, as well as diasporic Palestinians mentioned earlier. For instance, the metaphor of an "umbilical cord" which Nafar notes above is also used in the song *"Mali Hiriye"* (I Don't Have Freedom), the opening track on DAM's new album *Dedication*:

> We've been like this more than 50 years
> Living as prisoners behind the bars of paragraphs
> Of agreements that change nothing
> We haven't seen any light, and if we peek between the bars
> We see a blue sky and white clouds
> In the center a star reminds me that I'm limited
> But no, I'm strong, staying optimistic
> You won't limit my hope by a wall of separation
> And if this barrier comes between me and my land
> **I'll still be connected to Palestine**
> **Like an embryo to the umbilical cord**
> **My feet are the roots of the olive tree**
> **Keep on prospering, fathering and renewing branches**
> **Every branch**
> **Grown for peace**
> **Every branch**
> **Under the pressure of occupation**
> **Refusing to give up**
>
> We searched for peace between Generals
> Until we all became war children
> Asking for freedom from prisons that want us
> With closed and blind eyes
> Our eyes staring at the free children
> Always keep on rolling to a better life
> Our leaders only flavor their speeches
> Opening their mouths but shutting out hope
>
> […]
>
> We want an angry generation
> To plough the sky, to blow up history
> To blow up our thoughts
> We want a new generation
> That does not forgive mistakes
> That does not bend
> We want a generation of giants[192]

From this one lyrical snipet, there is much to elucidate: First, we should mention the self-critical and distrusting attitude throughout the album which DAM directs no only to the Israeli

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[192] DAM, *Dedication* (2006). Again, lyrics accessable here: http://www.dampalestine.com (Accessed May 31, 2007)

government, but the Palestinian and Arab political elite as well. This sentiment is particularly acute for Palestinian citizens of Israel, who, even in the event of implementation of a "two state settlement" will remain a marginalized minority politically, socially and culturally. This points to another theme which runs throughout DAM's latest album, "how the whole world is treating us as Israelis while Israel is treating us as Palestinians."[193] Second, the blue sky, white clouds and star, form an illustration of the Israeli flag – a symbolic ideal affirming national virtues which Palestinian citizens of Israel are implicitly marginalized from, as mentioned above.

Here also is where we see the explicit appearance of symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance, as described in previous chapters: *connectedness* to Palestine ("like an embryo to the umbilical cord"), *rootedness* ("my feet are the roots of the olive tree"), and *steadfastness* ("keep on prospering, fathering and renewing branches / every branch…") as *resistance* ("you won't limit my hope by a wall of separation," "every branch / under the pressure of occupation / refusing to give up"). Lastly, there is the invocation of *generation* here which is another theme running throughout *Dedication*. As we mentioned in Chapter 1, the idea of "generation" looms large in the Palestinian national narrative, and here once again we see the recurrent theme of "generation as possibility" elucidated by John Collins. And indeed, this theme is also constantly addressed by DAM in interviews. As Nafar describes:

> [*Dedication*] talks about a new generation. When we look back, it took us like 22 years to start figuring out that we need to fight back and we didn't have the tools. We did have the culture, but we didn't find it, we did have our own leaders, our own heroes our own poems… but we never knew them because the Israeli education is trying to wipe it, to erase it […] So if at the age of 22 we started knowing each other and I start feeling free here in my mind, and I can talk like this, and it made me stronger… then I guess you can do [some] simple math: [What] if I knew all that stuff when I was really, really young – so now I can be *much* stronger? A lot of little, small kids listen to DAM so we combined it, we talked about it - "We want education!" – whatever the Zionist education erased, we took it and we put it in a song, so it's like extra homework for the kids.[194]

And in this respect, DAM and groups like them are making an impact – in Israel, the Occupied Territories and when the group performs abroad. Journalist Rachel Shabi documents how the crowd at one show would erupt "into giddy cheers each time the band so much as uttered the word 'Palestine.'"[195] In the words of one fifteen-year old, "We love Dam, they are one of the most famous Arabic rap groups and they talk about our conflict through rap… Maybe if people

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[193] *Flashpoints interview*, op. cit.
[194] *Flashpoints* interview, op. cit.
[195] Rachel Shabi, "Palestinian political rap attracts growing crowds," *Mann News Agency,* January 10, 2007, http://www.maannews.net/en/index.php?opr=ShowDetails&ID=18526 (Accessed May 31, 2007).

don't hear our voices any other way, they will hear us through the music of Dam." At a concert in Ramallah, another fifteen year-old noted that, "I don't consider them as being from Israel, they are Palestinian… They speak about me and about who I am."[196]

Thus we see here what Frith addressed above, where music not only "reflects the people, but how it produces them" – their sense of individual and collective identity. As Frith further writes, "the aesthetic question about this postmodern music… concerns not meanings and their interpretation… but mutual enactment, identity produced *in* performance."[197] Indeed, music thus provides for the artist what we have been referring to throughout this thesis as a site of re-articulation, re-formation, and empowerment of both individual and collective identity. We can see this in the statement of Nafar, where "the best thing is to try to make an inner revolution for myself. I'm not everything I'm saying in the song, sometimes its stuff I really want to be."[198]

At the same time, not only does music draw from discourses and contextualize them for the artist, but it provides a site of *living them* in a <u>mutual</u> experience of performance by the artist and audience alike. This is especially the case with hip-hop, which draws heavily from "call and response" oral traditions. Thus, as Frith notes, music both "symbolizes *and* offers the immediate experience of collective identity."[199] The issue is not so much "that social groups agree on values which are then expressed in their cultural activities … but that they only get to know themselves *as groups… through* cultural activity, through aesthetic judgment. Making music isn't a way of expressing [and receiving] ideas; it is a way of living them."

In this process, groups like DAM are both drawing from and applying symbolic discourses of resistance to social and cultural practice – thus "living" aspects of these discursive themes. Through this artistic medium and through this discourse, not only are identities and solidarities empowered, but the discourse itself is remolded and transformed: hip-hop and new modes creative expression being *vehicles* for discourses *resistance and steadfastness*, mobilizing a new form sociopolitical consciousness autonomous from the "official," "nationalist" discourse. As Palestinian-American documentarian Jackie Sollums notes, by providing a platform to channel rage positively into art that can inspire and empower, "hip hop culture in Palestine… represents a new form of resistance." Groups like DAM are constantly emphasizing this point –

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[196] Ibid.
[197] Frith, op. cit., 121
[198] *Flashpoints* interview, op. cit.
[199] Frith, op. cit., 121

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that "knowledge is power," a weapon and tactic more powerful towards change than violent means (recall "this is the new Intifada / the lyrics are the stones"). This is clear if we consider two other lyrical excerpts:

> We will paint our culture, we feel it even though we can't see it
> The ones who erased it, still didn't erase us
> They torture us?! Ohhh, if you can't take it
> Don't grab a gun, but grab a pen and write
> I'M AN ARAB like Mahmud Darwish did
> I'll never kill the others just to live
>   -- from "*Kg'Ayer Bukra*" ("Change Tomorrow")

> We made rap wear a Kafyah
> We took the mic and handed it to Handala
> We are DAM's soldiers, we came outta pain
> Holding our weapons, in one hand it's the pen
> In the other hand, it's the mic and the anger is our ride
> Now - let's ride
>   -- from "*Hibuna Ishtruna*" ("Love us and Buy Us")

Here we see again the multiple, familiar metaphors and symbols drawn from symbolic discourse, but their fusion with the explicit idea of "new forms of resistance." In the first case, the Palestinian literary tradition is emphasized as a form of resistance, with the allusion to the famous poem of Mahmud Darwish, "Record! I am an Arab." In the second excerpt, we see explicitly how the medium of hip-hop is metaphorically associated with symbols of the Palestinian national idiom: the *kufiya* and Handala, the iconic cartoon character that has become synonymous with the Palestinian cause worldwide. Thus, by drawing from symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance in this manor, Palestinian hip-hop artists both extend the artistic and cultural reach of that discourse, as well as deepening it's salience for audience and artist alike.

What we should also note and highlight here is that Palestinian hip-hop artists are hardly self-congratulatory and in fact are quite self-critical in viewing the music's potential for change:

> take our CD, take the best political song and the best protest song and make shows with it, and you see how people scream and how people feel – argh! – they feel power… At the same time, go to the guy who just was had the shit beat out of him at the border, and while he's bleeding go and give him my CD. He cannot even wipe the blood from his face with the CD.[200]

Additionally, groups like DAM are also vocally critical of their audience, and the possible

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[200] *Flashpoints* interview, op. cit.

misinterpretations and misappropriations of their message. For example, at a concert in New York, DAM member Nafar singled out an audience member waving a modified Palestinian flag with the Al Aqsa mosque placed at it's center: "It's not that I don't love the flag. I do," said Nafer. But the fact that the flag was altered with a "symbol of exclusion," was not something which he and DAM supported."[201] Elsewhere Nafar has been even more explicit: "This is not about the Palestinian government. I'm not fighting for a flag, a symbol or the name 'Palestine.' This is about people, building a future for our children... it really doesn't matter what this country will be called."[202]

This reflects a larger trend among Palestinian hip-hop artists, and a crucial distinction which differentiates it from much of the overtly "nationalist" music of an earlier era described by Massad: that it empowers and asserts national identity, but is at the same time *non-nationalist* (in the exclusionary sense), embracing what Said called "the idea of Palestine," and representing the ideal of a bi-national state, of and for all its citizens.[203] As DAM member Nafar has put it, "there is no us and there is no you and there is no them, there is only one - us. All together."[204]

Still, what remains clear is that this nascent cultural phenomenon and form of musical expression is spreading, and its protagonists are all too aware. As Nafar notes, "Here it started among Palestinians in Israel, but you see now rappers and hip-hoppers in Jabalya, Ramallah, Khan Yunis, Jenin ... everywhere! It is becoming big and I dare to say that in every village you can find young people taking up a mike and performing."[205]

<u>A Different Kind of Ghetto</u>

Because I have already elaborated on the internal dynamics of Palestinian identity as well as introduced Palestinian hip-hop in previous chapters, I will not as extensively profile Palestinian hip-hop artists in the Occupied Territories as exhaustively as I have done above, but focus here on how Palestinian hip-hop produced in the Occupied Territories relates to the

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[201] Remi Kanazi, "FREE THE P! Palestine Takes NYC's East Village by Storm," *The Electronic Intifada*, 17 October 2005 http://electronicintifada.net/cgi-bin/artman/exec/view.cgi/11/4250 (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[202] Rachel Shabi, op. cit.
[203] Saree Makdisi, "Said, Palestine, and the Humanism of Liberation," in *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation* ed. Homi Bhabha and W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 80
[204] *Flashpoints* interview, op. cit.
[205] Evert-Jan Grit, "DAM Palestinian hip hop band builds reputation in Israel," *MIFTAH,* July 22, 2005 http://www.miftah.org/Display.cfm?DocId=8000&CategoryId=25 (Accessed May 31, 2007)

transnationality of this creative medium, and its transnational extension of symbolic discourses.

For the artist Boikutt, member of the group Ramallah Underground, the medium of hip-hop is not only "an art form, but also a means of resistance." Similarly, Muhammad El-Farah, member of the Gaza group PR mentioned earlier, notes how hip-hop has provided a creative outlet for him to express himself: "I was angry and there was nothing I could do. I got wounded once in the arm by an Israeli bullet and then I turned to rap."[206] El-Farah is also a literature student at Al-Quds Open University and, similar to many other Palestinian hip-hop groups, incorporates Palestinian and Arabic poetry into his lyrics to address a wide array of themes – all usually visibly steeped in the conditions of occupation: "With the situation and the events around us, it's not difficult to come up with songs. It expresses itself inside us. Whenever you are affected by something you see, you write."[207] Not surprisingly, the songs are blunt, but the theme of hip-hop being a "new form of resistance" remains

> If you challenge me or not, I will spend my life
> holding on to my mic defending myself from your assault
> My voice will remain an echo – asking where is the
> response to this injustice.[208]

Again, as Jackie Sollums has described, "for them, rap is a weapon against the occupation – they throw rhymes like others throw rockets."[209] Crucially, it through a *symbolic discourse of resistance* where hip-hop is appropriated and collectively understood in this fashion, through a *social practice* which is both identity-affirming through it's perception as a medium of "resistance."

But being a hip-hop artist in the Occupied Territories is obviously a difficult enterprise. Besides the "counter-culture" factor mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, the technology to digitally produce music (as hip-hop requires) is scarce. Perhaps more impacting, the travel bans and restrictions imposed by Israel affecting all Palestinian youth make working with other artists elsewhere incredibly difficult – even between artists collaborating between the West Bank and Gaza. Indeed, the concept of *collaboration* is highly important in hip-hop and serves as a means

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[206] "Palestinian Rappers (PR) Muhammad El-Farah," *This Week in Palestine*, Issue No. 88, August 2005. Available: http://www.artschoolpalestine.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&lang=en&id=386&Itemid=44 (Accessed May 31, 2007)

[207] Laila El-Haddad, "Rap finds new voice in Gaza," *Al-Jazeera.net* http://english.aljazeera.net/English/archive/archive?ArchiveId=10297 (Acessed May 31, 2007)

[208] Ibid.

[209] Ibid.

of expanding one's audience as well as refining one's artistic craft. Because of this, the Internet has been a crucial tool in both creating and communicating within the transnational Palestinian community – especially for those in the Occupied Territories. For example, members of Ramallah Underground have collaborated through the Internet with a whole plethora of musicians, from "Lebanese Turntablist DJ Lethal Skillz" to " Belgian indie-rock group Rumplestichkin."[210] Collaborating with such musically and internationally diverse musicians also brings their message to an international audience. For example Boikutt of Ramallah Underground recently collaborated with the UK group Slovo (who classifies themselves as "Trip-hop, Accoustic, Electronica"[211]) to produce a track called "Nakba" which has in turn been widely downloaded over the Internet.

Because of the necessity of the Internet in this regard, a highly utilized medium of communication and collaboration for Palestinian hip-hop artists – wherever they are – has become the MySpace social networking website. Of course, the "MySpace phenomenon" opens up all sorts of possibilities for sociological inquiry at large, even Palestinian transnationalism at large, but just to focus here on how the medium is used by Palestinian hip-hop artists in the Occupied Territories and Israel presents some interesting material. MySpace allows music groups to post songs for download, along with lyrics, pictures, and biographical information for free, and is universally accessible. Because the website is so highly used among youth around the world, it is today a highly attractive (and easy) means of disseminating one's music, "linking" your "MySpace page" with "friends," fans, and influences.

One of the first things one sees when they visit a MySpace page is a band's "location," placed just to the right of the artist's "profile picture." Not surprisingly, "Palestine" is not listed. What is interesting is how different Palestinian hip-hop artists in the Occupied Territories and Israel have coped with this, usually by putting different words in the "city" field which comes before the required "country" (appearing here in italics). Here are some samples:

> Palestine is not
> listed so F##K,
> *United States*

> Gaza Strip, Palestine, Not

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[210] An interesting sidenote is that out of all the artists profiled in this thesis, Ramallah Underground are decidedly the most diverse musically – incorporating elements of everything from acid jazz to heavy rock as a foundation for their lyrics.

[211] "Slovo," *MySpace*, Available: www.myspace.com/4slovo (Accessed May 31, 2007)

Israel

lod-palestine48,
palestine
Israel

Palestine, Ramallah
Iraq

Ramallah, Palestine, Palestine
Palau[212]

Here also, we encounter many of the same themes elucidated by Laleh Khalili in her study of cybercafes in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, where rather than erasing territorially and nationally-bound identities, "the realities of quotidian experiences and *lived* political and social relations" of Palestinians necessitate the extension national and territorial assertions of identity. As Khalili documents, one indicator of this is the national sentiment which drips off choices of cyberhandles, often incorporating Palestinian placenames, national symbols and the number "48."[213] We can see the MySpace example described above as an obvious extension of this – how the obligatory classification of "location" requires for Palestinians a subversion of the formal MySpace structure in order to affirm their identity. This illustration thus provides a useful illustration of the contradictions in appropriating "transnationalism" to Palestinians, where a territorial- centered identity remains highly salient. Further, our returning to the theme of transnationalism here provides a useful point of transition to describe out last spatial locale – diaspora Palestinians in the United States.

As Jackie Sollums and many others have noted, hip-hop "as a genre is accepted, popular, and has the potential to transcend global boundaries. Because it is so familiar, it is inviting and accessible to people. When people hear hip hop they immediately relate." The larger question for the next section then becomes, for Palestinian-Americans, to what extent has hip-hop similarly empowered and affirmed an individual and collective sense of Palestinian identity? Further, how have *symbolic discourses of resistance and steadfastness* been incorporated and contributed to this process – framing perceptions of Palestinian-American identity as well as mediating and contextualizing altogether different challenges faced as Palestinian-Americans?

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[212] Available : http://www.myspace.com/boikutt , http://www.myspace.com/palrapperz , http://www.myspace.com/damrap , http://www.myspace.com/aswatt , http://www.myspace.com/rucollective (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[213] Khalili, op. cit.

"Born Palestinian, Born Black": Palestinian-American Hip-Hop

Another conclusion Khalili reaches in her study of Palestinian youth in the Lebanese refugee camps is that they "'excorporate' the resources provided by high-tech capitalism and use the ideological concepts developed in their diaspora to form a cyberculture in which transnational nationalisms play the dominant role."[214] As such,

> instead of undergoing "identity travel," their national and political identities function as an integrative transnational force. For these young people, the internet further distributes modes of nationalist understanding using images and leaflets across borders. Far from destabilizing national identities, their virtual practices, whether quotidian or contentious, animate their "long distance nationalism.[215]

One could make additionally make the argument that the sub-cultural medium of hip-hop – relying heavily on the Internet "cyberculture" Khalili describes - functions similarly, especially for Palestinian-Americans, as a resource "excorporated" in the service of advancing a form of "long distance nationalism." However, as I argue, a salient component of such "excorporation" are the role of *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance,* which in many ways is not so much "nationalist" in thrust as "identity-affirming" and empowering. As has been described previously, these discourses act as constitutive, shaping forces impacting upon of "Palestinian identity." In the case of Palestinian-Americans, particularly Palestinian-American hip-hop artists, this discourse – especially its symbolic elements – is appropriated not only to reify and empower personal and collective identities, but also to contextualize and mediate particularly "Palestinian-American" circumstances.

As Anton Shammas writes in his essay "Autocartography: The Case of Palestine, Michigan," there is the notion of "creating one's own Palestine" in an "imagined geography": "a place that is the other, deep end of that pool of your created, acquired and invented memories."[216] It is this sense of "creating one's own Palestine" which Palestinian-American hip-hop artists are able to accomplish through song. However, with the transnational possibilities described earlier, Palestinian-American hip-hop artists remain further "connected" to Palestine through *performing*

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[214] Ibid, 127
[215] ibid
[216] Anton Shammas, "Autocartography: The Case of Palestine, Michigan," in *The Geography of Identity*. Ed. Patricia Yaeger, (Ann Arbor: Univeristy of Michigan Press, 1996), 466

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Palestine – referencing our earlier discussion of music, performance, and identity.

At relatively the same time when Palestinian hip-hop emerged in Israel, and subsequently in the Occupied Territories, a growing number of Palestinian-Americans also began to address Palestinian issues and Palestinian identity through hip-hop. Artists such as the Philistines, Iron Sheik, N.O.M.A.D.S. and others began self-producing highly political and socially conscious songs dealing not only Palestinian issues, but also larger Palestinian-American and Arab-American issues. Unlike the pervasive mainstream image of hip-hop artists in the US being "delinquents", and hip-hop being "low-culture," most Palestinian-American hip-hop artists are university-educated, their lyrics being more dynamic and sophisticated than many American hip-hop artists.

One of the most active Palestinian-American artists is Will Youmans, who records under the moniker Iron Sheik. Youmans is a Dearborn, Michigan native who recently relocated to Oakland and has a day-job teaching political science at a local community college. Youmans appropriated the name Iron Sheik – a stereotypically Arab character in the American World Wrestling Federation during the 1980s – to make a deliberate, satirical statement about the portrayal of Arabs in the US media. Like their counterparts described above in Israel and the Occupied Territories, Palestinian-American artists like Youmans draw on the exact same musical and literary influences (American hip-hop blended informed by Palestinian/Arab "high culture" traditions) and, as I argue, the same symbolic discourse drawn from the Palestinian national idiom.

For example, in the song "Olive Trees," Youmans utilizes the same symbology associated with olive trees and keys to denote rootedness and steadfastness, as described in Chapter One:

They exiled us and stole our homes
Now all we have are old keys and new poems
They turned us into refugees
And uprooted us like our olive trees
... olive trees.

As a Palestinian feel more like an Indian
Driven into reservations
Living under occupation
As a shattered nation

A western creation[217]

Additionally, we see here how the quintessentially American theme of "manifest destiny" and the history of Native Americans is used metaphorically in association with the Palestinian historical narrative. In other songs, Youmans similarly combines Palestinian issues with American political realities. For example, in the song "Dissappeared," Youmans chronicles the story of a Palestinian-American who fled from Lebanon in 1984, but was "disappeared" after 9/11 and has not been seen since. Additionally, Palestinian-American rappers like Youmans address the marginalization of their identities as Palestinian and the denial of their culture, in a manor similar to that of DAM, as described above. In the song "Growing Up," Youmans raps:

> I was stuck between two different worlds
> Mixed up in a multi-ethnic swirl
> My identity was hard to discover
> With assimilation that Arab side was smothered[218]

This is indeed representative of Palestinian-American hip-hop as "fuelled by an identity in flux – the life experience of exile and diaspora. Many… MC's use hip-hop to relate to a larger community in America, to make inroads into an America they may not fully belong to."[219]

This sentiment is probably most famously encapsulated in female Palestinian-American hip-hop artist Suheir Hammad's phrase – and title of her collection of poetry - "born Palestinian, born Black." As Hammad notes,

> Audre Lorde, who was a famous African-American poet, discussed black as being a political identity as well as a cultural identity. Within the Palestinian culture we have the concept of black being a negative force, and it is seen that way all over the world. What the book tries to do is take back the negative energy that is associated with black, reclaim it, and say that this is something that is about survival, something that is positive.[220]

Here we plainly see the same "reclamation" which we have noted elsewhere, symbolically subsumed under an understanding of "steadfastness as resistance," and also Rashid Khalidi's aforementioned notion of the Palestinian narrative transforming "failure into triumph." Hammad

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[217] Iron Sheik, "Olive Trees," *Camel Clutch*, 2003 (self-released). Lyrics available: http://www.ironsheik.biz/olivetrees.html (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[218] Iron Sheik, "Growing Up," *Camel Clutch*, 2003, Lyrics available: http://www.ironsheik.biz/growingup.html (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[219] Will Youmans, "Arab-American hip-hop," forthcoming 2007, supplied by the author.
[220] Nathalie Handal "Drops of Suheir Hammad: A Talk with a Palestinian Poet Born Black" *Al Jadid*, Vol. 3, No. 20 (Summer 1997) http://www.aljadid.com/interviews/DropsofSuheirHammad.html (accessed April 24, 2006)

herself is a refugee from _____ and has become a prominent and well-known voice in both the hip-hop community at large, and within the American poetry scene. As Hammad puts it, "hip hop has a tradition of... imparting your parents' historical legacy when that history has been marginalized in schools and in the mainstream. I understand the Palestinian diasporic situation better through hip hop."[221]

Lastly, a common thematic thread re-appearing in Palestinian-American hip-hop is the "re-discovery" of Palestinian identity. As longtime scholar working with Palestinian-American communities in the United States, Kathleen Christison has documented that for many Palestinian-Americans, returning to Palestine to visit and coming face to face with either the realities of the occupation and/or encountering discrimination and suspicion from Israeli immigration authority prompts in many cases a (re)discovery and renewed salience of "being Palestinian."[222] As Youmans has noted elsewhere, "I didn't begin to understand the politics of Palestine until I went there at the age of 17. My eyes opened up and I embarked on a path of learning."[223] As such, the song "Just trying to get home" chronicles a similar experience, and also draws on audio samples from Mohammed Fawzi, the famous Egyptian political figure:

> I gotta catch my flight 241
> JFK New York to Ben-Gurion in Tel-Aviv
> Taking off soon so I better leave
> back to see the fam
> and the land that formed who I am […]
>
> I suddenly woke up, I was in a much different place
> It was dark and damp
> I was being yelled at like I was in boot camp
> standing next to me was Israeli security
> with a bucket of water dripping on me
> I was laying on the floor of someplace I never been before
> My watch read four, someone else walked through the door
> "What am I being held for?"
> "We cannot tell you" […]
> the window was small and the bars were thicker
> "Welcome to Israel, they said with a snicker."[…]
>
> I thought Israel was a great democracy

[221] Christopher Farah, "Beyond Bling Bling," *The Jerusalem Report*, May 31, 2004, p. 4

[222] Kathleen Christison, "The American Experience: Palestinians in the U.S." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, No. 4. (Summer, 1989), pp. 18-36; See also Kathleen Christison, *The Wound of Dispossession* (Sunlit Hills Press, 2002).

[223] Junaid Alam and Will Youmans, "Interview with Palestinian-American Rapper Iron Sheik," July 30, 2004 http://www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?ItemID=5958 (Accessed May 31, 2007)

but it won't even let me see my family
the next day they sent me back to my second home
but my spirit stayed and it flies in the stones
each burning tire carries the fire
of my love for the land and my deep desire
to return to the land of my ancestors
They can't stop me.[224]

Here, especially in the last stanza, we also see the similar theme of "personal steadfastness" as was articulated by DAM in their song "I Don't Have Freedom," but also appropriating themes and metaphors drawn from our notion of a symbolic discourse of resistance: namely, "my spirit stayed and it flies in the stones / each burning tire carries the fire" which draws explicitly, and romantically, from the Intifada imagery of the "Children of the Stones," the stones personifying the "spirit of return" which will remain steadfast against adversity.

For many Palestinian-American hip-hop artists, as Youmans writes, "it is about the benefits of self-expression and self-representation: the act of speaking for the self." For most artists, the music is seen as a calling, a mode of self expression and communal identification, rather than a career. For example, as the San Francisco artist Kalamati explains, "I have been fulfilling that need to represent Palestine through hip-hop."[225] Similarly, New Orleans-based MC Shaheed has noted, "I speak for the people of Palestine, expressing their anger, their rage, their loyalty, and most of all their hope, I am not an artist. I'm just a product of my environment doing my job as a Palestinian by speaking out."[226]

For many and most Palestinian-American hip-hop artists, however, musical expression is part and parcel of being active both in their community and within politics. Many of their performances are not in conventional venues for hip-hop music (bars, clubs, night clubs) but larger Arab-Amercian community events, social justice demonstrations, and the like. As such, Palestinian-American hip-hop has become an integral component of Palestinian-American activism at large. For example, a CD compilation titled "Free the P" was a project launched by the group the Philistines – including almost all of the artists covered in this project – whose proceeds went to benefit filmmaker Jackie Sollums documentary on Palestinian hip-hop in the

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[224] Iron Sheik, "Just Trying to Get Home," *Camel Clutch*, op. cit. Lyrics available:
http://www.ironsheik.biz/home1.html (Accessed May 31, 2007)
[225] Will Youmans, "Arab-American Hip-Hop," op. cit.
[226] ibid,. See also "Shaheed*" New Orleans, Louisiana Palestine Solidarity*
http://www.nolapalestinesolidarity.org/shaheed/shaheed.htm (accessed May 31, 2006)

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Occupied Territories titled *Slingshot Hip-hop*.[227] Other events and concerts have further benefited Palestinian and Arab-American organizations. Additionally, similar to the Palestinian artists mentioned above like DAM, Palestinian-American artists also take a "self-critical" stand on other social justice issues such as homophobia facing their communities such as homophobia – being an increasingly problematic issue in both Arab-American and hip-hop communities alike.[228]

Lastly, like the Palestinian hip-hop artists in the Occupied Territories and in Israel, as we have described above," Palestinian-American hip-hop artists also view their artistic medium as an expression – and a means – of "resistance." Will Youmans, for example, refers to hip-hop as embodying Said's notion of a "weapon of criticism."[229] More critically, the choice of hip-hop as a medium for not only artistic expression, but as affirming individual and collective identity, reflects and exposes both the contradictions and possibilities of hybridity and transnationalism. As Youmans writes,

> An Arab rapper in America is in exile from his place of ancestry and identity. His choice of music could also be said to be in exile from its African-American origins. In other words, both exist outside of their places of origin in a sense. Both the Arab diaspora and rap music are global in reach. This is fully in step with the emergence of a global Arab Diasporic hip-hop movement, which precisely typifies Said's description of "adversarial internationalization in an age of continued imperial structures." Arab rappers are springing up all over the world and the U.S. to give voice to resistance and identity. [230]

To take this further, through the fusing of *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* which have become deeply embedded in a *Palestinian* "transnational idiom," with the *symbolic discourse of marginalization* which hip-hop represents, Palestinian hip-hop artists can be said to personify the hybridity of resistance and criticism which Said stressed.

Music and Transnational Identity

In Simon Frith's piece on Music and identity, he quotes Paul Gilroy's sense of skepticism about "rap nationalism": "How does a form which flaunts and glories in its own malleability as well as its transnational character become interpreted as an expression of some authentic

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[227] Free the P website www.freethep.com (accessed April 24, 2006)
[228] Youmans, op. cit
[229] ibid
[230] ibid

[national] essence?"[231] Indeed, Gilroy has an important point – one which I have been wanting to stress again for sometime: We mustn't assume Palestinian hip-hop as either homogenous, bounded or representing any sort of "essence" of the Palestinian "national idiom." By the same token, nor should we assume that Palestinian hip-hop – or what we have described of it here – embodies any "essence" of the symbolic discourses we have been focusing on throughout this thesis.

What I do mean to suggest, however, is that Palestinian hip-hop – and it's ascendance – represents an nascent thread of Palestinian youth cultural production which is essentially *transnational*. Further, its appropriation is both framed by and frames a *symbolic discourses of steadfastness and resistance* amongst it's participants. As Frith writes, "Music, an aesthetic practice, articulates in itself an understanding of both group relations and individuality, on the basis of which ethical codes and social ideologies are understood." Indeed, music is a carrier of discourse. As such, not only does music shape individual and collective identities in the sense which Frith describes, but the *symbolic discourses* carried by music do so as well. As such, we can say that through this artistic medium, these threads of symbolic discourse, both informing and embedded in the Palestinian national idiom, add shape and contour to both individual and collective conceptions of Palestinian identity. By incorporating these discourses – and many others – into a "performance" which is shared between audience and artist, individual, collective and national identities are further empowered and affirmed through social practice.

Frith writes that "hip-hop… with its cut-ups, its scratches, breaks and samples, is best understood as producing not new texts but new ways of performing texts, new ways of performing *the making of meaning*."[232] We can thus understand Palestinian hip-hop as a medium which acts as a *generator* – incorporating both more-dominant and less-dominant discourses and "making the meaning" of those discourses in the *experience shared* by artist and audience in an act of mutual performance. But this artistic medium, as has been described, is hardly local – it is international. The "experience shared" spans borders, checkpoints, and even satellite broadcasts. Thus, symbolic discourses which are carried by this medium, as collectively "shared" and received by Palestinians, Palestinian-Americans and Palestinian-Israelis alike, are decidedly *transnational*. The hyphenated and non-hyphenated Palestinian identities which they inform, affirm and empower are thus highly *transnationally relational*, and through that relationality,

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[231] Frith 122-123
[232] ibid, 124

symbolic discourses are further given fuel, substance and even a life of their own. At the same time, this process solidifies a national idiom which remains inexorably tied to territoriality, the lack of sovereignty, and a homeland lost. With all this in mind, what can be the ultimate significance of a transnational symbolic discourse?

CONCLUSION

Rethinking Transnationalism, Rethinking "Resistance"

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.
– Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*[233]

As Lavie and Swedenburg describe, "borders and diasporas are phenomena that blow up - both enlarge and explode - the hyphen."[234] We see this clearly in the last chapter, where the counter-cultural medium of Palestinian hip-hop exposes and expresses the constructive discontent of Palestinians in completely separate locales, all facing completely distinct struggles, but all appropriating, and contributing to, a pervasive symbolic *discourse of steadfastness and resistance* which is tied to the Palestinian national idiom. This transnational creative process thus *explodes* the "ambiguity," and *expands* the possibilities, of hybridized Palestinian identities and forms a basis for an understanding of what I term *Palestinian transnationalism.*

In the course of this project, I have attempted to trace these threads of symbolic discourse from their grounding in the national narrative and idiom, to examples of their social and political application, and finally to their transnational appropriation. Following Stein and Swedenburg's call for attention to both *intranational* and *transnational* relationalities, I have attempted to not only deconstruct the internal dynamics and contradictions of *symbolic discourse* as it is produced and applied, but also to approach "forms of mutual contingency" through which this discourse spans transnational frontiers among "hybridized" Palestinians.[235]

Such "mutual contingencies" are affirmed through *symbolic discourse*, and work to form what Stuart Hall terms "*translation*," – that is, "those identity formations which *cut across and*

[233] Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 7
[234] Lavie and Swedenburg, op. cit., 16
[235] Stein and Swedenburg, op. cit., 9-11

intersect natural frontiers, and which are composed of people who have been *dispersed* forever from their homelands."[236] The *larger* question considered here has been, What variables, contingencies and discourses provide the "intersecting" link solidifying the "umbilical cord" (as DAM would say) between the diaspora and a "Homeland Lost"? To what extent are these discourses relational, reflective, and/or mutually reinforcing? Again, these are the *larger* questions which I have not striven to "answer" necessarily, but to approach and deconstruct through explaining aspects and facets of one such "intersecting link" – that of what I term *symbolic discourse*.

My central hypothesis here has been that in periods of extended and protracted conflict, such as that which the Palestinians have faced, there emerges a *discourse* around "resistance" which is tied – but not bound – to the national idiom (hence, "steadfastness"). Neither "official," nor "popular," such a discourse implicitly frames social and cultural practice, pushes and guides political possibility, and impacts upon perceptions of individual, communal and "national" identity. Needless to say, this theoretical hypothesis has proven difficult to test, and especially difficult to "prove." This is partially because of the theoretical nature of *discourse*.

Discourse in this sense has been appropriated as a medium which is neither imposed and wielded from above, nor romantically conceived as organically emanating "from below." Rather, "discourse" has been understood as being constructed from the sum of its parts: chiefly, a tenacious occupation, and the various contingencies and responses it has engendered. Rather than viewing *symbolic discourse* as an opaque, homogenous "political culture of resistance" as Foran and Selbin have described, I have viewed *a symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance* – particular to the Palestinian national idiom – as embodying a significant "thread" or "channel" of "political culture." One which, depending on the mitigating circumstances, can be highly determining in framing social practice, giving shape and contour to perceptions of individual, collective and "national" identity. Understood in this way, such a discourse spans transnational frontiers, from *borderzone* to *diaspora*, and informs understandings of hybridized Palestinian identities and ethno-national solidarities.

Like Foran's conception of "political cultures," a *symbolic discourse* is "a product of, and in turn [has] an impact on, a range of material and discursive elements: from the historical

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[236] Stuart Hall, "The Question of Cultural Identity," in *Modernity and Its Futures*, S. Hall, D. Held and T. McGrew eds. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), 310

experiences that shape subjectivity and arouse emotions… to formally articulated ideologies, and through the organizations of social actors."[237]   But *symbolic discourse*, especially as tied to a national idiom, is neither explicit nor necessarily acknowledged. Nevertheless, it similarly forms, as quoted before, "the population's perception of the options that are available and seem plausible to them… 'repertoires of collective action'… constructing 'strategies of action' for dealing with their society."[238]

This "perception" can be both explicit and implicit. As we saw in both Chapter 1 and 2, the threads of symbolic discourse around resistance and steadfastness, as representing such "repertoires," were significantly expanded in the course of the first Intifada, as "resistance" and "steadfastness" came to be embodied in a whole host of social practices. At the same time, it was in part *from* the same symbolic discourse where such applications were rooted. For example, the transformation of the domestic practice of motherhood into a vehicle for women's empowerment, and the vocalization of women's issues discussed in Chapter 2, drew significantly from the pervasive idea of mothers as militant icons of the nation, a symbolic motif which was firmly embedded in the symbolic discourse of steadfastness and resistance of that period.

Thus, shared symbols and motifs central to the national idiom are carriers of *symbolic discourse* which impact upon collective imagining about the national self. Good examples of this are the *kufiya* or prickly-pear cactus discussed in Chapter 1, both of whose symbology came to be transformed by *both* impacting moments of rupture and a symbolic discourse of resistance which contextualizes those moments: the prickly-pear cactus from symbol of indigeneity and resilience (emphasizing its regenerative capacity) to also a symbol of resistance (emphasizing its pricks); the *kufiya* from being an iconic national signifier associated with the *fallah* (peasant) to an iconic symbol of resistance also associated with the *shabab* (youth) during the Intifada.

Yet, a crucial site where these discursive shifts in symbology are strengthened is in the realm of popular culture. Indeed, because this discourse is carried *symbolically* through popular culture, the medium of *music* provides a highly rich terrain on which to observe how a resistance-laden discourse operates *transnationally* with aspects of the national idiom. Particular motifs from the national idiom are viewed through this discourse and thus are appropriated *because* they most fully applicable to express commonly shared sentiments.   Particular music styles are evaluated and selected because they reflect the relevance of that discourse in a particular context

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[237] Foran, op. cit., 219
[238] Selbin, op. cit. 125.

and resonate with the listeners perception of it's meaning. And because "popular culture" is necessarily appropriated as a *transnational* medium, connecting Palestinians in the Occupied Territories to Palestinians in Israel and to Palestinians in the diaspora, so too does this symbolic discourse become embedded in shared understandings between these communities of what aspects of *global* popular culture can resonate with their collective adversities *as Palestinians.* Such an investigation is perhaps an illustrative starting point for Helena Schulz's call for scholarship on the Palestinian diaspora which she describes as "the impact of the fact of transnationalization on Palestinian lives and experiences"; the extent to which "Palestinians in exile create identities not solely shaped by the context of remembering, longing and struggling, but also crafted by new contexts," and, I would add, new cultural mediums of creative expression.[239]

In her study of "Palestinian cybernationalism," Laleh Khalili notes how Palestinians have increasingly utilized the Internet to engage in "unifying" transnational communication, and have "propagated national(ist) symbols in images and texts and employed cyberleaflets and debate forums for national(ist) mobilization." Through this practice, "virtual images of Palestinian places and landscapes have been crucial in *reterritorializing* Palestinians and reinforcing their ties to concrete locales and places."[240] Similarly, music serves as a vehicle for *sonically* reinforcing such ties – not so much to "concrete locales and places," but between individual, symbolic discourse and collective identity, *reterritorializing* Palestinians within a transnational "discourse community."

The growing appropriation of hip-hop as a "weapon of criticism" and a "new form of resistance" by creatively and socially galvanized young Palestinians in all three locales – and others – is a testament to this. Not only does this illustrate an increasing "transnational relationality" between youth in Palestine, Israel and the diaspora, but also how a *symbolic discourse of resistance* can be drawn from and at the same time transcended. For example, the fact a group like DAM speaks out against not only the ongoing occupation, but at the same time is highly and vocally self-critical of "Palestinian nationalism," national elites, drug use, apathy, religious conservatism, and patriarchy – all within their own communities – expands the symbolic discourse around "resistance" and transcends it. For unlike much of the "official," or "mainstream" nationalist discourse also drawing from a symbolic discourse of resistance, DAM

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[239] Schulz, *Palestinian Diaspora,* 4
[240] Khalili, 135

seem to have appropriated the adage of Hungarian sociologists Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, where "solidarity does not include unqualified support, rather it excludes unqualified support."[241] At the same time, Palestinian hip-hop groups like DAM extensively appropriate resistance-laden symbols, motifs and tropes, which are also drawn from a *national idiom*, to affirm and empower "Palestinian identity" and thus galvanize new forms of youth subjectivity. As Frith notes, "Identity is thus necessarily a matter of ritual, it describes one's place in a dramatized pattern of relationships… Self-identity is cultural identity."[242] So we have seen in how the "ritual" of hip-hop – in both the performance and the recorded medium – connects artist and audience with a creative cultural expression of symbolic discourses which reinforces and empowers transnational "Palestinian" subjectivities.

Further, while the impact of a group like DAM and the nascent youth movement it represents should not be over-estimated, so to should it not be *under*-estimated. By making forceful and innovative contributions to the larger "discourse community," especially through the symbolic power of music, the reverberations and rumble of Palestinian hip-hop could well be significant. Even if perceived at face-value as merely vocalizing issues facing Palestinians to audiences abroad or empowering the subjectivity handful of young show-goers, Palestinian hip-hop stands as a developing mode of cultural production which is redefining not only the margins of popular and "underground" culture, but also exposing and challenging the rigid, exclusivist margins of the ethno-territorial nation-state.

As Stuart Hall and others within Cultural Studies have observed, popular culture is not merely significant in its "reflective" capacity to illustrate "deeper" social and political realities, but also a "site of the struggle to define how life is lived and experienced," articulating "the meanings of particular social practices and events… how they are experienced and lived." In turn, popular culture as an "interpreted social practice" is necessarily "articulated into even larger relations of domination and resistance."[243] As I argue, this is true as well of "sub-culture" or otherwise "counter-cultural" cleavages. In other words, *both* popular and sub-cultural cleavages should be seen as "constructive rather than merely epiphenomenal," and thus form what Stein and

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[241] Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher. "Citizen Ethics and Civic Virtues," quoted in Elliot Colla, "Sentimentality and Redemption: The Rhetoric of Egyptian Pop Culture Intifada Solidarity," in *Palestine, Israel, and The Politics of Popular Culture*, op. cit., 352

[242] Frith, op. cit., 125

[243] Lawrence Grossberg, "History, Politics, and Postmodernism: Stuart Hall and Cultural Studies," in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies,* ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), 158.

Swedenburg describe as

> a crucial locus of political engagement, although not in static or necessarily resistive ways, and always working in articulation with broader social forces, political process, and modalities of difference in fluid and variable ways across a range of institutional locations.

It is in this understanding where Swedenburg advances the call for a "rethinking" of "popular culture" where "what emerges… is not merely a proliferation of sites of power but also an expanded conception of the possible avenues and modalities of resistance."[244]

Reciprocally then, as I argue, we should also "rethink" *resistance* in a way which emphasizes the transnational capacities of both popular and "underground" culture to gradually subvert exclusivist, ethno-territorial conceptions of the nation-state. Indeed, if as DAM says, the terrain of popular and "underground" culture represent the site of a "new" sort of Intifada, which is increasingly waged *transnationally*, what sort of "stones" will be effective in deterritorializing and de-homogenizing the nation-state? Just as we should "rethink" *transnationalism* in a way which "insist[s] on the continuing importance and reemergence of the nation-state as an ideological-political form in the midst of globalizing processes,"[245] so to should we rethink the possibilities transnational cultural production: as tied to a *reterritorializing* national idiom, but imbued with the possibility of *deterritorializing* it's exclusivity.

At the close of this project, this is how I have come to understand the possibilities of *transnationalism*, specifically in understanding its manifestation in the form of *Palestinian transnationalism* elucidated herein.

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[244] Stein and Swedenburg, 9
[245] ibid, 10

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