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File ID	127783
Filename	Chapter 3 Exilic narrativity : audiovisual storytelling and memory

SOURCE (OR PART OF THE FOLLOWING SOURCE):

Type	Dissertation
Title	Telling memories : Al-Nakba in Palestinian exilic narratives
Author	I.A.M. Saloul
Faculty	Faculty of Humanities
Year	2009
Pages	250

FULL BIBLIOGRAPHIC DETAILS:
http://dare.uva.nl/record/298203

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CHAPTER THREE

Exilic Narrativity: Audiovisual Storytelling and Memory

To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' […] It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger […].

– Walter Benjamin, (1977: 257).

We engage in history not only as agents or actors, but also as storytellers or narrators. In this chapter, I take this idea as my starting point. This activity of storytelling is fragmented in a case of historical disaster. Above, I cite the brief extract from Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" to emphasize the fragmented sense of storytelling (or fragmented narrativity) of the Palestinian loss of homeland as a subjective mode of cultural remembrance *in* exile.[57] This mode, I argue, does not strive towards articulating the historical past as self-identical, "the way it really was". Rather, Palestinians' memories of *al-nakba* encompass first and foremost a configuration formed out of past as well as present images in the context of their everyday practices and lives at the time of rememberance. Within these narrative memories, the catastrophic event in the past is constantly modified. Those transformations occur because memories of the place are unleashed, to borrow Benjamin's phrase, "at a moment of danger". In the Palestinian case, moments of danger, as I attempt to show below, represent moments of the dangers of collective annihilation in the present: sixty years after *al-nakba*, exiled Palestinians still exist under a daily threat of being nullified as a people. The text through which I will demonestrate how such fragmented storytelling functions is this time a film, which deals with the Palestinians' imaginary of loss of homeland by Egyptian director Tawfiq Saleh.[58]

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[57] Benjamin's "Theses", which he wrote in early 1940s while in exile, are part of his political critique of historicism, and of historiography as a tool of domination and ideology. The "Theses" also symbolize Benjamin's decisive break with historical materialism and a return to the metaphysical concerns of his earlier writings. For relevant discussions on both aspects of Benjamin's thought and style in general, see, among others, Sontag ([1972] 2002), Buck-Morss (1989), Beiner (1984: 423-34), Jacobs (1999), and Ferris (1996 and 2004).

[58] Once described by the French critic Yves Thorval as "the filmmaker of the damned of the earth", Tawfiq Saleh (b. 1927) is one of the most controversial figures in Egyptian cinema. He is an innovative director who is credited for a number of seminal films such as *Darb Al-Mahabeel* (Al-Mahabeel Alley, 1956), *Siraa Al-Abtal* (The Heroes' Struggle, 1962) and *Al-Mutamarridoun* (The Rebels, 1968). His films often show a high degree of sensitivity towards the struggle of the down trodden against class oppression and the harsh political reality of their life. See, Saleh (1999). On the pan-Arab production context of Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un*, see also Shafik (1998: 155-56).

In the previous chapter, my analysis of Liyana Badr's collection of short stories already laid the ground for reading fragmented narrativity in Palestinian exile, both culturally and narratologically. Culturally, my analysis of the short stories revealed how, through the shift from nostalgic to critical memory, Palestinian exile constitutes an entangled spatio-temporal condition of forced travel and undesired movement. Narratologically, this condition of Palestinian exile, I argued there, is presented to us, the readers, through a fragmented first-person narrative discourse. Multiple narrative voices and instances of personal memories are conjured up repeatedly as concrete (verbal) imagings of forced displacement. Each of these literalizes, retrospectively, conceptual metaphors of "travel", "movement" and "mobility" in Palestinian exile.

In what follows, I will pursue this argument further but shift the focus to an examination of the relationship between Palestinian identity and the exilic space itself. This shift of focus is best explained in theoretical terms as my attempt to bring "imaginative geographies" to bear on Palestinian exile. To be sure, that concept has evolved out of Edward Said's renowned critique of the historical and political configurations of orientalism, particularly the ways in which they simultaneously inform and regulate cross-cultural encounters between East and West. Here, the geographies are drawn not by Western orientalists but by the people affected by the loss of their land. The word "imaginative" is used here not to mean "false" or "made-up", but to highlight the geopolitical contestation of space as culturally perceived and articulated.[59]

A pertinent critique that traces the contested meanings of imaginative geographies in the contemporary political-cultural landscape of Palestine, and the Middle East at large, can be found in the work of geographer Derek Gregory. In his book, *The Colonial Present: Afghanistan, Palestine, Iraq* (2004), Gregory discusses the colonial past and its impact on the colonial present and future. Specifically, Gregory analyzes the intercultural connections between geographies of the Middle East and the political, military and economic modalities of Western colonial power represented both by the long history of intervention of the United Kingdom of Britain (UK) and United State (US) in the region, and by their current political roles in the context of the so-called "war on terror" in the aftermath of 11 September 2001. Exposing the tattered formation of the modern state of Afghanistan, the violent expansion of Israel as a "colonial-settler state" in Palestine, and the American and British military occupation of Iraq,

[59] See Said (1979). For relevant studies on the use of "imaginative" in terms of national identity, see Anderson (1983). Also, for very useful discussions that evaluate both the contemporary political and intellectual relevance of Said's *Orientalism* and the theoretical implications of the concept of "imaginative geographies" in cultural criticism, see Boer (2004b: 9-21 and 2006: 1-42), and Brennan (2000: 558-83).

Gregory makes an excellent argument that the war on terror is an articulation of the colonial present (13).[60] With respect to Palestine, Gregory's analysis demonstrates that the war on terror is used as a pretext for a renewed Zionist strategy to dispossess the Palestinians of land and property.

In making these arguments, Gregory outlines three aspects that summarize the geopolitical configurations of world politics today. First, American, British and Israeli military campaigns launched respectively against Afghanistan, Iraq and Palestine are all connected. Second, these campaigns have defined these countries as outsiders. Third, the extension of global order coincides with the colonial past into what seems to be developing as the colonial present (25-28). According to Gregory, these aspects of present-day politics project the ways in which Western colonialism, which he describes as "constantly territorializing" (253), is rehabilitated into our own present through "torsions of time and space" (251). As a result, the colonial promise of Western modernity is skewed by a geopolitical structure that differentiates between "us" and/versus "them"; in this case the "them" in the East are labeled as "terrorists". This division also implies values: it *locates* by reducing humanly occupied sites to point in a grid, it *opposes* by dividing the world starkly into West and East, and it *casts out* by excluding everyone but the Western "us" from the benefits of modern humanity. At stake is a vindictive colonial process of "othering" based on an inferior representation of the non-Western subject, while at the same time vilifying him or her as essentially violent. Such is the material of "evil". In this context, the US, as Gregory tersely puts it, has internalized a geopolitical identity of the value of "the protector of the world", through which the identity of "us" in the West was based on "the privileged site of universal values" (23). This distinction has blurred the distinction between *just* and *unjust*.

The key to understanding Gregory's analysis is the point he makes concerning imaginative geographies. For Gregory, imaginative geographies are not just accumulations of time, and successive histories, but also include performances of space. For him, space is not only a domain, but also a "doing" (19). It is this conceptualization of "space as doing" that I wish to mobilize in my discussion of the relationship between Palestinian identity and exilic space. Rather than raising questions concerning how narratives of loss of homeland assert cultural notions of a denied subjectivity in exile, I inquire how these narratives perform space through collective images and discourses of the historical uprootedness of 1948 within the geopolitical continuity of exile. The question how this geopolitical continuity affects our

[60] I borrow the phrase "colonial-settler state" from Maxim Rodinson who uses it to emphasize Israel's origins as a creation of Western colonialism in the Middle East. (1973: 39).

understanding of the daily exile of subsequent generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians as an ongoing catastrophe in 2008 will be central to my discussion of oral narratives of *al-nakba* in the final chapter of this study.

In this chapter, and also in the following one, I focus on audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*, a Palestinian aesthetic domain that remains to be fully illuminated. My analysis reflects on Palestinian identity in its spatio-temporal negotiation of the rigorous boundaries between "home" and "not home" (or exile) in two related ways. First, I develop a specific vision on the connection between audiovisual storytelling and memory, what I will call "exilic narrativity", as a spatially-charged and fragmented narrativity that has the potential to take the literary "imaging" of exile in the literary narratives I analyzed in this study to its visual version: the image evoked in language can be shown in the film. Second, I examine the ways in which exilic narrativity is put to use in a post-*nakba* culture where Palestinian identity, but in different ways also Israeli identity, is addressed, and potentially influenced by audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*. This is what I will refer to in the next chapter as "performative narrativity". This fragmented mode is a special case of exilic narrativity that has the performativity effect to transform, slowly and through iteration, the formation of identity of the viewer. At stake in my discussion in both chapters is the notion that the audiovisual image is as important as the verbal image as a cultural space for reflection on narrative transpositions of personal memory and public, in this case politically catastrophic, events as well as the stimuli of spectatorial interactions with spaces of imagination within contemporary Palestinian culture in exile.

Through *Al-Makhdu'un*, I make the deregulations of exilic space, or the Palestinian subject's experience of its environment, central to my discussion because the filmic narrative reactivates, through memory, collective flows of re-territorialisation against continuing de-territorialisation. I mean to set forth Saleh's film as a different cultural object from the literary narratives I analyzed in chapter One and Two, yet at the same time to emphasize that this film is based on fragmented narrativity as an aesthetic device through which its narrative is exposed. A complex sense of such a fragmentation resonates in *Al-Makhdu'un*'s audiovisual storytelling through multiple fictional voices and archival images, which invokes both the historical loss of Palestine in 1948 and the shared plight of Palestinians in the present. As a sequel to where I left off my discussion of Badr's short stories, the questions which the film's narrative addresses are the following: once denied access to his or her home in Palestine, what is the destiny of the Palestinian subject in exile? In his or her quest for home, can this exiled subject find an "alternative home"? In its attempt to answer these questions, *Al-Makhdu'un* stages the struggle that Palestinians conduct in their arduous attempt to escape their impoverished lives in refugee

camps and to build their national future while they are being torn apart by forced exile and displacement.

Saleh's film is an adaptation of Ghassan Kanafani's masterful novella *Rijal Fi A-Shams* (1962), which was translated into English as *Men in the Sun* in 1978. In his fiction, Kanafani often elaborates a rigorous critique, on the basis of class and ethnicity, of Palestinian and Arab contemporary conditions, especially their distorted relationship to power and political struggle. Kanafani was the first to apply the term "resistance" to imbue Palestinian narratives before 1967 with significance as a new approach to Palestinian literature in general. Although he was politically involved as the spokesman for the Marxist political organization, *The Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine* (PFLP), and the editor of its journal *Al-Hadaf*, Kanafani was never an ideologue. His literary works show that he was a highly conscious writer whose commitment to the Palestinian cause did not exceed his aesthetic commitment to his art. As Roger Allen accurately comments, Kanafani's modernist narrative techniques and storytelling methods mark "a distinctive advance in Arabic fiction" (1990: 2).[61]

As is the case with the majority of his works, Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* has been read as a narrative of Palestinian calamity. The novel's stark description of the hardships and insecurities of Palestinian refugee life and its political and psychological subtext, especially its critique of corruption, political passivity and defeatism, had a strong impact on Arab cultural-political debate of the time. In her introduction to the novel, Hillary Kilpatrick describes *Men in the Sun* as "an exposé of the Palestinian national paralysis after *al-nakba*" (1983: 3). In her seminal *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, Salma K. Jayyusi concurs with this interpretation and points out that Kanafani's narrative ironically emphasizes the miserable experience of Palestinians after 1948:

> The desperate quest for survival, the unified tragedy of men from all walks of life, and, above all, the stifled spirit of Palestinians who have already experienced such devastating rejection and such exacting conditions within the larger Arab world that, numbed by fear and desperately eager to fulfill their dream in Kuwait, they let precious time slip through their hands" (1992: 29).

[61] Kanafani, who was born in Acre in 1936, is one of the most acclaimed Palestinian intellectuals: he was a major writer, literary critic, historian, journalist, and theorist of the Palestinian resistance movement until his assassination by *Mossad* (Israeli intelligence) in a car-bomb explosion in Beirut in July 1972. There is a massive amount of studies on both Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* and his literary project in general as "narratives of resistance". See, among others, Harlow (1987, 1996 and 2006), Kilpatrick (1976 and 1983: 1-7), Kanafani (1982), Haider (1980: 110-21), Khouri (1980: 69-101), Sidiq (1984), Harb (2004: 65-76), Boullata (2005: 52-54), and Abu Shawer (2007).

In his adaptation of *Men in the Sun*, Saleh chooses to follow Kanafani's narrative structure faithfully. In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un* I do not directly address the differences between the filmic adaptation and the novel. I will only refer to those differences when I feel they challenge or add something to my reading of Saleh's film. Using as a setting Palestinian national paralysis in the immediate aftermath of *al-nakba* in 1950s and 1960s, *Al-Makhdu'un* recounts the travails of the three main characters of Kanafani's novel, the elderly man Abu Qais, the young man Assad, and the teenager Marwan. These characters represent three different generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians. To seek their salvation, the three men embark on a journey to the rich oil-gulf state of Kuwait, where they hope to work and have a decent living. The characters' search for material security in exile is alluring but brings them to their destruction. The three men suffocate in the empty water-tank truck in which they are smuggled from Basra in Iraq to Kuwait as their driver, an effete Palestinian smuggler called Abu Al-Khaizaran, is delayed at the borders by guards. In the closing scene of *Al-Makhdu'un*, we see Abu Al-Khaizaran as he leaves the three men's dead bodies on the side of the road. Both the story, the journey the film narrates, and the characters' lives end up on the garbage heap.

Indeed, both the epic theme and the cataclysmic ambiance of the narrative's ending, condensed into this film of 107 minutes, seem congruous with Palestinian political history since 1948. By taking on this film, I probe the narrative pressures and challenges generated by its audiovisual experimentation with the multiple voices and fragmented sequence of storytelling of the three narratives of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, especially the ways they transmit exilic reality. In the first section, I reflect on what I mean by the film's "exilic narrativity". Then, I analyze the first story of the film, Abu Qais's story. As I attempt to show, *Al-Makhdu'un*'s fragmented narrativity reaches beyond the conventions of realism into the realms of memory and the imagined, to return eventually to the subject's everyday life. I argue that this fragmentation, which takes place through multiple fictional voices and archival images and between personal and historical memory, shows Palestinian exilic space as a void wherein subjectivity is split. Subsequently, I will analyze the stories of Assad and Marwan and show how the film's exilic narrativity transforms the void of exile into a geopolitical discontinuity. At the heart of this transformation is an audiovisual shift from individual to collective loss of homeland. In the final section, I discuss the characters' journey in exile, the closing part of the film. I argue that the film's exilic narrativity stages an apocalyptic climax, which collapses past, present and future of the Palestinian loss of place, and it does so, more importantly, in a single anti-linear sound-image. This sound-image instantiates the simultaneity of space and time in

Palestinian exile. Hence, the subject's home in Palestine is specified neither as an essentialized sense of identity, nor is the exilic space, the "not-home", emptied of its political content.

Exile Beyond Fiction and Documentary Divide

Although it is still difficult to speak of a Palestinian cinematic industry, in the past two decades, this sector has become a rich medium to convey varying experiences of loss of homeland and exile. As one of the first Arab films to address the Palestinian predicament, Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* remains a landmark audiovisual narrative of *al-nakba*.[62] And as a black-and-white production, the film also remains a difficult one to watch. This difficulty stems from the way in which it links personal experience to collective memory. On the level of our cinematic encounter with the film, *Al-Makhdu'un* presents us with images of forced displacement, uprooting, and destruction so bright that we wish to close our eyes or look away, and with exiled voices so tormented that we wish to close our ears, but we always fail to fulfill either wish.

Al-Makhdu'un takes the personal stories of three ordinary exiled men and brings these together to re-enact the collective vertigo of the Palestinian people in their quest for home. These stories range from Abu Qais's memories of the home he left behind in Palestine and of his family who lives in a refugee camp and cannot find subsistence, to Assad who desperately wants to get a start in life but whose political involvement in the resistance movement limits his possibilities and finally makes him submit to the tribal values he abhors, to Marwan who sets off on a hazardous journey into the unknown in order to support his mother and five brothers after both his father and eldest brother have abandoned them. In its presentation of these stories, the film undertakes a memorial storytelling that captures the disorientation of the characters' journey in exile through multiple fictional voices and archival images.

The interplay between fiction and archive brings the film within the boundaries of the main cinematic genres, fiction and documentary at the same time My analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un* departs from a narratological rather than generic point of view. What underlies my

[62] For a vivid historical and terminological critique of Palestinian film-making, especially in relation to the problematics of how to classify (or identify) Palestinian exilic cinema in the context of the absence of an official name for "Palestine" as an independent political state, see Tawil (2005: 113-40). Also, for relevant studies on Palestinian exilic cinema, including actual information on the dire conditions of its industry under military occupation as lacking the necessary technical and artistic resources, working place and methodology, see, for example, Abdel Fattah (2000 and 2000a), Abdel-Malek (2006), Dabashi (2006), and Vitali and Willemen (2006).

choice of narratology here is a specific understanding of the cinematic image and its narrative intertemporality in relation to montage.[63]

In his book *The Image* (1997), Jacques Aumont offers a lucid account of this relationship around five main questions: What does it mean to see an image? Who watches the image? How is the relationship between viewer and image regulated? How does the image represent the real world? And why do we classify some images as art? As Aumont succinctly explains:

> All films are edited even though some films have few shots, and even though the function of editing may differ in each film. Leaving aside all narrative and expressive functions of editing, it is first and foremost the ordering of units of time, units between which there are implicit temporal connections […] In order to understand a film in the way that the cinematic apparatus structures it to be understood, one must know that a change of shot represents temporal discontinuity during shooting – that the camera filming the scene was not suddenly moved to another place, but that between the filming and the projection this process called editing has taken place [….] In cinema, montage (editing, sequential ordering) constructs a completely artificial, synthetic temporal relations between units of time, which in reality may be discontinuous. This synthetic time (which a photograph cannot easily or 'so' naturally achieve) is without a doubt one of the factors that pushed cinema towards narrativity and fiction. On the other hand, it is also possible to see this sequential ordering of units of time as an original documentary-type production. In the 1950s, Eric Rohmer put forward the idea that a film is also and always documentary about its own production. In other words, whatever a film's fictional story may be, it always links together the pieces that were filmed separately and thus it necessarily must give an image or representation of the production process, although this image may have an odd temporality of its own. (125-26)[64]

Seen from this perspective, the generic distinction between fiction and documentary cinema becomes moot; it looses its relevance. More relevant to my analysis is the intersection between *Al-Makhdu'un*'s narrative, the ideological meanings of its audiovisual imaging, and the historic-cultural process of loss of place. My interest in this film is not so much with the "truthfulness" of its imagings of *al-nakba* as items of information about historical reality, but

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[63] Specifically, I am referring here to the documentary cinema often conceived of as a visual expression that is based on the attempt, in one fashion or another, to document "raw" reality. At stake here is the common assumption that the documentary offers a "more real" guide to interpret the modern world than its fictional counterpart of film making. For more focused studies on the history, theory and the generic distinction between fictional and documentary cinemas in terms of representation, reality and imagination, see Nichols (1991 and 2001), Kracauer ([1947] 2004), Winston (1995), Elsaesser and Buckland (2002), and Bordwell and Thompson (2003). Also, for relevant discussions of literary genres and movements, see, for example, Bal (1987), and Culler (2000a).

[64] For insights on Eric Rohmer's particular vision of cinema, especially his classical and transparent style of filmmaking, see Rohmer (1989).

more with the cultural "recognisability" of such imagings, through memory, as properties of the contexts of ongoing exile. I seek to disentangle some of the images of the dilemmas and contradictions of the Palestinian subject's life in exile, and to assess their political implications in relation to his or her cultural identity in the present. Hence, the narratological approach to the film enables me to make claims for alternative readings that are markedly different from those made in the strict sense of cinema criticism.

In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, I focus on the relationship between the stories that are told and the ways of telling them within the film. This mode of telling is specific to the situation in which events evolve. In this case, this mode becomes what I call "exilic narrativity". This term refers to the film's fragmented narration in terms of memory, space, self and other through a plurality of voices. I use the word "plurality" à la Bakhtin.[65] As a result of this fragmentation, a drifting mode of storytelling takes shape. Audiovisually, this mode can be seen in *Al-Makhdu'un*'s mixing of fictional voices and archival images, as well as in its constant shifting between the past of the lost homeland and the present of exile. This drifting mode, I argue below, allows the three stories to transmit personal memories and historical details, which revive Palestinian cultural memory. The melodramatic aspects of the stories give voice to the voiceless exiles, both individually and collectively. Individually, because these aspects construct a plausible place out of the non-place (exile) as we will see in a moment, wherein each one of the three men could exist (live and die) as an individual. And collectively, they do so by means of thematic nexus of the stories and their storytellers as particular narratives told by Palestinian subjects in exile. The formal narrative and geographical drifting of the three men leands to the mode of storytelling I call "exilic".

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[65] In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, Bakhtin explains how Dostoevsky creates the polyphonic novel by repositioning the idea of the novel, its truth, within multiple and various consciousnesses rather than a single consciousness and by repositioning the author of the novel alongside the characters as one of these consciousnesses, creator of the characters but also their equal. Bakhtin also claims that this new kind of novel is no longer a direct expression of the author's truth but an active creation of the truth in the consciousnesses of the author, the characters, and the reader, in which all participate as equals. This truth is a unified truth that nonetheless requires a plurality of consciousnesses: "It is quite possible to imagine and postulate a unified truth that requires a plurality of consciousnesses, one that cannot in principle be fitted into the bounds of a single consciousness, one that is, so to speak, by its very nature *full of event potential* and is born at a point of contact among various consciousnesses" ([1963] 1984: 81). Such a unified truth of the polyphonic novel combines several autonomous consciousnesses into "a higher unity, a unity, so to speak, of the second order", which Bakhtin explains only by analogy with "the complex unity of an Einsteinian universe" ([1963] 1984: 16). For more focused studies on Bakhtin's thought and concepts, see, among others, Bakhtin ([1975] 1982: 259-422), Clark and Holquist (1984), Morson and Emerson (1990), Holquist (1990), and Emerson (1996: 107-26 and 1997). Also for a recent and constructive confrontation between Bakhtin's ideas and contemporary expressions of popular culture, see Peeren (2007).

Conceptualizing the exilic narrativity this film deploys enables me to read (audiovisual) narratives of *al-nakba* within a mode that systematically accounts for their multiple voices and imagings in terms of memory and its temporality against linear time. This mode derives its coherence from a basis in affect. I use the word "affect" following Mieke Bal's account of the term "affective reading" as a way of "position[ing] the act of reading in the present, as self-reflexive, and as based on a 'deictic' relationship between reader and text" (1999c: 139). Incidentally in Bal's use, the term "deictic" demonstrates the way cultural analysis borrows concepts from other fields. For example, after acknowledging that Roland Barthes uses the term to underscore that interpretation is exposition, Bal turns to Gregory Nagy's discussion of the Greek verb from which "deictic" derives, compresses his linguistically complex exploration and reapplies it to her own methodological and theoretical agenda. I pursue a similar interdisciplinary approach here. At work is the notion that the "affective reading" or interpretation of a text justifies the somewhat eclectic use of other disciplines in interpretive situations created by the analyst. On the affirmative side, this mode of reading emphasizes that the yawning chasm of history or philosophy or politics which separates any specific cultural object and the analyst can be temporarily bridged by means of sensitive attention to the details of the object and its context and acknowledgement of the analyst's own prejudices and worldview (1999c: 140-43).[66]

In my case, this acknowledgment entails the understanding that narratives of Palestinian loss are inherently narratives *of* and *about* being in extremes. Processes of reading these narratives in exile are, therefore, activities that emerge from and within complex nets of direct political pressures, committed interests and cultural responsibilities. In practice, this means that my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, similarly to what I have done in the previous chapter with Badr's collection of short stories, concerns both the rhetorical style, themes and cultural imagings of the audiovisual narrative itself as much as my own situatedness in a double role; in aspect as a cultural analyst and in location as a Palestinian in exile. At stake is a cultural analysis that rejects the boundaries between word and image and image and sound, while at the same time remaining attentive to the conditions which allow the analyst to bring the cultural artifact from the past, *Al-Makhdu'un* of 1972, to appear *in* and *as* the present, of 2008. This self-reflexivity, conjuring up the specificity of the cultural object and the personal inflection of the analyst, is precisely what gives my reading of the film's exilic narrativity its affective impulses. The experience of forced

[66] For an excellent overview of the analytical use of "affective reading" in a different but related context of conflicted discourses of cultural memory, see Van Alphen (1999b: 143-51). Also, for relevant studies dealing with the relationship between the cinematic image, affect and anti-linear temporality, see, for example, Pisters (2003: 66-71 and 2005).

displacement and uprooting necessarily intensifies the sensitivity to the temporal and the spatial complexities and contradictions in all attempts at representation.

Palestinian exilic narratives magnify and dramatize the distance between *what was* and *what is* in order to address the reclamation of the lost home as a cultural space of selfhood, against the constant denial of access to this place in the present. In exilic narrativity, time and space are set adrift to mirror an experiential truth beyond the fiction – documentary divide. In the next chapter, in my analysis of *1948*'s performative narrativity, I shall discuss in detail how notions of "self" and "other" can be read affectively in audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*. Here, I examine the notions of "memory" and "space" that intersect in *Al-Makhdu'un*, and that have a structuring and representing role to play in its exilic narrativity, as the opening story in the film will make clear.

The Void of Exile: By Way of Showing

Al-Makhdu'un's intense drama is set in a highly charged and awkward space, shaped by the characters' death in the blistering desert. It is from this place that their stories emerge in the film, sinuous and winding, but always told for life and for remembering. In the opening shot of the film, the camera descends from the sky in the midday blazing sun to an empty desert. This image is accompanied by sentimental Arabic flute music as the names of the film crew roll on the screen. While on the lower part of the screen we see what looks like human skeletal remains of someone who has died in this desert, on the upper side of the screen, the camera zooms in on a man who is coming from a distance. As the camera moves to receive him, the image of the skeletal remains slowly disappears and is replaced by the image of a seemingly exhausted man with a white scarf covering his head, carrying a small sack on his shoulder. From up close, we see the man as he looks up at the sky and raises his hand in front of his face to protect it from the desert's sun, which blinds his eyes. Although we see the man's face, we cannot fully make sense of it. Immediatley after, the following lines pop up on the screen:

> And my father once said:
> A man without a homeland
> will have no grave in the earth
> and he forbade me to leave [travel].

The conjunction "and" with which the first sentence begins is more than a paratactic sign, a common style in Arabic language. It is also a sign that carries with it a temporal relationship

with the sentence that precedes it and that which follows. What precedes this sentence, however, is absent and invisible.[67]

Narratologically, this invisibility reflects on the temporality of the larger story, and even on the film itself. What is invisible becomes a demarcation that situates the film at a specific moment in time that does not coincide with the beginning of the whole story. To put it differently, the beginning of the story is missing, drifting somewhere before the dangling "and". At the same time, the present of the story we will see in *Al-Makhdu'un* immediately starts after reading the words "my father once said [...]" Instead, it is the story of exiled men "without a homeland", who will have "no grave in the earth". In spite of their father's warning not to leave the homeland, they still take on the journey, and now we will see the story of how they perish in exile; a foretold destiny of doom precipitated by their ignoring of the father's vision.

But there is more in this opening scene, especially if we read its imaging in terms of two audiovisual details. The first and most obvious detail is that the man's image replaces that of the skeletal remains in the desert, and the second one is that his face remains invisible to the viewer. Read through the first detail, the film seems to depict exile as a place of death, and read through the second, this place also becomes a place wherein the subject's identity is invisible. As much as the desert's sun blinds the man's eyes, it also blinds the viewer to who he is. In one sense, by beginning in this manner, the film renders the lost homeland in a way that allows it to stand as a privileged place in opposition to the deadly desert. Yet, in another sense, the film also complicates any straightforward relationship between space and time in Palestinian exile. The fact that the beginning of the film foregrounds the father's gloomy vision of exile allows for the imaging of its space as an empty desert, or as an "anti-place" to borrow Barbara McKean Parmenter's terminology, the void of the homeland that the characters leave behind.[68] I already pointed out a similar imaging of exilic space in the first chapter of my study. There, I argued that the infinite emptiness of this place causes the exile's feelings and thoughts to be caught in a nostalgic reminiscence that revolves on a specific place left behind. This also happens in *Al-Makhdu'un*.

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[67] In his book, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, M.H. Abrams defines paratactic style as, " […] one in which the members within a sentence, or else a sequence of complete sentences, are put one after the other without any expression of their conjunction or relations except (at most) the noncommittal connective, 'and'". ([1957] 1992: 304- 05). For a relevant critique on the "and" a propos of the phrase "literature and psychoanalysis", see Felman ([1977] 1982).

[68] In her analysis of the relationship between Palestinian literature and land, Paramenter uses this term "anti-place" to refer to the function of the desert as more than a symbolic setting in Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, but as a counterpoint to the lost homeland. (1994: 55).

The void of exile is constructed from a temporality of a before that predicts an after. Here, the dangling "and" conforms to this temporality. Such a temporality, however, does not entirely compose the film's narrative of this place. Instead, the film radically questions the father's vision of exile. It questions what is envisioned discursively in terms of how successful the travelling is of the characters in exile, and how endurable the environment is of the exilic place. To answer these questions, *Al-Makhdu'un* itself is compelled to take on a journey. It has to accompany the characters on their journey, and even become a traveler like them. This travelling, as I will attempt to show below, takes place through memory, foregrounding the film's exilic narrativity.

Following the opening scene, the camera begins to track sideways to bring into view an oasis wherein the exhausted figure travelling could rest. The moment the man enters this oasis, he takes the white scarf off his head, and throws himself into the shade of a tree with his face on the ground. The shade of the tree, however, does not relieve the man from his trip. Instead, it opens a gate through which he, as well as the film, continues travelling; this time backward into the past and the place left behind. In this recollection, we are exposed to the man's identity: he has a name, Abu Qais, and he comes from a specific place, Palestine. Thus the film intimates that only in his or her memory of the lost homeland does the exiled subject have a concrete identity.

While Abu Qais is facing the ground he hears the sound of his own heart beat. Immediately after, he begins to recollect a similar scene when he is laying down in the shade of the trees of his field in Palestine, chatting to his friend. When Abu Qais asks him about the source of the sound, his friend answers: "it is the sound of your heart. You can hear it when you lay your chest close to the ground". Abu Qais shrugs off his friend's answer, and challenges him with another question: "And the smell, then?" When his friend does not provide an answer, Abu Qais grabs some ground in his hand and begins to sniff it and says:

> Every time I sniff the ground, I seem to smell the scent of my wife's hair after a cold bath. The same smell. The same freshness. The same moisture. This moisture comes from yesterday's rain. But yesterday it did not rain. It could not have rained. Have you forgotten where you are?

As the earth and his body throb in unison, Abu Qais seems to become one with the earth. His identification with his homeland is shaped through a materialization of this place, his very being an extension of the homeland. This materialization emerges through the projection of the romanticized figure of his wife by means of the senses, hearing, smell and touch. As a result, the

homeland encompasses the substance of Abu Qais's life so that his identification with it becomes an unspoken existential bond. Moreover, the fact that this encounter happens between Abu Qais and his friend adds charge to the socio-cultural component of the land: it exposes its integral role in Palestinian society. The society of the Palestinians, divided broadly between rural farming and town, lends their understanding of the land a more domesticated and quotaidian tone, where the economic life of the community is intertwined with a husbandry of the land.[69]

Further, through the senses Abu Qais is brought back from his recollections into the present. Only when he smells the ground, a metonym for homeland, Abu Qais realizes that the "moisture comes from yesterday's rain" and that "it could not have rained [yesterday]". Therefore, he must be in the wrong place, in exile. The image on the screen corresponds to Abu Qais's realization in that, immediately after these words, we see him back in the oasis; this time not in the shade of the tree, but in the blazing sun. Abu Qais's transfer from the past into the present and from the shade into the sun becomes symbolic of his transition from being a Palestinian peasant "with" a homeland into a Palestinian refugee in exile "without". It also shows Abu Qais as an exiled subject who embodies a memory that shifts between multiple places (homeland and exile) and multiple times (past and present). The voice that tells this is also a split. At the end of the monologue Abu Qais changes from first-person to second-person discourse, "have you forgotten […]" He can no longer be a unified person when the realization of exile hits him.

Abu Qais's realization leads him through a long recollection from the past through which his journey of dispersion is revealed. In the oasis, having momentarily regained consciousness and still holding the ground in his hands, Abu Qais's eyes begin cruising until they settle on a river. He suddenly recognizes this river as the *Shatt al-Arab* waterway in Iraq. This recognition also happens in recollection. Abu Qais learned this one day when he was sneaking from the window watching his son (Qais) in the class of Ustaz Salim, the teacher from Jaffa who taught in the village's school. The moment Abu Qais identifies the river, we hear Ustaz Salim's voice-over, and then we see him teaching the village's kids about the river. The audiovisual splitting between Ustaz Salim's voice-over and image from the past in this scene signifies that Abu Qais's memory of the homeland is instigated upon him: his past in Palestine constantly impinges on his present exile. This recollection of Ustaz Salim serves as a plausible

[69] It is worth mentioning here that the word "Palestine" itself is a feminine name. For relevant studies on feminine projections of the homeland in Palestinian national lexicon, see Bardenstein (2002: 353-87 and 2006: 19-32), and Sherwell (2006: 429-43).

explanation of Abu Qais's sudden recognition of the river. It also allows the viewer a glimpse of the lives of Palestinians before *al-nakba* as simple peasants, who were apparently unaware of the tensions building up to it: Abu Qais's sudden recognition of the river emulates the sudden nature of the catastrophic event.

This becomes clear in the following scene in which we see the men of the village, including Abu Qais and Ustaz Salim, sitting in the headman's reception-room, smoking the water pipe and chatting. When one of the men asks Ustaz Salim if he is going to lead them in the Friday prayers, he immediately answers: "No, I am a teacher, not an Imam [a religious cleric]. I cannot lead the prayers". When the headman asks him for clarification, Ustaz Salim confesses that he does not know how to perform the rituals of prayer. The men of the village, puzzled by Ustaz Salim's confession, turn their eyes to the headman who bursts out: "what do you know then?" As Ustaz Salim is rising to leave the room, he says: "many things. I am a good shot, for example. When they [the Zionists] attack you, wake me. I know how to shoot. I can be of some use to you then". Again, as in the opening lines, a voice from the past proleptically evokes the future.

Immediately after this scene, the military attack on the village begins, and thus confirms this prolepsis. We see Ustaz Salim defending the village together with another man who later appears in the film as Abu Al-Khaizaran, the driver who smuggles the three men through the desert. At the moment when Ustaz Salim is killed, we hear Abu Qais's voice-over saying:

> God rest your soul, Ustaz Salim. And may he bestow upon you his mercy. Undoubtedly, you must have been among God's favorites, when he made you give up the ghost before the Zionists occupy the land. God must have loved you – may his mercy be upon you. You stayed over there, Ustaz Salim. Is there any divine bounty more glorious?

For Abu Qais, the death of Ustaz Salim appears as a fortunate happening. His death took place "before the Zionists occupied the land", and so he was saved from living under military occupation and from enduring the humiliation of exile that Abu Qais, like all the other Palestinians who survived *al-nakba*, is experiencing in the present. This statement is followed by a sequence of images, a mix of archival footage of *al-nakba* combined with a single fictive image. In the archival footage, we see images of the Palestinians' forced dispersion from their villages and towns: departing trucks filled with people, their tents, their hunger, and dependence on the United Nations' aid, their settling in refugee camps. In the fictive image we see Abu Qais and his family, his wife and kids, as members of that group of Palestinians.

This part of the film is exclusively audiovisual: there are no words spoken and there is no voice-over. The fragments of the archival footage are not so much telling but showing *al-nakba*. This audiovisual mixing situates *Al-Makhdu'un* rigorously beyond the fiction – documentary divide. It also foregrounds the film's own discursivity as a traveler that I mentioned before. The film travels, by means of memory, between the historical event of *al-nakba* and its fictional re-telling in the present in order to reassemble the fragments of Palestinian collective memory. Like its character (Abu Qais) who is recollecting his memory of the past, *Al-Makhdu'un* also has a memory. The film's memory is composed of past images, preserved in archives, and is recalled by the insertion of this old filmic material. In conveying its memory, the film emphasizes a particular conception of memory; one whose functionality is foregrounded in terms of filmic archives as a historical witness. In the next chapter, I shall further discuss this historical witnessing in relation to Palestinian and Israeli conflicted discourses of *al-nakba*. In this conception, memory functions in different ways: both as a resort and as a consequence in an interminable phase of flux. Memory appears as no more stationary in the limited space of filmic archives than in the labyrinth of our brains.

This is consistent with psychological theories of memory. In his book, *Searching for Memory: The Brain, the Mind and the Past* (1996), Daniel L. Schacter summarizes recent scientific findings in the controversial relationship between memory and the brain. Aided by numerous reproductions of contemporary paintings that evoke the subjective workings of memory, Schacter explores how we convert fragmentary remains of experience into autobiographical narratives. His central thesis is that memory is not a single faculty, as was long assumed, but instead depends on a variety of systems, each tied to a particular network of brain structures, all acting in concert so we recognize objects, acquire habits, hold information for brief periods, retain concepts and recollect specific events. Moreover, our recollections are inextricably associated with the contexts in which memories are recalled, or what Schacter calls "cues for memory", and with the contexts in which those memories were previously formed (23 – 24).[70]

Memory not only appears as a specific imprint of the past to which we constantly resort when needed. It can also be conceived of as a consequence that is temporally constructed in the present and that is performed both in response and through the processing and incorporation of

[70] Schacter also discusses distortion in memory, repressed memory of childhood sexual abuse, and recollection of extreme trauma and memory impairment with aging. According to Schacter, implicit memory is always at work even when we are unable to fully recall recent events, pervasively, unconsciously colors our perceptions, judgments, feelings and behaviour. (1996: 80-95). Most of these topics are developed further in Schacter and Scarry (2000), and Schacter (2001).

cues of memory (or its contexts). For the remembering subject, the emphasis is not so much on what he or she experienced but on the weaving of his or her memory in narrative, the work of recollection itself. Through such a cognitive-functional view of memory the psychoanalytic notions of the (un)trustworthiness and (un)reliability of memory open up the possibility to consider memory as a useful and continuously accessible process of disruption, rather than as an already distorting faculty. Notions of (un)trustworthiness and (un)reliability of memory are ultimately cognitive – functional notions themselves, which are first and foremost related to the subject's emotions and desires.[71]

In this perspective, the film's use of archival material suggests that the nature of memory changes over time so that its experience shifts from the mnemonic to the contextual wherein memory is generated, reduced and conflated. Memory as such becomes a "good reader" that fills the temporal gap between past and present by marking the absences of the past's events. Rather than being a faculty that misappropriates (or misrepresents) the past, memory in and through historical archives of *al-nakba* becomes a cultural process that regularly interrupts, and at the same time is itself interrupted, in order to compose the temporality of ongoing exile. The archival footage not only suspends the fictional story of Abu Qais within the film, but it also interrupts the viewer's evanescent memory of this story. This interruption is facilitated by the historical information of *al-nakba* so that the contexts within which Abu Qais's memory is formed, enshrined and recalled can be unveiled; his memory of the present becomes contextualized. As a result, the viewer's activity of meaning production shifts from the fictional images of Abu Qais's story the film to the reality of *al-nakba* referenced as it happened outside but determining the narrative of the film.

This shift between inside and outside the narrative introduces another splitting of causality. The events "truthfully" presented in the images of the archival footage are both disconnected from the fictional story of Abu Qais by generic incompatibility, and simultaneously presented as the cause of his present state. Thus, the filmic archives as historical witness, which interrupts Abu Qais's story as told by the film, becomes also a bearer of its fictional referentiality; a reference itself that authenticates the latency of his personal story by exposing its narratological and historical contexts. Hence, within the film's exilic narrativity the temporal referentiality of the subject's story *of* and *in* exile is determined by the documented

[71] For relevant critiques of psychoanalytic notions of "untrustworthiness" and "unreliability" of memory with special focus on the concept of trauma, see Van Alphen (1997 and 1999a: 24-38), and Lam (2002). Also for a recent and valuable study on the interaction between cognitive-emotive and neuro-somatic factors during cultural acts of reading literature, see Burke (2008).

past of its historical event, *al-nakba* of 1948. It must be so: this is how the chronology of Palestinian loss of homeland and exile begins and, more importantly, as I argue in this chapter and throughout this study, *does not end*.

With regard to memory and space, this temporal configuration highlights two specific aspects. The first shows how the film's exilic narrativity merges personal experience of exile with collective memory. This merging is given audiovisual shape through the insertion of the fictive image of Abu Qais's family in the archival footage. At stake is a double integration of "truth" and "fiction" in audiovisual storytelling. While the film's employment of archival footage engenders "truth in fiction", the fictive image puts back "fiction in truth". Through this image, not only Abu Qais becomes an allegorical figure standing for exiled Palestinians, but more importantly, his memory becomes a synecdoche of the collective loss. The historical event of *al-nakba* embodies his personal narrative, and vice versa, so that his daily experience in exile becomes personal, historical, and political all at once. This entanglement recurs in most of the narratives that I analyze in this study. It engenders Palestinian identity "in the act" of collective re-enactment and cultural recall as an identity whose terms are not *at all* neutral. I shall return and elaborate on the absence, if not impossibility, of neutrality for Palestinian cultural identity, especially in terms of the "non-ending" of loss of homeland, in my analysis of the characters' journey in exile in the final section of this chapter.

The second aspect concerns the utilization of the exilic space. Through the temporal configuration of the exiled subject's personal (or fictional) story in and through the historical past of *al-nakba*, the desert of exile is transformed from a void into a geopolitical discontinuity. The difference between them, as I already explained in the first chapter of my study, is that the former is inert absence, and the latter is a disconnection that requires a connection. Palestinian exile is inexorably linked to the lost homeland and to the (im-)possibility of return to this place. This transformation of the exilic space is given form through the film's shifting, both in voices and images, from the individual to the collective. Within this audiovisual shift, rather than a personal narrative the loss of place unfolds as a collective one, at the heart of which we are exposed to the severity of connection between exiled Palestinians and their homeland. This can be observed in the way the story of Abu Qais is opened up so that the stories of the two other characters, Assad and Marwan, can be introduced in the film. To do so, the film is compelled to travel back from the realm of historical memory of *al-nakba* into the memory of its speaking subject in exile.

Loss as a Geopolitical Discontinuity: By Way of Telling

Al-Makhdu'un deploys its audiovisual medium to tell the experience of exile as well as showing it. Immediately after the scene with archival images of *al-nakba*, we see Abu Qais walking between the olive and the cactus trees; an image that, once more, enacts his transformation from being a Palestinian "with" a homeland into a Palestinian refugee in exile "without". While the olive tree denotes fertility and is a potent symbol of Palestinian nationalism and resistance, the cactus tree signifies barrenness and is a symbol of the ruins in sites where Palestinian homes and villages once stood before 1948.[72] At the end of this scene, Abu Qais emerges from behind the cactus trees and further elaborates on the death of Ustaz Salim:

> God rest your soul, Ustaz Salim. You stayed over there. And thereby, you saved yourself all that misery, and have spared your white hair that shame. If you had lived, Ustaz Salim, and if you were drowned in poverty, as I am, would you have done what I did?

In this address to the dead man from the past, Abu Qais reiterates that Ustaz Salim's death was a fortunate happening because it saved him the "misery" of becoming an exiled refugee. Abu Qais also reveals his reservations about his decision to go to Kuwait. He wonders if the impoverished lives of Palestinians after *al-nakba* would have forced Ustaz Salim to act similarly to what he is doing now, leaving the homeland. The moment Abu Qais asks this question, we see him walking in the blazing sun in the desert where his mind drifts once again. In a relatively long scene, he recalls how Saad, his neighbor in the refugee camp who returned from Kuwait with a fortune, influenced his decision to undertake the journey. In this part, Abu Qais also narrates the Palestinian catastrophe in the context of Arab politics at large.

While Saad is describing his successful adventures to a group of men and women of the refugee camp, he turns to Abu Qais and asks him "why don't you go there, Abu Qais?" Confronted by Saad's question, Abu Qais does not answer with a series of other questions echo in his head:

> Why don't you go there? What are you waiting for? Are you still unaware that you lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole country? What did you expect? Talks […] Talks arguing nonsense. They have sold you and bought you again […] You have the Zionists before you and the traitors behind. You are in between [the hammer and the nail]. Haven't you got it yet that all this is useless? They want you to remain a beggar with a drooping head. They want to make sure that you never raise your voice. That you quarrel instead of striving together and claim your rights. It is a fact. Whoever

[72] For further explication of the symbolic functions of these trees in particular in the context of Palestinian-Israeli conflict, see Parmenter (1994), and Bardenstein (1999: 148-71 and 2006: 19-32).

> survived the bullets of the Zionists dies in humiliation. And whoever survives both is a victim of the traitors and plotters. Wouldn't it have been better you had died like Ustaz Salim […] Why don't you move on […] What are you waiting for? That fortune should fall on you from the roof? But do you have a roof yet? No roof, no house. They brought you and told you live here and you stayed. A year later, they said that room is too big for you. Let us have half of it. And you made a partition with blankets and jute. What are waiting for? Your baby, who is going to raise him? Who is going to feed him? Why don't you go and find work to recover what you have lost?

Set in a mode of split subjectivity infiltrated by "you" and "they", Abu Qais's questioning follows a temporal progression that shifts from individual to collective consciousness and back again. The loss of Palestine is presented as a loss that encompasses every aspect of life: "you lost your trees, your house, your youth, and your whole country". In the aftermath of this loss, Abu Qais's experience is nothing short of collective annihilation: "Whoever survived the bullets of the Zionists dies in humiliation. And whoever survives both is a victim of the traitors and plotters". Moreover, Abu Qais criticizes both the international community's and Arab regimes' passivity toward the Palestinians. Audiovisually, this criticism is supported by means of archival footage of discussions of the Palestinian predicament in the *League of Arab States* and *United Nations Security Council*, where we see images of Arab leaders such as King Hussain of Jordan and King Faisal of Saudi Arabia. These images are composed of daily news footage in 1950s and 1960s, and they are juxtaposed with the images of Palestinian suffering after *al-nakba* that we saw earlier in the film.

This juxtaposition once again foregrounds the temporal referentiality of the present (fictional) re-telling of the subject's narrative of exile in and through the documented past of *al-nakba*. The juxtaposition also signifies the continuity of the loss of place in the sense that the action taken in the aftermath of *al-nakba* does not relieve the Palestinians. This continuity can be seen in the audiovisual splitting between Abu Qais's voice and his image between the cactus trees. At the moment when Abu Qais's voice reaches the question "what do you expect?", his image among the cactus tree is replaced by the archival footage so that his voice becomes a voice-over. On the screen, the juxtaposition between the archival images of the political discussions and those of the aftermath of *al-nakba* continues to the point when Abu Qais's voice-over reaches the question, "Wouldn't it have been better you died like Ustaz Salim […]?" This question takes the form of a hopeless resolution and highlights a mismatch between Abu Qais's expectations of what should have been the response to the loss of Palestine and what actually happened. At this point, Abu Qais's image between the cactus trees emerges once more on the screen, and his voice-over returns to direct voice. This return in voice and image signifies

that Abu Qais's speaking position did not change in the aftermath of *al-nakba*. It also generates the sense of unsuited response to the Palestinian catastrophe through which the discussions of Arab (and world) leaders become, like Saad's fictional exhortations of life in exile, "Talks […] Talks arguing nonsense".[73]

Both this lack of response and the fact that his position did not change in the aftermath of *al-nakba* determine Abu Qais's departure from the homeland. In the following scene, we see Abu Qais and his wife talking to Saad, who tells them that "just beyond the *Shatt* [*al-Arab*] lie all the things that are denied you". When Abu Qais consults his wife, she answers "whatever you say" and nods in a supportive manner. Only then we are brought back to Abu Qais as he leaves the oasis. The juxtaposition, both in terms of setting and of the act of seduction, between the two images of Abu Qais's movement inside the oasis and outside of it and the previous one with his wife and Saad evokes the Quranic imaging of Adam's fall from paradise, so that Abu Qais's loss of Palestine becomes emphatically "a loss of paradise".[74] This imaging is fitting in his case as a representative of the first generation of post-*nakba* Palestinians, as we have seen in the first chapter of my study. Edward Said's concise comment on Abu Qais's character in *Men in the Sun* that "his own present is an amalgam of disjointed memory with the gathering force of his difficult situation now; he is a refugee with a family, forced to seek employment in a country whose blinding sun signifies the universal indifference to his fate" (1992: 151) seems to capture the essence of Abu Qais's dilemma at this point of *Al-Makhdu'un*.

Immediatley after, we see Abu Qais negotiating the financial terms of the trip with an unnamed smuggler, speaking with an Iraqi accent, who warns him that the journey to Kuwait is not easy and that it will cost him fifteen dinars. When Abu Qais proposes to pay him ten dinars instead, the smuggler refuses and turns to Abu Qais and says: "we don't force you to do it". Thus, he distances himself from Abu Qais's actions. At this point, and in a repetition of the same scene, the film interrupts the story of Abu Qais as we see the smuggler asking for the charge, the fifteen dinars, from someone else, the young man Assad, who like Abu Qais also wants to be smuggled into Kuwait. After bargaining with the smuggler, Assad finally agrees to give him the fifteen dinars on the condition that the smuggler will only receive the money after the completion of the journey. The smuggler does not accept Assad's condition, and tells him to "get out, and don't stop before you are on the main road". The moment Assad hears the words

[73] In fact, *Al-Makhdu'un* was banned twice in Egypt and in other Arab countries for its criticism of Arab regimes articulated in this scene. See a description of the film on www.arabfilm.com.
[74] The account of the fall from paradise in the Quran can be found, for example, in Surah *Al-Baqra* (The Cow). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 4-39).

"the main road", his mind drifts back into the past as we see him lost on the road in the desert. I shall shortly return to the meanings and the signification of this scene.

Like Abu Qais, we see Assad as an exiled Palestinian who is victimized and whose situation forces him to leave the refugee camp in Jordan where his family settled after *al-nakba*: his life simply cannot become any worse than it already is. Assad is involved in the resistance movement and persecuted by the Jordanian authorities. In order to evade both imprisonment and political maltreatment, Assad decides to escape and make a new start in Kuwait. Unlike Abu Qais who clings to the mirage of the trip to Kuwait, yet hesitates before taking on the journey, Assad is convinced that a new start in Kuwait is the best solution. This convection leaves him with little choice but to escape. And for that there is a price to pay; Assad must accept the traditional marriage ideals he detests.

When Assad turns to his uncle to borrow the money he needs for the trip, his uncle turns him down and warns him that he should not be too optimistic about his trip to Kuwait because many have gone before him but "came back empty-handed". Soon after, however, Assad's uncle changes his mind and decides to give him the money:

> [uncle:] All the same, I will give you the fifty dinars. But remember, these are my last. [Assad:] Why give it to me since you are sure I'll never be able to refund it? [uncle] Do you know why? [Assad:] Why? [uncle:] Because I want you to start even in hell. So that you can marry my daughter.

The moment Assad hears his uncle's motivation for giving him the money he realizes that his uncle wants to buy him for his daughter, as Assad puts it, "just as one buys a bag of manure for one's field". The degrading agricultural metaphor signifies Assad's disapproval; it is also spatially expressive of the relationship between gender and land. The combination between the words "manure", in the sense of fertilizer, and the "field" elicits a gendered image, which bears out the feminine projections of the homeland in Palestinian lexicon as we saw earlier in Abu Qais's story. Later on, when Assad, agitated by his uncle's proposition, complains to his friend and asks him whether he should accept to marry his cousin "just because [their] fathers read *Al-Fatihah* when they were born [on] the same day?", his friend answers:

> No doubt he believes it is destiny […] Why should you sell yourself? Why do you grab those fifty dinars in such a way? Stay here, Assad […] Don't run away […] Do you think of running at every difficult step? […] Stay with us. Why should you sell yourself.

Despite his friend's appeal to him to stay and face his problems rather than run away from them, Assad is determined to make the journey even if it means to "sell" himself. Since he is wanted

by the Jordanian authorities, Assad believes that escape is necessary. He accepts his uncle's proposal and takes the money.[75]

In the next scene, we see Assad's troubles in journeying from Jordan to Iraq. We see Assad as he strikes a deal with Abu Al-Abed, his neighbor in the refugee camp, who takes the money from him in advance and swears by his honor not to betray him while crossing the border. This is the scene of "the main road" I mentioned earlier. Its meanings are key to the film's narrative, especially to the ways Palestinians perceive both exilic space and that which fills it. Before reaching the Jordanian border, Abu Al-Abed tells Assad that all he needs to do is to walk around the sand dunes and to get to the highway where he will be waiting for him to continue their journey into Iraq. Yet, when Assad reaches the appointed place, he does not find Abu Al-Abed and realizes that he was betrayed and left alone in the desert. After waiting for a long time, Assad catches a ride from two tourists who are travelling to Iraq. During the trip, they chat about rats in the desert. "The desert is full of rats. What do they eat?" one of the tourists asks. "Rats smaller than them", the other tourist replies. In one sense, the "rats" here symbolize the Arabs who patrol the desert's borders and cause the death of the three smuggled men, the "smaller rats". In another sense, this comment follows on the film's audiovisual storytelling, wherein the narrative voice from the past proleptically forecasts the future. It offers a foreboding hint about the fatal outcome of the characters' journey from Iraq to Kuwait.

When Assad finally makes it to Basra in Iraq, he also encounters more rats in the only hotel he can afford. The rats indicate how Palestinians conceive of cities of exile. The city of exile in Palestinian literature, as Parmenter astutely observes, is "unrelenting in its ugliness. It is associated with crowds, strangers, vermin, corrupt bureaucrats, and hucksters" (1994: 60).[76] In our film, these negative imagings inflect the transformation of exilic space from a void into a

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[75] *Al-Fatihah* (The Opening) is the first Surah of the Quran that is customarily recited at the conclusion of a marriage agreement. See Yusuf Ali (2000: 3-4). Moreover, Assad's acceptance of traditional marriage is worthy of a brief note concerning challenges to traditional gender ideologies in Palestinian nationalist discourse. These values, with their thorny contexts, expose Palestinian society with its specific socio-cultural fabric. Moreover, the Palestinian resistance movement, like most twentieth-century anti-colonialist national movements around the world, often rigidified gender tradition as a key element of cultural nationalism, while political and economic mobilization, most notably during the first Intifada (1987-1993) and the ongoing second Intifada (2000-), presented Palestinian women with new and alternative scopes for political activism. For in-depth studies on these issues, see Sayigh (1979, 1994 and 2007: 86-105), Tamari (1994: 69-86 and 1997: 17-40), and Sharoni (1998: 1061-89).

[76] Negative views of cities of exile are not exclusive to Palestinian literature. They also appear in other exilic literatures. One of the examples that comes first to my mind here is Walter Benjamin's prolific *Reflections* on Marseilles during his exile there as follows: "Marseilles – the yellow-studded maw of a seal with salt water running out between the teeth […] it exhales a stink of oil, urine, and printer's ink […] The harbor people are a bacillus culture, the porters and whores products of decomposition with a resemblance to human beings. But the palate itself is pink, which is the color of shame here, of poverty [...]" ([1978] 1986: 131).

geopolitical discontinuity. Assad's story accentuates the severity of connection between the Palestinian subject and his or her homeland as much as the complexity of this subject's choices in exile. Assad's motivation for taking the journey and his decision to escape, like Abu Qais and Marwan as we will see in a moment, are determined by a forced exile. This condition, as I keep demonstrating throughout my study, is not a choice, nor a privilege, but something that Palestinians must live with in the aftermath of *al-nakba.* The subject's choices in this condition are intrinsically generated by a lack of choice; hence, they are impositions.

Immediately after Assad's recollections, the film cuts back to the present where it left off, as we are brought again to the scene in which he was bargaining with the Iraqi smuggler. This return is not a ploy to continue with Assad, but a storytelling device. It serves to introduce the story of the teenager Marwan. Audiovisually, Marwan's introduction happens in the same way in which Assad previously replaced Abu Qais. On the screen, we see first the Iraqi smuggler asking for the charge of the journey, the fifteen dinars, and then we see Marwan. The audiovisual repetition exposes an order of appearance, which mimics the generational order of the characters from old to young and from first to third generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians, so as to underline the generational component of loss of place. This repetition also establishes a contiguous relationship between the exiled characters in the narrative as well as in life circumstances in exile, the result of which a collectivization of their individual voices occurs. This collectivization, through contiguity, can be observed in Marwan's story.

Marwan threatens the Iraqi smuggler that he will report him to the police if he does not accept the five dinars, which he can only afford. The smuggler becomes angry, slaps Marwan on the face and throws him out of the shop. As he runs away crying, Marwan meets Abu Al-Khaizaran; the man we saw earlier defending the village with Ustaz Salim in Abu Qais's recollections. Abu Al-Khaizaran tells Marwan that he is also a Palestinian like him, and that he agrees to smuggle him for the five dinars on the conditions that he should not tell anyone about it, and to help him find other people who want to go to Kuwait. When Marwan says that he knows someone who is staying with him in the hotel (Assad), Abu Al-Khaizaran says that he also knows someone who used to be his neighbor in the village in Palestine (Abu Qais). Only then do the different story lines come together in *Al-Makhdu'un*.

The encounter between Marwan and Abu Al-Khaizaran is crucial to understanding how the film's exilic narrativity brings the individual stories of the characters together to re-enact the collective narrative of loss of homeland: namely, by constructing specific spatio-temporal relationships between them, alternatingly in relation to the lost homeland and the place of exile. All characters come from Palestine, and in exile they are hotel-roommates as in the case of

Assad and Marwan, or guest/host as in the case of Abu Qais and Abu Al-Khaizaran. Narratologically, the collectivity of loss of homeland is not so much determined by the original place, Palestine, but through the effectivity of the characters' relationships in exile. The film's use of multiple voices, notably the addition of Abu Al-Khaizaran's voice, bears out this effect. The audiovisual narrative makes his voice an integral part of the other characters' destiny and story. Abu Al-Khaizaran, as we will see below, turns out to be an escapee just like the other characters. But the point can still be made in the encounter I described above by the fact that Abu Al-Khaizaran is presented as the "second smuggler" in the film; Marwan and the other characters first try out the Arab one, the Iraqi smuggler. At stake here is more than a simple ordering of a character.

By presenting Abu Al-Khaizaran as the second smuggler, especially if we read his character as an allegory of Palestinian leadership, *Al-Makhdu'un* significantly differs from Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* wherein Abu Al-Khaizaran is the only smuggler in the narrative. *Al-Makhdu'un* emphasizes its incentive to both *involve* and *criticize* Arab politics. By making him second, the film takes away some of Abu Al-Khaizaran's political responsibility. As a result, *al-nakba* is emphatically removed from its localized Palestinian realm into its wider Arab political significations: the loss of Palestine is not merely a Palestinian catastrophe, but also constitutes a larger Arab one. More relevant to my point about storytelling, the moment when Marwan is thrown out of the Iraqi smuggler's shop crying is a moment that threatens narrative closure: so far, all we saw in the film is rejection and failure, even before beginning the real journey to Kuwait. Marwan's success in finding a smuggler is, therefore, imperative in order to prevent narrative closure. When Abu Al-Khaizaran emerges as *the* smuggler, he also emerges as a "savior", not so much of Marwan himself, but of the continuation of his story.

When the four men, Abu Qais, Assad, Marwan and Abu Al-Khaizaran, meet and discuss the details of the journey, Abu Al-Khaizaran tells them that he has to go to Kuwait since he works there, and that he drives a truck in which he can smuggle them across the border. Abu Al-Khaizaran's motivation for taking the men along, as he says, is "to make some more money", and so he charges each one of them ten dinars, except for Marwan of course. He also assures them that the truck belongs to a rich Kuwaiti man so it does not get checked at the border. All they have to do, according to Abu Al-Khaizaran, is to hide inside the empty water-tank "for six or seven minutes" on the Iraqi border and a similar amount of time on the Kuwaiti side while he finishes his paperwork. Doubting their safety, Abu Qais is the only character who shows discontent, and says: "this is a dangerous business. Maybe we die". In response, Abu Al-Khaizaran smiles to him and asks him not to worry since "[he is] the one who drives, the

leader". This is how Abu Al-Khaizaran, unlike the Iraqi smuggler who distances himself from the characters, becomes part of their joint destiny. His role shifts from smuggler to "the leader" of the men; hence, he becomes one of them. When the men agree and strike the deal to depart the next day, Abu Al-Khaizaran turns to Marwan and asks him if he knows anyone in Kuwait. His question triggers Marwan's recollections of the past so that the viewer is exposed to his motivation. Marwan's story continues.

It recounts his predicament when both his brother and father abandon their familial responsibility. We see that Marwan's brother used to send money from Kuwait to help support the family in the refugee camp, but stopped sending it after he got married. As a result, Marwan's father could no longer support his wife and five children and leaves them for a new wife. He marries the rich handicapped Shafiqa who lost her leg during *al-nakba* and who has difficulty finding a husband, but whose father offers money and a home to whoever would marry her. Marwan is forced to leave school and give up his lifetime dream of becoming a doctor, and has to go to Kuwait to find work to support his family. When Marwan visits his father and Shafiqa before embarking on his journey, his father tries to erase the culpability for his actions. He tells Marwan that "a man wants to be able to settle down in his old age and not find himself obliged to feed half a dozen of open mouths", and gives him some money for the journey. Immediately after, the film returns to the scene of the deal with Abu Al-Khaizaran. Marwan, still unable to understand the actions of both his father and brother, naively asks: "But why do they do that? Why do they […]?" Before Marwan finishes his question, Abu Al-Khaizaran interjects and tells him that: "the first thing you will learn is that money comes first, and then morals".

Abu Al-Khaizaran's statement reveals who he is, and it highlights the problematic aspects of his character throughout the narrative: his preference for money over morals. I shall return to Abu Al-Khaizaran's character in the next section. Importantly, his statement supplies information that prepares the viewer for the events to follow. It maps the semantic field of the audiovisual narrative by stating the alternatives that the characters experience in their quest: financial security in exile versus commitment to the lost homeland, Palestine. This duality is not a simple opposition. Rather, it portrays the evolution of the characters' unawareness to awareness of how their bodies are locked into the spatio-temporal coordinates that define the geopolitics of exile; hence, it renews their existential relationship with the lost place, Palestine, as *the* homeland. In order to make this case, I will turn to the characters' journey to Kuwait, the closing part of *Al-Makhdu'un*. As I will attempt to show, the film's exilic narrativity shows the characters' awareness in a single "anti-linear sound-image". The anti-linearity of this sound-

image, which is read through memory fragments in the film's exilic narrative, allows the viewer to participate in the construction of its details, and therefore in the construction of the audiovisual narrative discourse.

Palestinian Time-Space Beyond Tragedy

At this stage of *Al-Makhdu'un*, the viewer is exposed to the three stories of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan. Each of these, as we have seen, is told through filmic snapshots charting a series of analepses, which are all connected ultimately, albeit differently, to the same historical event, *al-nakba*. In the closing part of the film, the three men's lives converge during their journey in the desert. The journey towards Kuwait is riveting and emotional, and it is presented through different short scenes, all of which lack synchrony except for the opening one: the beginning of the journey wherein we are exposed yet to another story within the film, that of Abu Al-Khaizaran.

As the journey commences, the characters agree to take turns on who sits next to the driver, Abu Al-Khaizaran, in the shade. Since they depart early in the morning, Assad goes first, while Abu Qais and Marwan climb the roof of the truck so as to save them later on from the blazing sun of the afternoon. Abu Al-Khaizaran is chatting to Assad, and mockingly comparing the hundred and fifty kilometers of the journey to "the path which God promised his creatures they must cross before being directed either to paradise or to hell". The only difference, Abu Al-Khaizaran continues, is that "the angels here are the frontier guards". The "path" in the first sentence is a religious reference to the straight path, *A-Serata Al-Mustaqeem*, which according to the Quran people must cross in order to reach heaven.[77] Narratologically, Abu Al-Khaizaran's comparison offers, once more, a foreshadowing of the dreadful end of the characters' journey. It also discloses his attempt to relieve himself from his responsibility in determining the characters' destiny; the blame in the second sentence is not his but that of the Arab frontier guards. However, Assad's response to Abu Al-Khaizaran's comparison that they "entrusted him with leadership, and it is up to him to take them to heaven or hell" highlights his role as a "leader", and confirms the driver's responsibility in the matter.

Later, Assad asks Abu Al-Khaizaran whether he has "ever been married?" After shrugging off Assad's question with another question, "why do you ask?", Abu Al-Khaizaran begins to recollect the past. In this story, not only we are reminded of Ustaz Salim's death that we saw earlier in Abu Qais's recollections, but we also see a latent continuation of that story

[77] Surah *Al-Fatihah* (The Opening). See Yusuf Ali (2000: 3-4).

from the perspective of Abu Al-Khaizaran. His story can be summarized as follows. Shortly after the death of Ustaz Salim, Abu Al-Khaizaran is also injured while defending the homeland and as a result he is stripped of his manhood. In one of the scenes, we see Abu Al-Khaizaran on the operation table and screaming that he "[does not] want to […]". When one of the doctors tells him that "losing one's manhood is better than dying", Abu Al-Khaizaran continues screaming and says: "No. It's better to be dead".

This statement connects Abu Al-Khaizaran's perspective on the loss of the homeland with that of Abu Qais, who also sees the death of Ustaz Salim as a fortunate happening that saved him from living on without a homeland. Abu Al-Khaizaran's preference of death over life "without manhood" becomes a synecdoche for Abu Qais's preference of death over life "without a homeland". Kamal Abdel-Malek notes in his essay, "Living on Border Lines: War and Exile in Selected Works by Ghassan Kanafani, Fawaz Turki and Mahmoud Darwish", that Abu Al-Khaizaran is "destined to live with the physical scars of the war in whose aftermath he lost both home and manhood" (1999: 181). Moreover, according to Abdel-Malek, the impotence of Abu Al-Khaizaran symbolizes a larger collective political one in that "much like Abu Al-Khaizaran, Arab and Palestinian leadership became impotent in 1948 and after, and yet kept pretending to be aroused by the desire to do battle with Israel" (181). At the heart of this sexual symbolism is the cultural notion of loss of Palestine as a loss of the subject's dignity: *al-nakba* is bodily experienced as a castration.[78]

At this point of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story, the viewer sees him as an exiled Palestinian who, like Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, deserves sympathy. However, the viewer's sympathy with Abu Al-Khaizaran remains partial. The following scenes of the journey reveal the negative aspects of this character. Through his words and actions, we do not see him as a man who sacrificed his manhood for the homeland, but more as a man who lost the "morals of manhood". For example, Abu Al-Khaizaran keeps describing himself as someone whose goal in life is to collect money: "All I want is money, and when I have money I want more and more". After Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan have crossed the Iraqi border, the three men are resting in the shade of the truck, barely having survived their ride inside the hot and airless water-tank. Abu Al-Khaizaran grabs the water skin attached to the truck and starts pouring it into his mouth. He then washes his head and body without offering water to the dying men. Such selfish actions not only prompt the viewer's withdrawal of sympathy with Abu Al-Khaizaran, but they also facilitate the well-established allegorization of his character as a careless émigré Palestinian. With regard to

[78] For a useful analysis of body politics in the Palestinian national narrative, see Amireh (2003: 747-72).

the duality of financial security in exile versus commitment to the lost homeland I mentioned earlier, his character embodies the first side of this duality: Abu Al-Khaizaran is one of those Palestinians who, rather than staying in the homeland, prefers material security in exile.

Immediately after the exposition of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story, we return to the characters' journey in the desert. As I suggested above, the remaining scenes of the journey lack synchrony. As Bal succinctly puts it in her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, "when a scene lacks synchrony, ellipsis often becomes prominent" (1997: 105). In *Al-Makhdu'un*, time is compressed. Unlike in the opening scene of the journey and the first part of the film in general, where all the characters are given time to return to their past in the lost homeland, in the closing part of the film ellipsis occurs in the characters' present to signify that there is no time to go back to the past. A good example can be observed in the scene just before the characters' first ride to the Iraqi border.

In this part, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan repress both what they have given up by having to live in exile and the suffering they are experiencing, and focus instead on what they might gain from the trip. The three men are now contemplating their exilic selves by reflecting on how they have dealt with the limited choices afforded them. Abu Qais, for example, reminds himself that with the money he will earn in Kuwait, he will be able to feed his family, send his son to school, and buy olive shoots in Palestine. Assad, in turn, accepts his imprisonment by traditional marriage and the consequences of his political involvement by telling himself that his uncle has good intentions for him, since, "otherwise he would never have collected fifty dinars in his whole life". Finally, Marwan deals with his inability to pursue his schooling and becoming a doctor by reassuring himself of what his eldest brother told him before, that he will instead receive a better education from the experience of life itself: "School teaches nothing. It only teaches laziness. So leave it and plunge into the frying-pan with the rest of humanity". Throughout this scene, instead of the characters going back into their past by means of recollections, the past erupts in their present as we hear voices in the characters' minds and see images of their past pop up on the screen. Narratologically, this audiovisual blending between past and present voices and images reveals the characters' hopes for the future. This blending, moreover, interrupts the progression of Abu Al-Khaizaran's story: we only see how he lost his manhood, but we do not see how he travelled into exile like the other characters. Also, the journey itself is presented in an accelerated manner as if the film's narrative runs towards its ending. At stake here is the notion that to live in exile is to exist in an embattled relationship with time.

Those dissonances with the temporal in exile become most visible in the film's closing scenes. Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, barely able to stand up, go into the empty water-tank for the second, and final time, doubting that they will come out of it alive. This realization is given shape as Marwan goes last into the water-tank and declares: "We all lost it". This statement reflects the characters' initial awareness of how their bodily existence is locked into the spatial coordinates of exile. As we will see in a moment, the characters' comprehensive bodily awareness explodes in the film after they die; awareness happens after the fact. Before closing the opening of the water-tank, Abu Al-Khaizaran tells them to set their watches and that it would not take him more than "seven minutes" to finish his paperwork. While Abu Al-Khaizaran is rushing into the empty border checkpoint, the frontier guards begin teasing him about his alleged escapades with women in Basra. This engenders a stark ironic encounter since we already know that he is impotent. Temporally, this encounter frustrates the viewer, focused on what will happen to the three men, as the discussion exhausts the small and precious window of time in which the men in the truck can survive. This encounter also offers us a glimpse on how Abu Al-Khaizaran is surviving his exile: by showing how good he is at lying. At stake here is a case of mistaken identity through which pretending to be someone else is the only thing that saves Abu Al-Khaizaran from the guards.

In the officials' room, the more Abu Al-Khaizaran pleads for time by repeatedly shouting "I am in a hurry" and denies his alleged relationship with women in Iraq, the more the guards delay his paperwork and insist on knowing who his secret mistress is. In the meantime, the camera keeps shifting between the inside of the room where Abu Al-Khaizaran is being held and the outside where the truck with the men is standing. In one of these shifting shots, the camera zooms in on the truck as we, the viewers, hear the men inside the water-tank knocking. The men's cry for help, however, does not reach the other characters in the officials' room. In this same image, the camera zooms once again, but this time away from the truck and instead cuts to the noisy air conditioners attached to the officials' room. The audiovisual juxtaposition between the sound of the men's knocking and the noise of the air conditioners shows how the noise of the air conditioners, a metonym for Arab modernity, drown out the men's cry for help. At the heart of this image is a political critique through which the death of the exiled Palestinians emphatically appears as a moral failure of Arab politics. Moreover, the fact that the viewer is the only person who hears the sound of knocking foregrounds his or her participation in the construction of the audiovisual discourse. By making us hear, the film makes us culturally responsible and calls on our active engagement in the narrative. This moment of engaging the viewer epitomizes the audiovisual artifact's ability of critical process; it is also the performative

moment of spectatorial interaction with cinematic representations of *al-nakba* which I will attempt to develop as a special case of exilic narrativity, namely as performative narrativity, in my discussion of Bakri's *1948* in the next chapter.

Immediately after the image and the sound of the air conditioners, we return to the inside of the officials' room wherein we see Abu Al-Khaizaran consulting his watch, which indicates that he already lost four minutes. At this moment, the camera zooms on Abu Al-Khaizaran's face and we see a change in his facial expressions. He now realizes that the only way to escape the guards is to play along with them and to stop denying his relationship with women in Iraq: he now plays the role of a "playboy". This transformation from being "impotent" to "playboy" is what I meant with Abu Al-Khaizaran's mistaken identity. This role-playing, however, consumes more time. As Abu Al-Khaizaran finally finishes his paperwork, and after he promises to introduce the guards to his imaginary mistresses, he consults his watch again to ascertain that he is indeed late and that it took him more than seven minutes; this time his watch indicates fifteen minutes. Driving away from the border, Abu Al-Khaizaran stops the truck after a while, and goes to check on the men. When he opens the blazing hot water-tank, he finds the three of them dead.

Narratologically, the use of watches, like the camera's shifting shots between the inside and outside of the official's room, adds to the temporal charge of this scene: they remind the viewer of both the scarcity of time and the desperate need for it. These watches give access to exilic time by indicating that time in exile is moving rapidly, from four to fifteen minutes, and at the same time that the suffering is endless. The watches also suggest that there is time in exile, yet it is never enough. Such a vision of exilic time becomes exemplary of the men's short lives in exile. For Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan, life can possibly begin in exile, but it is a life that is not to be lived, nor to be continued; a life that is planted in an airless environment under the blazing desert's sun. This sun brands the three men with pain as it acts as a "decoy" implanted in time; one that can make a day in their lives seem like a year, yet also one which shortens the time they have to live. This is precisely how Palestinian exile becomes a spatio-temporal moment of danger of collective annihilation in the present.

At this point of *Al-Makhdu'un*, it would be tempting to conclude that the film approaches the loss of homeland and exile at a rhetorical level in that the catastrophe from which Palestinians suffered most seems a result of moral failure. This moral failure manifests itself through both the impotence and egocentrism of Abu Al-Khaizaran, and the missing vitality and lack of support of the Arabs. However, there are two related problems that complicate this conclusion. First, it puts so much emphasis on the moral aspect so that, rather than resolving the

duality between financial security in exile and commitment to the lost homeland, it enforces the binary opposition between the two sides. The second, and more important problem is that, in relying on the tragic imaging of the men's suffocation at the border, it seems to exclude the narrative perspective of the protagonists, Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan. It represents these exiled Palestinians as passive victims so that they are fatally turned into hapless refugees and economic migrants seeking menial labor in Kuwait. This representation would be only plausible had the film indeed ended with the scene of the characters' suffocation inside the water-tank that we saw above. But it does not. In *Al-Makhdu'un*, Palestinian death is not the end. This is where the anti-linear sound-image takes shape.

Immediatley after Abu Al-Khaizaran finds out that Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan have died, he returns to his truck and continues the journey in total silence. Without uttering a word, he stops on the outskirts of Kuwait city, carries the three dead bodies off his truck and abandons them on the garbage heap. This image is accompanied by the same sentimental music with which the film began. On the screen, while we see Abu Al-Khaizaran walking back to his truck and driving away from sight, the camera returns to the three bodies laying on the garbage heap and begins scanning them and moving forward. The camera's movement takes the following order: it first scans Marwan's body, then Assad's, and finally Abu Qais's until it reaches his hand in the shape of someone who is holding his fingers as if on the trigger. Only then do the same lines with which the film began pop up on the screen:

> And my father once said:
> A man without a homeland
> will have no grave in the earth
> and he forbade me to leave [travel].

The anti-linearity of this sound-image is best explained through a three-fold juxtaposition between the textual repetition of the "father's vision of exile", the scanning order of the men's bodies from Marwan, to Assad to Abu Qais, and the camera's movement forward. Audiovisually, each of these engenders different temporal effects in which past and present losses of place ultimately come together so that the future can be envisioned. This envisioning campaign takes place, first, in the textual repetition of the father's vision. This repetition evokes the past loss of homeland in the present of exile. Second, the scanning order reverses both the sequence of storytelling and generational order of the characters: instead of first to third generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians, we have third to first generations. This reversal connects the present of exile to the past context of *al-nakba*. Finally, the camera's movement forward

envisions a future, symbolized by Abu Qais's hand gesture of the trigger. I will elaborate on the significations of this symbolism in a moment. Circularity and movement stand for an endless repetition and retrovision so that this anti-linear sound-image shows the Palestinians' loss of homeland and their quest for it *together*.

In order to understand how this happens, I will read both this sound-image and the previous scene of the characters' suffocation inside the water-tank in relation to the ending of the literary narrative that Saleh's film adapts, Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*. With regard to exilic narrativity, reading the two endings will also help me reflect on the potential of the audiovisual artifact to take the literary "imaging" of exile to its visual version. Like *Al-Makhdu'un*, Kanafani's novella also ends with the suffocation of Abu Qais, Assad and Marwan inside the water-tank. In the last lines of the narrative, after he finds out that the men have died, Abu Al-Khaizaran repeatedly asks the question: "Why didn't you knock on the sides of the tank? Why didn't you bang the sides of the tank? Why? Why? Why?" (1999:74). Thus, Kanafani's ending critiques Palestinian national paralysis after *al-nakba* by intensifying it: the narrative emphatically calls on Palestinians to take action and urges them to carry arms.

The ending of *Al-Makhdu'un*, as we saw above through the scene of the characters' suffocation and the anti-linear sound-image, departs from the literary text in two audiovisual details: the characters' knocking on the walls of the water-tank, and Abu Al-Khaizaran's silence. When asked why he changed Kanafani's ending, Saleh explained that "the novel was written in 1963, but by the early 1970s the Palestinians had become engaged in armed struggle and were hijacking airplanes, actions for which the knocking on the walls of the tank could serve as a metaphor".[79] Thus, Saleh's changing of the ending in the film is both temporally and spatially motivated; it takes little away from Kanafani's thematic project. This is so because the three characters, despite their knocking, do suffocate. Temporally, then, the film's exilic narrativity shows how Palestinians died in 1963, but also how, despite their actions, they die in 1970s. To put it differently, *Al-Makhdu'un* shows Palestinian national paralysis after *al-nakba*, but also how this paralysis continues. In this sense, the film not only takes the literary imaging of exile to its visual version, but also alters its temporality from past to present.

This unfolding of the image of exile in time is put at the service of space. This can be observed in the second difference with Kanafani's ending, the silence of Abu Al-Khaizaran. Narratologically, in silencing Abu AL-Khaizaran, the film gives voice to the dead men, the protagonists of the narrative. In so doing, the film seems to suggest that the absence of life in

[79] Cited in Mustafa (2006).

their exiled bodies does not equal the complete absence of their bodies in exilic space. In this sense, exilic space becomes an index, a cipher for both the characters' bodies and stories that have brushed up against it. The territorial designs of this space transform the men's geopolitical realities, from being Palestinians "with a homeland" into Palestinian refugees "without". These designs also transform their life experiences on the ground. Both the textual repetition of the father's vision of exile and Abu Qais's hand gesture as if on the trigger perform this transformation.

Between the first and the second quotation of the father's vision, the film has travelled to discover its meaning. Through the image of the characters' dead bodies on the garbage heap, the film seems to suggest that it has understood the meaning of "have no grave in the earth" and therefore it subliminally evokes the image of the trigger, symbolizing the choice of staying in the homeland to work in the resistance instead of existing the desert of exile. This gesture reminds us of the characters' death, and marks the exilic space. This is precisely how the anti-linear sound-image transforms the "moment of danger" of Palestinian exile, which consumes the lives of the characters, into a moment of bodily awareness. This moment is emphatically connected to the *unpredictability* of the characters' travel in Palestinian exile so that it subverts the tragic vision of their suffocation inside the water-tank, which is inherently static, into a more dynamic and active vision. At the heart of this vision is a specific audiovisual discourse that strongly exemplifies the quintessence of Palestinian cultural identity as "exilic"; that is, an identity *shaped* in exile and *defined* by its spatio-temporal forced condition around the questions of whether to submit or to resist? Such a discourse, further, bears on the "non-neutrality" of Palestinian identity so that the exilic space emerges as a decisive geopolitical site of subjection and resistance. The experience of the exilic space as a geopolitical discontinuity transforms the Palestinian refugee into a subject with a political consciousness, with nothing to loose but his "refugeeism", which is not much of a possession. In exile, the Palestinian subject can be defeated, but not destroyed.

In my analysis of *Al-Makhdu'un*, I discussed the multiple ways in which the film's audiovisual storytelling activates Palestinian cultural memory, both narratively and aesthetically, in relation to exilic space as inherently lived, albeit deadly, space that shapes collective imaginaries of the lost homeland. The geopolitics of exilic space transforms cultural realities as much as life experiences on the ground. The details of the relationship between exile and the Palestinian subject vary from narrative to narrative, but the ways in which these details alternate and effect topographies of Palestinian identity in the present is a critical question in those narratives. With

regard to the relationship between Palestinian identity and exilic space, *Al-Makhdu'un*'s exilic narrativity connects spatial representations to the exercise of political power. It exposes a transformation of the construction of Palestinian identity, from catastrophe and victimization to ideology and political movements. What are the details of this construction? And how does it take shape in audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*, especially in relation to the notions of Palestinian "self" and Israeli "other" and their conflicted discourses of memory? These two questions are the focus of my discussion of the performative narrativity of Bakri's film *1948* in the next chapter.

Unlike *Al-Makhdu'un* which presents Palestinian exilic time and space by means of a fragmented mode of memorial storytelling as an experiential truth beyond the fiction – documentary divide, *1948* enacts this truth in terms of role-playing beyond another divide, that between performance and documentary. The employment of bodily engagement of exile through role-playing, as we will see, foregrounds the film's performative narrativity. This facilitates the probing of narratives of *al-nakba* and exile beyond their linear limits so that audiovisual storytelling deconstructs the assumed generic predominance of "truthful" documentary over performed subjectivity. *1948* conveys a strong political argument about contemporary Palestinian identity. Palestinian exilic identity emerges through unconventional aesthetic strategies, various modes of storytelling, and the performance of remembrance. *1948* does not primarily unveil the catastrophic past so much as it transmits its present. The underlying message is that catastrophe and exile are destined to continue in the future, so long as institutionalized regimes of denial and dehumanization remain unchallenged.