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ENGLISH SUMMARY

As the Palestinians continue to be denied the right of return to their homes in Palestine, the relevance of narratives of *al-nakba* continues to increase. They are indeed the key narratives of Palestinian historical and political discourses. This dissertation deals with *al-nakba* as a powerful cultural signifier of contemporary Palestinian exilic consciousness. I explore the ways in which Palestinian popular literary, audiovisual and oral narratives articulate memories of the loss of the homeland, memories *of* historical events around 1948 *in relation to* the continuing exile of 2008. I argue that the persistence of catastrophic output in Palestinian culture and politics is closely linked to their construction of exilic identity. Narratives of *al-nakba* offer a set of symbolic identifiers and imagings of loss of place. They provide the exiled subject with a concrete geopolitical orientation of the lost home in Palestine, and expose the ways in which that loss continues to be experienced in the present, influencing the identity and agency of different generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians.

Telling Memories does not recount the history of *al-nakba* but gleans from literature, films and oral narratives how different generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians deal with the memory of loss of homeland, and how this memory shapes their identity in exile. Indeed, memories of *al-nakba* reinforce the centrality of the land in Palestinian discourses of identity. More relevant to my point about remembering and storytelling is that Palestinians' memories of *al-nakba* also influence the substance and the style of their narratives of exile. The objects through which I develop my argument are two literary texts, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's novel *The Ship* (1985) and Liyana Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* (1983), two films, Tawfiq Saleh's *Al-Makhdu'un* (The Dupes, 1972) and Mohammed Bakri's *1948* (1998), and a collection of oral narratives that was published in 1998 by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* as "Reflections of Al-Nakba", combined with a selection of personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip in 2004.

My analysis of Palestinian exilic narratives not only tracks the diverse contours of Palestinian memory representations of the past loss of place, but also accounts for the processes of narration through which these memories are told in the present. My point is that memorial modes of storytelling – or what I refer to in slightly different terms such as "fragmented narrativity" or "exilic narrativity" and "performative narrativity", are at the heart of how Palestinians narrate loss of homeland in exile. The act of remembering and the act of

storytelling bear on each other, and thus can work together in taking the past memory of *al-nakba* into the present and the future, both in time and space.

The five chapters of this study address issues pertinent to debates over Palestinian cultural memory and identity such as nostalgia and trauma, narrative fragmentation and notions of home and forced travel, space-time configurations and anti-linearity of memory, the play of power in memory and the meanings of silence and denial, performance as representationally performative, and "post-memory" and geopolitical continuity of loss of place in the everyday. By way of the methodology of cultural analysis and detailed readings of textual and audiovisual images of loss of homeland, I demonstrate how the complex modes of memorial storytelling of *al-nakba* function as an alternative discourse of Palestinian exilic identity, which not only challenges official versions imposed by dominant Zionist discourses, but also tests the limits of literary and cultural criticism of the condition of Palestinian exile. Palestinian exilic narratives utilize memorial storytelling as a mode that scrutinizes different retellings and realizations of the same story or related stories of *al-nakba*, so that they give coherence and meaning for the aftermath of that catastrophe as "the ongoing catastrophe". Most importantly, memorial storytelling offers a cultural envisioning that calls on a specific notion of collective memory in narrative, not only as an assertion or testimony of the past *nakba*, but as a point of departure that exposes the repetitive quality of past loss of place as well as the durability of this loss in the present. Contemporary exile; this is where we are steeped in Palestinian narratives as specific cultural manifestations in which the ongoing spatio-temporality of *al-nakba* appears particularly intense and urgent.

In chapter One, my analysis of Jabra's novel *The Ship* examines the concept of "nostalgia" in terms of the cultural memory of *al-nakba* as the traumatic loss of the homeland in the past. "Nostalgic memory", I will attempt to show, need not always to be negative; it is neither a reactionary nor an escapist sentiment. Rather, nostalgic memory can be taken as a potentially productive mode of remembering that goes beyond recovering or idealizing the past, and instead functions as a cultural response to the loss of homeland in exile; what I will call "a reconstitution of injured subjectivities". This positive function of nostalgia is possible and offers a cultural potential of great value, because nostalgic memory, I argue, is a present-oriented memorization that links the past to the present and future: a cultural recall of a traumatic past of loss of place that constantly impinges on equally problematic immediate present of exile.

In chapter Two, I analyze Badr's collection of short stories *A Balcony Over the Fakihani* as cultural expressions that expose the psychic consequences of the loss of

homeland and repeated displacements for the minds and lives of Palestinians. I base my analysis of these narratives on the assumption that in the everyday of exile the subject's memory of *al-nakba* shifts, in time and space, from a nostalgic memory of the lost homeland to a "critical memory" of his or her immediate experience of denial of access to this place. Within this shifting framework of memory, my reading of Badr's short stories shows how Palestinian exile constitutes an entangled spatio-temporal condition of forced travel and undesired movement. This actual condition, I argue, involves a past loss of homeland but also, crucially, an everyday denial of access to home. Within this condition, the subject is physically denied his or her cultural space of selfhood. As we will see, this condition is presented to us, the readers, in Badr's collection through a fragmented narrativity. Multiple voices and instances of personal memories are conjured up repeatedly as concrete (verbal) imaginations. Each of these literalizes, retrospectively, conceptual metaphors of "travel", "movement" and "mobility" in Palestinian exile: these imagings expose the subject's present denial of access to home as an effective construct of identification that prompts his or her meanings of Palestine as the (lost) homeland, not vice versa.

Chapter Three and chapter Four focus on audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*. My analysis of these films progresses form discussing how Palestinian exile constitutes an actual condition of displacement to an examination of the relationship between Palestinian identity and the exilic space itself. In other words, both chapters mark a transition from how narratives of loss of homeland assert cultural notions of a denied subjectivity in exile to the performance of space through collective images and discourses of historical uprooting of 1948 within the geopolitical continuity of exile. At the heart of this transition is the question of how do the filmic narratives reactivate, through memory, collective flows of re-territorialisation against continuing de-territorialisation? With regard to memorial storytelling of *al-nakba*, I will reflect on Palestinian identity in its spatio-temporal negotiation of the rigorous boundaries between "home" and "not home" in two related ways.

In chapter Three, my analysis of Tawfiq Saleh's film *Al-Makhdu'un* develops a specific vision of the connection between audiovisual storytelling and memory of loss of homeland, a connection I indicate with the term "exilic narrativity", as a spatially charged mode of fragmented narrativity that has the potential to take the literary "imaging" of exile in Jabra's novel and Badr's short stories to its visual version: the image evoked in language can be shown in the film. *Al-Makhdu'un*'s exilic narrativity, I argue, connects spatial representations of Palestinian memory of loss of homeland 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 Bakri's film *1948* in chapter Four. With respect to memorial storytelling, my reading of Bakri's film examines 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 my discussion of *1948* as "performative narrativity". The notions of the play of power in memory, the meanings of silence and denial, and performance as representationally performative will be crucial to understanding the film's performative narrativity as a special case of exilic narrativity that has the performativity effect to transform, slowly and through iteration, the formation of identity of the viewer. Audiovisual narratives of *al-nakba*, I argue, not only present us with a stark example of a displaced identity, but also articulate the construction of Palestinian identity as a matter of existing "in the act" of collective re-enactments and cultural recall of loss of place in and for exile: an exilic identity that needs to be performed through continuous practices of re-tellings and re-readings.

Finally, chapter Five explores oral narratives of *al-nakba*. Two sets of objects are central to this chapter: a collection of the narratives that was published in 1998 by the *Journal of Palestine Studies* as "Reflections of Al-Nakba", and a selection of personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip in 2004. My analysis of these narratives focuses on cultural processes of the preservation of collective memory and the roles they play in the construction of a Palestinian exilic identity. In particular, I address the question how geopolitical continuity of loss of homeland affects our understanding of the daily exile of subsequent generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians as an ongoing catastrophe in 2008? I attempt to provide an answer to this question in two analytical parts.

In the first part in connection with the collection "Reflections of Al-Nakba", I propose an alternative mode of reading oral accounts of *al-nakba*. Instead of treating these accounts as ethnographic field work notes, I treat them like the literary and audiovisual narratives I analyze in this study; namely as narrative configurations of memory *in* exile. What underlies this mode of reading, as we will see, is a shift of focus from the historical catastrophe of 1948 to the everyday condition of its "catastrophed subject" in 2008, a condition I mobilize in my discussion as the *mankoub* (catastrophed). To embed a reading of oral accounts of *al-nakba* as

configurations of memory in this narrative framework, I argue, may provide a useful analytical tool. This tool not only attends to the nuances of loss of homeland and forced exile with which many narratives of *al-nakba* resonate, but at the same time exposes, through memorial storytelling, cultural imaginings (or when particularly visual, "imagings") of practices of Palestinian identity in terms of an event/subject constellation between the past and present experiences of catastrophe.

I conclude this chapter, and the whole book, with the second part with the personal interviews that I conducted in my fieldwork in the Gaza Strip in 2004. In this section, I draw on the problematic notions of "post-memory" and geopolitical continuity of loss of place in the everyday. I do so in order to derive a tentative "imaginative-discursive" framework for the analysis of the generational transmission of memory of *al-nakba* within a geopolitical continuity of loss of place in exile.

Within this framework, I use the term "post-memory" as shorthand for the presentness of a temporal, ongoing *nakba*. To put it differently, I do not use post-memory to suggest that *al-nakba* is in the past, but on the contrary to suggest that the originating moment of the ongoing catastrophe has been transmitted to later generations of Palestinians. As we will see, narratives of subsequent generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians expose a resoundingly present-oriented model of post-memory. At the heart of this model, subsequent generations of Palestinians take the position of the previous generations in terms of the effect of the trauma of *al-nakba* in their parents' past experience. Most importantly, the distinction between memories of what the previous generations lived through in 1948 and what the subsequent generations experience sixty years later, may become so blurred that the intergenerational continuity of loss of place can in fact be sustained both in memory and experience. This is simply so because the Palestinians' loss of homeland, through their exile, did not stop. Hence, in the case of Palestinians, the problem of the term "post-memory" is not so much with memory, but with "post". The "post", I argue, is by no means constitutive of the experience of catastrophe of subsequent generations of Palestinians: they do not have just post-memories of *al-nakba*. Rather, these *mankoub* subjects live *al-nakba* on a daily basis as exiled Palestinian refugees whose lands as much as lives are being persistently violated under Israeli occupation. Whereas the first generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians have memories and experiences of the originating event of *al-nakba*, second and third generations of post-*nakba* Palestinians, although they have not experienced this originating moment (1948), are still "inside" the event itself living the catastrophe everyday: their *nakba* happens in the ongoing exile of 2008.