

Threads of Memory and Discourses of Rootedness: Of Trees, Oranges and the Prickly-Pear Cactus in Israel/Palestine

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Memory and memories weave their way in and out of the narratives constructed in Palestinian and Israeli discourses of indigenouness and "rootedness." This article examines some of the particular ways memory and memories are articulated, mobilized, suppressed or absented in the context of assertions or denials of rootedness and natural connection to the Holy Land, and in creating configurations of collective memory, configurations which in part develop quite independently of each other, and in part overlap, converge and interact with each other. Three of the most hyper-saturated and contested symbols mobilized in these respective discourses are trees (planting, caring for, uprooting, remembering, burning), the "Jaffa orange," and the prickly-pear cactus (*sabir/tsabar/sabra*).¹

Several aspects of memory are at work or highlighted in the mobilization of these symbols, and are examined in detail in what follows. One of these is the selective appropriation of what is perceived as part of a repertoire of past collective memory, or tradition, which is incorporated and activated within a discourse in the present.² The flip side of this is the selective erasure or suppression of parts of a repertoire of collective memory, which is key or central in the creation of new traditions, or the laying down of new layers of collective memory, in the present. A second

recurrent "memory-effect" illustrated in the examples and discussion to follow is the phenomenon of multiple memories inhabiting the "same" sites, or converging on the same objects. At times these memories are openly contested and in explicit conflict with each other.³ More often, however, one set of memories gains ascendancy and legitimacy in the constructed present, and other layers of memory are submerged to varying degrees, giving rise to the phenomenon or sense of a memory-site or memory-object being "haunted" by those submerged memories. (It takes the active "memory-work" of those with unrecognized or outlawed memories, or of others, to infuse memory-sites with their "haunting" layers). A third aspect of remembering examined here which is activated in Israeli and Palestinian discourses of indigenism is nostalgia, in a considerable array of forms. Nostalgia for lost homelands (Zion, Europe, Palestine) is only the most obvious of these forms; it is also found extending into less predictable domains of yearning, such as "nostalgic" yearning for something or someplace not ever previously directly experienced, or continuing to yearn for something even when it is apparently present or at hand.

Jewish Rootedness/Rootlessness Anxiety

"Trees have roots... Jews have legs."
—Isaac Deutscher⁴

The examination of the constructed memories of Jewish rootedness reveals a pattern of disruption, discontinuity, and precariousness. The earliest narratives looked back to by Jews as their collective points of origin are characterized by restlessness, by tropes of banishment, settling down, wandering, exile, return and dispersion. A cursory and obviously selective glance reveals some of the most conspicuous examples of such narratives: the banishment of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden; Abraham's setting out from Mesopotamia to settle in Canaan at God's instruction to "go, leave your country, leave your birthplace, leave your father's home and go to the land I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). Some generations later, we read the narrative of Joseph's dislocation to Egypt and

subsequent settlement there, and that of the Exodus from Egypt and of decades of wandering through the desert under the guidance of Moses, ultimately to take up residence once again in Canaan, the Promised Land. We read of subsequent relatively short-lived periods of stability and hegemony, disrupted cataclysmically by the first and then second destruction of the Temple, and of the corresponding dispersions of the people into exile, not to mention numerous subsequent migrations and dispersions from other homes established later in Spain, Central and Eastern Europe, and elsewhere.

Clearly, "homeland" as a place in which one is securely rooted has been a very precarious construct in Jewish narratives, in which the possibility of uprooting or being uprooted seems to be always just barely at bay. A wide variety of discourses and practices too numerous to mention here have repeatedly underscored and revived the stigmatization of Jewish rootlessness and "uprooting anxiety" in different ways at different historical periods. It is clearly beyond the scope of my focus here to elaborate on these. A connection that I would like to establish, however, is between constructions of memory and anxiety about Jewish rootlessness, and the incorporation of these into modern Zionist discourse and practice as a pre-occupation with assertions of connectedness and rootedness.

An over-arching example of this type of pre-occupation is the project of "getting to know" or "knowledge of the country," referred to in Hebrew as *yedi'at ha-aretz*. This is the project of becoming directly acquainted not only with historical events of note, but very pointedly with the country's flora, fauna, geographical and geological terrain, etc. This project is rigorously, one might even say obsessively, institutionalized throughout educational institutions in Israel (and was so in the pre-1948 Jewish educational institutions in Palestine), from kindergarten through primary and secondary school, as well as in the army and in a number of independent organizations.

The impetus for these undertakings, and their extensive scope, may be understood by considering the fact that the overwhelming majority of the people who were to comprise the Jewish homeland as conceived by secular, political Zionism were transplanted from other locales, and thus in a very literal sense did not "know" the country. Needless to say, at issue is not who really "knows" their

country—although it is often taken for granted that a people “knows” its country, how many of us could say we “know our country” in the sense of *yediʔat ha-aretz*? Clearly, assumptions about who knows or does not know their country are as constructed as most other perceptions about peoplehood and nationhood. But in the project of Zionism, this kind of knowledge could not be, and was not, taken for granted, and programs disseminating *yediʔat ha-aretz* aimed to fill both a perceived and an actual lack, a lack of immediate and intimate acquaintance with and “knowledge of” a newly adopted home. The project of *yediʔat ha-aretz* was also crucial in order to bridge the gap and time lag between the fact of being in what was actually a newly adopted home and the trope of “return,” so central and constitutive within Zionist discourse. The logic operating here is a circular or retroactive one. Implicit in the notion of Jews “returning” to Zion is the assumption that they had been there before and “knew” it to some extent. Since the actual immigrants moving to Palestine and Israel had, of course, generally not been there before, it was necessary to fill in retroactively the kind of knowledge they could have had if they actually *had* been there before, or if there had been no dislocation of the Jewish population in centuries past. It could then become *as if* they were returning to a place, *as if* they had known it before. Certainly the ritualized longing and yearning for Zion, imagining it from afar, whether in liturgical contexts or later through secular Zionist education abroad, contributed to smoothing the discursive path for the modern-day union of Jew and Zion to be articulated as “reunion” and “return.”

In Amos Oz’s *Hill of Evil Counsel*, a novella shot through with nostalgic longings, we find a still more complicated and problematized relationship between nostalgic yearnings for places and attempts to “get to know” these places intimately. Dr. Hans Kipnis, a Jew from Silesia who emigrates to Palestine in 1932, has long dreamt of himself “wandering with a stick and a haversack among the hills of Galilee.” He befriends a wandering Bavarian ornithologist, and together

... they roamed to the Marj ‘Ayun Valley, into the Mountains of Naphtali and the Huleh Swamps. Occasionally, in their wanderings, they reached the remote sources

of the Jordan. Here they would sit all day in the shade of the lush vegetation, reciting together from memory their favorite Schiller poems and calling every bird and beast by its proper name. (Oz 1983: 276)

The very means by which he tries to “get close” to his new homeland, or the filter through which he experiences it while hiking and identifying flora and fauna, seems to be simultaneously that which blocks his ability to achieve intimacy with it: the language, poetry, culture of his “ex-homeland.” What, then, is the object of his yearning? On the one hand, of course, his new home, Zion, and the desire to become intimately acquainted with it. But he is also longing for the homeland from which he has been ousted, nostalgically (or pseudo-nostalgically) imagining himself partaking in national pastimes from which he was excluded back in Europe. It is no wonder then, that we find him writing in his journal:

I have been living in Jerusalem for three years, and I continue to yearn for it as though I were still a student in Leipzig. Surely there is a paradox here. (*ibid.*: 278)

The preoccupation with forging a connection to this place, in the face of anxiety about non-connectedness and non-rootedness, has manifested itself in many ways in Zionist discourse and practice. Two of the most salient of these have been the wide-spread institutionalization of tree-planting, perhaps the most literal attempt to “put down roots” in the country, and the appropriation of contested symbols of indigenoussness and native status.

Tree Planting—The Jewish National Fund

The Jewish National Fund (JNF) has been one of the central institutions implementing the goals of secular Zionism since the turn of the century, with the goal of reclamation of the Land of Israel as the collective property of the Jewish people—not only of those living there or colonizing it, but of those living abroad as well (Levin 1957)—by procuring and preparing land for Jewish settlement in Palestine. One of the JNF’s most visible undertakings has been the planting of trees, referred to variably as the “Afforestation” or the “Reforestation Campaign.” The JNF tree campaign began

modestly at the turn of the century, and the originators of the idea would probably be astounded to know just how wildly successful it would turn out to be. Since its inception, several hundred million trees have been planted in what is now Israel and the Occupied Territories. In addition to its practical functions (preventing topsoil erosion, etc.), the JNF Afforestation Campaign has also been one of the most "literal" of symbolic assertions of Jewish rootedness and connection to the land, situated within secular political Zionism's larger master narratives of "making the desert bloom," "conquering the wilderness," and "naturalizing the Jew" through "return" to the land and cultivation of the soil.

Individual trees were planted, as were gardens, groves and forests, some in memory of people, which have taken on the status of "living monuments": forests dedicated to Theodore Herzl, to Menahem and Aliza Begin, to Jewish children killed in the Holocaust, and many more. In such instances, the planting of trees not only has a "memorializing" function, but simultaneously serves as an assertion of Jewish rootedness in Israel, connecting those in whose memory the trees were planted, and the donor of the trees, to the planting site (and by extension, the country) as a Jewish one. They become sites of Jewish memory woven into a Zionist narrative, with a repertoire of rituals generated around them, from dedication ceremonies to symbolic plantings (before actual planting done by foresters) to private as well as more institutionalized pilgrimages.

The forest recently planted in memory of Menahem and Aliza Begin provides an interesting case in point. At the dedication ceremony of this site (July 1994), prominent political figures of the Likud party addressed the audience of several hundred, most of which was comprised of Likud party members and former cronies of Menahem Begin from the Irgun⁵ and their families. The creation of this forest-as-memory-site embodies the features mentioned above, but has a still more pointed intersection of trees and memorialization as part of the ritual created around it. The constructed memorial at the visitors' site is a solitary tree (in the middle of a small stone plaza) which has been isolated from the others, painted white and "frozen" as a monument. Significantly, Begin's forest is planted just along the Green Line (which runs between the territories claimed by Israel in 1948 and those that came under

Israeli occupation in 1967) not far from a place called Betar. The legendary significance of this particular memorializing tree was related by one of the speakers at the ceremony: In the 1948 war, after the battle of Betar, Begin looked off into the distance (towards what lay beyond what would become the Green Line) and saw a solitary tree. He swore that one day they would return and conquer what lay beyond the tree, after which the tree would no longer be isolated and the mark of a limiting boundary, but would instead be one tree in the midst of a forest which would erase any such limits or boundaries. This ostensible prophecy was fulfilled, first by the 1967 Israeli conquest of what lay beyond "the tree"—the West Bank—and later by the planting of the Begin forest in 1994, with the effect of blurring the boundary that was in danger of re-emerging in the wake of the 1993 peace accords.

The JNF tree-planting campaign has figured prominently as an articulation of "connectedness" between Israel and Jewish communities elsewhere. It has created the ubiquitous tradition of planting trees in Israel to mark all manner of special occasions (births, birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, deaths) within these communities. Planting a tree in Israel in honor of someone's birthday, for example, has multi-layered symbolic capital as a gift-giving gesture. One is giving a gift to that person; the gift given in their name has the added cachet of being a non-materialistic gift of charity. One is simultaneously adding a tree to the biosphere, an ostensibly neutral layer of the gift-giving. But having the tree planted specifically in Israel asserts a connection between the giver, the recipient (and life cycle events in his or her community abroad), and Israel as a Jewish state, since the entire transaction is executed under the auspices of the JNF.

The holiday of *Tu B'Shvat* (the 15th of the month of Shvat) marked the separation of tithes of fruit at times of Jewish presence in the Holy Land, and was traditionally observed among Jewish communities outside of Israel by eating different types of fruit grown there and reciting Biblical passages mentioning these fruits. This festival was completely transformed in the context of Zionism, a change facilitated largely by the JNF. In this context it became not only the "new year of trees" as referred to in early Jewish sources, but most conspicuously the celebration of the JNF afforestation

campaign. Planting trees on Tu Bishvat, the most conspicuous way this holiday is now celebrated, became a national ritual of "putting down roots" both in the pre-state Jewish colony and in Israel. The JNF went to great lengths to transform the celebration of Tu Bi'shvat abroad as well into a major drive for its afforestation campaign, aimed at instilling a connection to Israel in young Jewish children, incorporating the traditional feature of eating fruits from the Holy Land and recitation of pertinent Biblical verses, but most pointedly culminating in the children pledging money to plant trees in Israel.

This type of "invention of tradition" was a central and explicit element of Zionist culture-in-the-making. The deliberate co-mingling of the "old" and the "new" was idealized as the achievement of a kind of golden mean—the old could be revived and revitalized, and the new could be anchored by the weight of the past, in ways that served to legitimize the discourse of return, as if closing a circle of memory. Tree-planting in its various forms in the context of Zionism has served to create new connections and new memories in the *present*, while simultaneously invoking old memories of connection, and in the process aiming to create a community of Jewish memory and collectivity.

Planting Over the Memories of Others

Not only do tree-planting and the afforestation campaign create memory in the ways described above, but they have also served to *erase* memory, by erasing or planting over traces of places in Palestinian collective memory. A number of the several hundred Palestinian villages that were destroyed between 1947 and 1949 have had JNF trees and forests planted over their remains, in a further reshaping and reconfiguration of these sites.

JNF forests as an articulation of Jewish rootedness in Israel, or of associated anxiety and guilt about it, have figured in the modern Israeli literary imagination. A story by Israeli author A. B. Yehoshua called "Facing the Forests" (*Mul ha-ye'arot*; 1968) tells of a quirky and ineffectual Israeli academic who is having difficulty finishing his doctoral dissertation. For a change of pace he hopes will push him to complete it, he takes on a job as a Forest Guard at a JNF forest.

His only steady companion in the isolation of the forest is an Arab assistant who brings him his food, and whose tongue has been cut out, rendering him speechless, capable of only grunts and noises. In spite of this obstacle to communication, the academic learns that the forest he is guarding has been planted over the site of a Palestinian village that has been destroyed, and that his assistant was one of the villagers. Ultimately, the forest is set on fire and burns; the reader is led to believe that the Arab set the fire, and that the Israeli Forest Guard did nothing to stop it until it was too late, in what can be read as an acknowledgment of guilt over the destruction of the village, and the granting of an opportunity to take revenge by not taking measures to stop the fire. The planted forest asserts Jewish presence, implicitly both past and present, and simultaneously effaces Palestinian memory of the site. The burning of the forest re-exposes Palestinian memory and disconnects Jewish memory from it.

I had the opportunity to visit a number of sites of former Palestinian villages that have been variously reshaped through tree-planting and related JNF projects, in ways that would appear to promote "collective", if selective, forgetting. If one visits the site of the destroyed village of Ghabsiyah in the Galilee, for example, upon closer scrutiny the trees and landscape themselves yield two very different and contesting narratives converging on the same site.⁶ One has to rely on landscape readings, because little else remains. What is most readily visible to the first-time visitor are the JNF trees planted on the site—the recognizable combination of pine and other trees that have grown over the past four decades in a manner that makes it seem as if perhaps that is all that was ever there.

But subsequent visits to the site, accompanied by former villagers, now refugees, reveal another layer of memory. Among the trees, one can find bits of rubble from some of the destroyed homes, some remains of the village mosque, and the large round stone remaining at the site of the village olive press. But the primary way the former villager reconstructs his map and memory of the village for me is through his reading of the landscape and trees. Those of the JNF forest are ignored, "forgotten." Between and among these, he identifies the site of the former home of the *mukhtār*, or village chief. How? By the two towering palm trees that used to flank the

entrance to his home, the only such trees in the village, which are still standing. Their former function of demarcating status and authority seems mocked by the fact that they now rather ridiculously "flank" an empty space, announcing only a lack or an absence. Able to discern landmarks such as these, he continues to reconstruct his memory of this site by "reading" the clusters of prickly-pear cactus, *ṣabir*, traditionally used to delineate boundaries of village properties, now overgrown but still in discernably linear patterns. Fruit-bearing trees are other texts to be read—remains of the village's orchards, as well as configurations of individual fruit trees planted by villagers in the vicinity of where their homes once stood. In some instances, with the aid of other landmarks, particular trees are identified as so-and-so's fig, pomegranate or lemon tree. Other reconfigurations of the sites of destroyed Palestinian villages with trees and landscape are too numerous to elaborate on here. While the particulars of such reconfigured sites vary considerably, each is imbued with the competing and overlapping impulses of selective remembering and selective forgetting.

Uprooting Trees—Deracination

Another facet of what I have been describing as part of the discourse of the assertion of Jewish rootedness that remains to be mentioned in this context, if only in passing, is, of course, the highly symbolic and literally deracinating act of the uprooting of trees. The practice of uprooting trees as a punitive measure has a history predating the establishment of Israel—it was implemented under the rubric of emergency regulations in British Mandatory times in Palestine, and reference has even been made to the practice having been used by Ottoman rulers against peasants as punishment for non-payment of taxes. In the Palestinian-Israeli context and in the struggle to assert contesting roots and memories, the continuation of this practice takes on new layers of significance. Sometimes in punishment for offenses minor or serious, sometimes as a means of severing Palestinian connection to contested or soon-to-be-confiscated land, the practice of uprooting or sawing down Palestinian olive and other fruit-bearing trees by the Israeli military (and settlers) intensified greatly during the *intifāda*, and continues to this day.

The village of Qattana is one of many that has had over one thousand olive trees uprooted or sawed down on its land, and provides an illustration of the lengths these real and symbolic rootings and uprootings can reach. In the mid-1980's when Qattana's trees were uprooted, some were reported to have been transported from the West Bank village to the Jewish sector of West Jerusalem and re-planted to line a public street there. That, however, was apparently not quite the end of it, for according to villagers, when word of this reached Qattana, a group of villagers staged a demonstration at which they placed ribbons around the transplanted olive trees in Jerusalem which read "Take Me Back to Qattana!"

Symbols of Indigenousness: The "Sabra" Prickly-Pear Cactus

While the prickly-pear cactus figures in the landscape of the destroyed Palestinian village, in the present and in constructed memories, as "proof of having been there," the same type of cactus figures prominently as a well-known symbol of Israeli indigenousness. The *tsabar*, or sabra cactus has been taken up since the 1930's as the way of referring to a "native-born" Jew in Palestine, later Israel. The oft-cited feature linking the two is said to be that of being tough and thorny on the outside, but soft and sweet on the inside. But the defining feature of the term, and its use in everyday Hebrew, is that of being native-born. A term more specific than simply "Israeli" was coined in response to the need to distinguish between the bulk of the population that was not indigenous and the nativeborn. A variety of characteristics became attributed to the "sabra," largely those viewed as the antithesis of the "diaspora Jew"—being "natural," physically healthy and robust, somewhat wild, untamed, naughty, being eternally youthful or even childlike, to name a few.

Earlier representations of the prickly-pear cactus from the 1930s are relatively reverent and uncynical articulations of the cactus as emblem of the new native-born Israeli. A well-known sketch by Nahum Guttman from the 1930s with the caption "I Have Picked

a Sabra Fruit" (*Katafi Tsabar*) shows a young boy clad in t-shirt, shorts, and sandals, smiling exuberantly, standing triumphantly on top of a prickly-pear cactus plant he has pinned down with one foot. In one hand he holds up a prickly-pear fruit he has just picked; in the other he grasps the long pronged stick he has used to pick it from among the plant's sharp thorns. Not only has he picked the prickly pear, he has *become* or he *is* a human prickly pear, sketched as he is with thorns growing out of all parts of his body just like those of the plant beneath him. When the cartoon character "Srulik" or "Little Israel" was created by renowned Israeli cartoonist Dosh, he was first sketched as the middle portion of a prickly-pear cactus plant, without thorns on his body but with the same intention of conflating the new native-born Israeli with the prickly-pear as *tsabar* (Dosh 1951). He too was portrayed as innocent and boyish, clad in shorts and sandals, and led an unaging life for decades in Dosh's cartoons as the sabra "everyman."

Perhaps the luxury of having achieved statehood and the possibility of taking it for granted have helped paved the way for the development of less naive portrayals of the *tsabar*. In what has been referred to in Israel as its "post-Zionist" phase, (approximately the past decade) representations of the prickly-pear cactus are jaded, alienated and cynical. Israeli photographer Barry Friedlander's image of the sabra on the CD cover of a contemporary Israeli heavy metal group (Friedlander 1991) shows what could be described as an "in-your-face" uglified version of the cactus plant, foregrounding and highlighting its deformed, mishapen, sickly and moribund character. Set against the backdrop of an eerily unnatural landscape, the image suggests the post-apocalyptic. Another contemporary Israeli photographer, Shuka Glutman, presents a mocking and sarcastic depiction of the sabra, composed of a dismembered segment of a prickly-pear cactus with a childish cut-out smiling face (Glutman 1988). Cast irreverently on the ground, it is lying flat and face up, with the shadow of a hand stuck directly in front of the "face" of the sabra, further defacing it. Some Jewish Israeli artists have portrayed the prickly-pear cactus in a manner that deliberately and provocatively evokes both the *tsabar* as Israeli/cactus and the Palestinian *sabir*, as in graphic designer and artist David Tartakover's images appearing in Israeli newspapers that were used

to commemorate the first and then subsequent years of the Palestinian uprising of the late 1980s and early 1990s. In the first of these images (Tartakover 1988), we see in the foreground a photograph of a proud female *Palma*ch fighter, clad in Palestinian head-covering (*hatta*) and bearing a sub-machine gun and grenades (Figure 1). In the backdrop behind her we see a prickly-pear cactus



Figure 1 "First Anniversary of the Uprising 12.9.88" by artist David Tartakover, appearing on cover of Israeli magazine. Reprinted with permission of artist.

growing out from beneath the ruins of a demolished home. The Israeli army logos visibly "stamped" on many of the pieces of rubble conveys clearly that this is not just any crumbled home, but a Palestinian one demolished by the Israeli army. In these images the prickly-pear cactus figures both as the Israeli one—the Israeli/sabra/army as perpetrator of the act of demolition—and the Palestinian one—the cactus that remains in spite of villages having been destroyed; the Palestinian presence that remains steadfast, rooted and resilient in spite of the demolition of homes. The ironic fact that this cactus is not indigenous to the region at all, but is itself a transplant from Mexico dating from the 1700, has not prevented its saturated use as a symbol of indigenosity in both Israeli and Palestinian contexts.

The Jaffa Orange

The Jaffa Orange, and its cultivation and export, has been another contested symbol of indigenosity in Israeli and Palestinian discourses. Pre-State Zionist discourse was pre-occupied with asserting the "naturalization" of the Jew through physical labor and, very pointedly, through agricultural labor, re-connecting the Jew with the soil. In such a context, the importance of demonstrating the existence and success of Jewish labor, usually referred to at the time as "Hebrew labor," was articulated in a wide variety of songs, as well as in posters, e.g. in advertisements encouraging (Jewish) consumers to eat the fruits of this Hebrew labor such as "the Hebrew banana." The Jaffa Orange, once exported in the region as a product of Arab labor, ultimately came to be identified as the quintessential Israeli agricultural export and fruit of Hebrew labor in extensive markets abroad.

The orange has subsequently been used in non-agricultural contexts as consonant with being "authentically" or "quintessentially" Israeli. At a time when even the uniforms of El Al Airlines stewardesses were drafted to present the collective national image, the Jaffa orange figured centrally (Figure 2). These uniforms, used for nearly 15 years, were designed around the motif of "Israel as Jaffa orange," from the bright orange color to the helmet-like cap



Figure 2 El-Al Airline Flight Attendant in "Jaffa-Orange Inspired" Uniform. Slide provided courtesy of spokesman of El-Al Airlines.

designed to resemble an orange.⁷ Nostalgic collections of "love of country" Israeli folksongs use and re-use the image of the orange on their covers. The cover of one such anthology of songs entitled "The Very Best of Israel" (Ganor 1990) shows simply a large close-up photograph of an orange with the "Jaffa" emblem on it. Another anthology entitled "Homeland" (Ganor 1988) presents a harvest scene,

with a ladder leaning up into a cluster of lush orange trees laden with ripe oranges. Tel Aviv itself is portrayed as "the big orange" on the brightly-colored cover of a compact disk of songs by Arik Einstein, one of Israel's foremost singers most known for his classic "love of country" Israeli folksongs (Tartakover 1988, 1994).⁸ In this colorful drawing one large bright orange flies prominently in the foreground, while others are shown flying and hovering in the air over familiar Tel Aviv landmarks. Jerusalem is portrayed as "the big orange" on a Jerusalem storefront advertising its undisputably "all-Israeli" product, Israeli army surplus paraphernalia, to a tourist market (Figure 3).

Images of the orange have appeared in Israel's "post-Zionist" period that remove or alienate the orange from its revered, sacrosanct position. These works toy with the notion of the Israeli/orange as natural, as is evident in Menashe Kadishman's outdoor sculpture of "orange trees," that conspicuously denaturalizes the trees by rendering them in bright blue, with pop-art-like contrasting oranges (Kadishman 1975–1990). The artificiality of the trees is further effected and enhanced by their location—situated as they are in the middle of an actual garden with trees in Jerusalem. Havoc is wrought with the notion of the

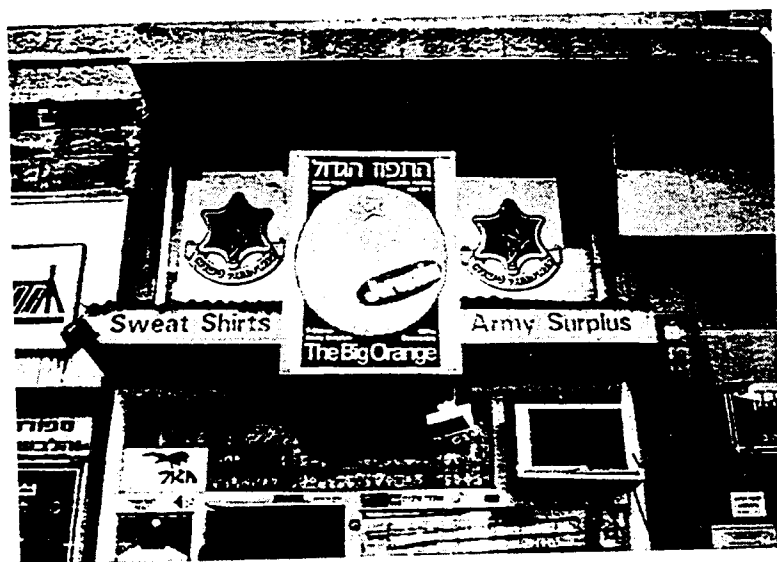


Figure 3 Jerusalem as "The Big Orange" on front of Jerusalem Army Surplus Store. Slide taken by author.

Israeli/orange as connected to and rooted in the land in Ran Morin's sculpture of an orange tree sprouting out of an orange both of which are suspended or hovering above the ground. The fact that this sculpture is located in the heart of what used to be the home of the Jaffa orange, the old port of Jaffa, in what is now Tel Aviv, serves to enhance this denaturalizing effect (Figure 4).

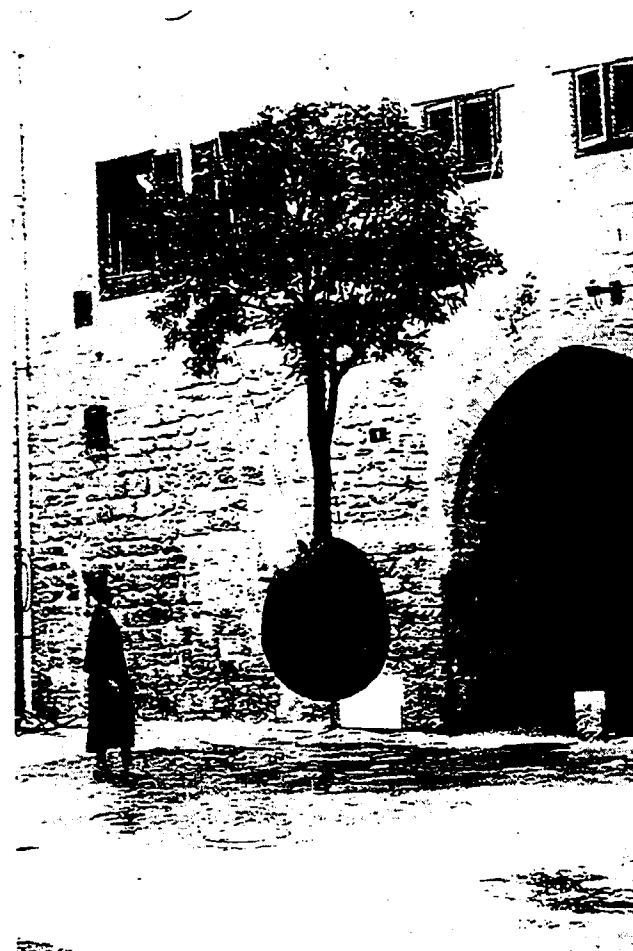


Figure 4 The Orange Tree denaturalized and rendered rootless, in Jaffa. Sculpture by Ran Morin. Reprint provided courtesy of artist.

Palestinian Rootlessness/Uprootedness

If I have situated much of what is described above in the framework of reactions to anxiety about Jewish rootlessness and the urgent compulsion to set down roots in the new homeland, the texture, history and development of a Palestinian discourse of rootedness is, not surprisingly, substantially different from the Jewish/Israeli one. It seems to come at an "opposite" moment in Palestinian collective memory, the moment of beginning to be uprooted and physically displaced from Palestine, and it appears and reappears almost as a fixation with each backward glance towards the lost homeland.

It accompanies the shock of being uprooted with the *nakba* or "collective catastrophe" of 1948. A short story by Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani, entitled "The Land of Sad Oranges" (*Arḍ al-Burtaqāl al-Ḥazin*; 1962) illustrates clearly how the shock and trauma of sudden displacement is immediately linked to an association with the trees back home or with their fruit. The story, told from the viewpoint of a young child, recounts how the family set out from their home in Jaffa to spend the holiday season in Acre in the north, only to become refugees when their ill-timed visit coincides with the Jewish conquest of the city, and the exodus of its Arab inhabitants north towards Lebanon. At a stop along the way the women go to buy oranges from a peasant; they burst into tears as they pick up the oranges, which become a metonym for the receding home of Palestine, and more specifically of Jaffa and the family's orange groves there. The child's uncle takes an orange from one of the women; he "gazed at it in silence, and then burst into tears like a despairing child." For the adults, the trauma of being uprooted is pushed to the surface by the sight of the oranges. The child does not quite comprehend the displacement, but as he watches the adults' reactions to seeing the oranges, their association of it with trauma is passed on to him. As he sees the men handing over their guns, and the long line of trucks of refugees winding into Lebanon, moving further and further away from the "land of oranges," he relates:

I too burst into a storm of weeping. Your mother was still looking silently at the orange. And all the orange trees which your father had abandoned to the Jews shone in his eyes, all the well-tended orange trees which he had bought one by

one were printed on his face and reflected in the tears which he could not control in front of the officer. (Kanafani 1993: 58)

As a refugee on the outskirts of Sidon, the child recalls the peasant who cultivated oranges "back home" who told him that the oranges would shrivel up if watered by a strange hand. The story closes with the child looking at the table at the bedside of his uncle, who has made an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide. The child's eyes fall on the revolver, and then on the orange beside it, which was "dried up and shriveled." The notion of the land and its trees remaining "loyal" (i.e., healthy, alive, and fruitful) only to its "rightful" tenders, and shriveling up as if in protest when tended to by strangers is a recurring theme in Palestinian writing.

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

Ambiguous Nostalgias

Before proceeding further into the terrain of Palestinian nostalgia, I would like to situate its discussion within the context of developments in the theoretical treatment of the subject of nostalgia. In "The Ambiguity of Nostalgia," Suzanne Vromen (1990) traces some of the most important shifts and developments in the conception of nostalgia. She begins with its origin as a term coined to describe what was viewed as a medical condition in a 1688 Swiss medical thesis by Johannes Hofer, which examined the phenomenon of Swiss soldiers serving in areas far from home and their affliction with the debilitating disease of nostalgia, which could be brought on suddenly, even fatally, by such stimuli as hearing Alpine music, or smells or tastes associated with "back home." Traces of the pathological model of nostalgia as a medical ailment are evident in the contemporary

term "homesickness." Both Vromen and cultural geographer David Lowenthal describe how the notion of nostalgia shifted from this to a more existential type of nostalgia, not necessarily for a particular place which could be "cured" by returning to it, but a more inconsolable type, e.g., nostalgia for one's youth, for an ideal from which one was distanced, etc. This "incurable" variety of nostalgia became an almost fashionable illness and an indicator of refined sensibilities among nineteenth-century European elites and in their literature (Lowenthal 1975).

Nostalgia, the longing for and conjuring up of aspects of the past, has had its camp of detractors, as well as those who have viewed it in more positive terms. One of the main points at issue, and one pertinent to the examination of Palestinian nostalgic representations, has been whether nostalgia is merely a reactionary escapist response to the "real world in the present" which merely lulls people into passivity, or if it is also capable of playing an enabling role in the construction of collective memory in ways that can be mobilized for resistance or other forms of engagement with the immediate present. Bearing in mind both the ubiquity of Palestinian nostalgic representations as well as the accusations and harsh self-criticism leveled at the early phases of the Palestinian response to its collective tragedy as passive and impotent, the relevance of the theoretical controversy surrounding nostalgia quickly becomes apparent.

Raymond Williams, one of nostalgia's outspoken detractors, views it as inauthentic and reactionary, likening it to opium that suppresses critique of the present by offering a comfortable falsification of the past, with the result that the "status quo is uncritically accepted and social change becomes more than unlikely" (Vromen 1993: 71; see Williams 1974). Maurice Halbwachs, the French sociologist and author of *"Les cadres sociaux de la memoire"* and of other seminal works on collective memory, viewed nostalgia quite differently. Halbwachs asserted the enabling capacity of nostalgia (1925; 1980), seeing it as a functional and intermittent response to a present that might be constraining, difficult, or unbearable. He stressed the importance of nostalgic remembering and recollection in tying people to "collective frameworks of social reference points which allow memories to be coordinated in time and space." He insisted that this process was rooted in the experienced present and

that it enabled those engaging in it to consider possibilities other than their present conditions, i.e., to contemplate and possibly enact change. Frederic Jameson also sees the liberating potential of a nostalgia that is "conscious of itself, a lucid and remorseless dissatisfaction with the present on the grounds of some remembered plenitude" (1969-70: 52-58).

Palestinian nostalgic representations would appear to articulate variably both wistful longings and sentimental recollection on the one hand, and a "remorseless dissatisfaction" at times inclining towards active resistance on the other. In Palestinian painting we find that nostalgic representations generalizing an idyllic peasant existence are ubiquitous; they include recurrent scenes of orange and olive harvests, such as those by one of the foremost contemporary Palestinian artists, Sliman Mansour. In another painting by the same artist, entitled "Palastina," Palestine "herself" is portrayed as a peasant woman bearing the emblematic orange-fruit of the land in her arms. In his poem "A Lover From Palestine," Maḥmūd Darwīsh incorporates images of oranges and orange groves in his simultaneously sentimental and bitter portrayal of longing for home while separated from it, a portrayal shot through with the determination to keep the memory alive. He writes:

I seek the wisdom of the forefathers.
How is it that the green orange grove can be dragged
To a prison, to an exile, to a port,
And despite all its travels,
Despite the scents of salt and longing,
Still remain so green?
I jot down in my diary: I love oranges. And I hate the port.
And I write further:
On the dock at the port
I stood.—The world was bleak as winter's eyes.
All we have is the orange peel, and behind me lay the desert. (Darwīsh 1968: 7-8)

In this representation as well, the orange grove is emblematic of homeland/Palestine itself, and functions as a vivid, private homeland of the mind, carried around both as a painful reminder of loss and as consolation and inspiration in the face of that loss. It is a virtual homeland that can be accessed at will regardless of the circumstances

preventing access to the "actual" homeland. The image of the orange is employed here to articulate the gap between the idealized remembered homeland, always intact and green as a flourishing grove, and the reality of loss of that idealized homeland, likened to an orange peel, removed from its organic "whole" and destined to dry up and decay. Bethlehem-based artist 'Adnān Zbeidi (1987) mobilizes the Jaffa orange in a bitter portrayal of the "real" Jaffa orange, understood as the Jaffa and Palestine of Palestinians, having the juice and life squeezed out of it in the process of the Jewish building of Tel Aviv and, by extension, of Israel itself, with the juice of the orange being poured into a six-pointed Star-of-David shaped vessel (Figure 5).

While indignant or bitter portrayals of what has been done to the "Jaffa orange" of Palestinians are to be found, representations of an irreverent or cynical nature (of the types referred to above in the Israeli context) towards the orange as a symbol of Palestinian indigeness and rootedness are far less common in the Palestinian cultural landscape. Perhaps the uncertainty and precariousness of the state of Palestinian rootedness, in the context of continuously thwarted attempts at even a semblance of Palestinian independence or statehood, does not tend to give rise to such discursive threads. One interesting such representation is, however, to be found in a series of "E-mail Memoirs" about Jaffa, dispatched in a series of installments, by a Palestinian anthropologist who dares to be irreverent about the sacrosanct symbol of the Palestinian orange, and specifically the Jaffa-ite orange (Jaffa List 1996). Like many second-generation Palestinian refugees, she makes periodical visits/pilgrimages to her parents' hometown of Jaffa. Her memoirs poignantly articulate the mixture of reactions and connections to her parent's past and her own present relationship to the "place" that surface on these trips. On the one hand, we find this impulse, shared by so many other Palestinian "pilgrims" to sites of loss:

I am still overwhelmed by the desire to uncover that past of Jaffa hidden under the new signs and make it live again through my father's and other exiles' stories and how they link to a pavement I walk on, a shopfront now boarded over, or a series of three old cypress trees in a front garden.



Figure 5 Squeezing the Life/Juice out of the Palestinian Jaffa Orange. 'Adnān Zbeidi, Untitled, Oil on Canvas, 1987. Reprinted with permission of artist.

At the same time, she likes going to Jaffa with a particular friend because

...he harbors many of the resentments that I do about the oppressive reverence with which children of Jaffaites are supposed to react to the place, as well the desire to resist the overwhelming anger and bitterness one feels about the subversion of Jaffa's history.

The author describes the emotional trepidation with which she always goes to Jaffa, and the dissipated anger and disappointment she always feels upon her return to Jerusalem, repeatedly coming to the conclusion that she does not want to return to Jaffa again. For someone who grew up with Jaffa as an iconic myth, a place that "doesn't exist in reality but only in the world of lost paradises, a place which any other place or way of being can never really measure up to," going to the "actual" Jaffa of today can only be a disappointment.

I feel so burdened by Jaffa—like any child of a Jaffaite (there are no "former Jaffaites"—they never really left in '48—they still carry it around with them everywhere and always). I would love to be able to walk through Jaffa and not be burdened by its past and my duty to that past...

But when her ambivalent irreverence toward the memory of Jaffa extends to the memory of the family oranges, and her family learns that she has exposed this in the public sphere of the internet, it is deemed a transgression, albeit one which actually consists of relating the "transgression" of her uncle. She recalls a family visit to her uncle in Bonn when she is fourteen years old:

My mother (not from Jaffa) is in a temper with my father—later I learn the reason. In a discussion of what the family lost in Jaffa, my mother decries the loss of all those orange groves. My father's innocent brother unknowingly sets the record straight. "We didn't have any groves, grandfather... was only an orange merchant not a grower." For twenty years of marriage my mother, fed on the past glories of Jaffa, had been told of the family's great estate and its loss. Somehow my father had never had the courage to tell her the truth.

Persistent Memory: The Palestinian Prickly-Pear Cactus

We have seen how the prickly-pear cactus has been used to affirm Palestinian presence as indigenous (on visits to sites of destroyed villages), and how it has been employed as a symbol of Israeli neo-indigenism. As alluded to above, the persistent presence of prickly-pear cactus grown out of control on the sites of hundreds of destroyed villages, in spite of the planting and building that has

been done in re-making these sites, is a haunting and ubiquitous reminder or marker of Palestinian memory. We also find the image of the prickly-pear cactus used on the cover of some of the *Bir Zeit* series of "memory books" of individual destroyed Palestinian villages, as emblematic of the overall function of these books—to assert former presence and to articulate the memory of particular villages (Ya'qūb 1995).

A painting by the Palestinian artist Fathī Ghaban depicts a Palestinian mother in peasant dress, with a child, nestled in the midst of the prickly-pear cactus, which protects and shields them from the dangers of the scenes of war and fighting around them (Figure 6). While this representation reinscribes the traditional function of the cactus as a border-fence of the Palestinian village, delineating different kinds of space, it also adds a protective aspect to it, as well as the implication that the features connecting the cactus and peasant mother/child, embedded within each other as they are in the painting, are their authenticity, their rootedness, and their "staying power" or steadfastness. A sculpture by Rana Bishara (Untitled) foregrounds the use of traces to construct memory of the Palestinian village through a unique utilization of the prickly-pear cactus plant. The sculpture consists of an old worn wooden window frame, which connotes familiar traces of former Palestinian existence, the remains of a home. The inside of the frame is filled with the irregularly-shaped patches of the "skeleton" or dried-out remains of actual prickly-pear cactus plants. A close-up view of the cactus plant skeletons reveals the variegated texture of this unusual medium, as well as the manner in which the remnants of this memory-piece are barely held together, literally sewn together as patches.

In Palestinian discourse, we find the prickly-pear cactus further developed in the direction of the assertion of defiant memory, and as a symbol of becoming a fighter and joining the Palestinian resistance. In Tawfiq Zayyād's 1966 poem "We Shall Remain Here," the prickly-pear cactus and its thorns act as a persistent and threatening "thorn in the enemy's side." He writes:

In Lidda, in Ramla, in the Galilee, we shall remain
like a wall upon your chest,



Figure 6 Palestinian Prickly-pear Cactus as protective, steadfast and rooted in the face of adversity. Fathi Ghaban, Oil on Canvas, 1978. Slide provided courtesy of Sliman Mansour, Palestinian Artists' Union.

and in your throat like a piece of glass, or thorny cactus,
and in your eyes a sandstorm. (1970: 197–98)

In Sahar Khalifeh's novel entitled "The Prickly-Pear Cactus" (1976) we learn that to "become a thorn" is to become transformed

into someone completely dedicated to the collective Palestinian cause, willing to fight, kill and be killed without regard for personal interests. A character, Zuhdi, who has been an accommodationist to Israeli occupation, willing to compromise "the cause" for personal comfort and safety, finds himself near the end of the novel in a position where he can no longer straddle the fence; he says to himself: "You're a thorn now. Yes, a thorn in spite of yourself... Well then. Pick up the machine-gun and fire! Fire!" (Khalifeh 1991: 182). The Israelis are firing upon Palestinian guerillas who have attacked the bus Zuhdi was on, a busload of Palestinian workers. Zuhdi fires back in the direction of the Israelis, and is killed.

A somewhat more complex or at least ambiguous employment of the prickly-pear cactus is found in the paintings of the Palestinian-Israeli artist 'Āṣim Abū Shaqra. Shortly before his death several years ago, his work came to focus almost obsessively on a single theme: the prickly-pear cactus in a planter, with variations in color, size and texture. His work enjoyed a surprisingly wide acclaim among the Jewish-Israeli public, with a series of group and individual exhibitions in Israel's most prestigious museums, quite a rare phenomenon for a Palestinian-Israeli artist. It has generated much debate within the Israeli establishment of art critics (not in the Palestinian-Israeli sector, however, where it has barely been shown or discussed), though interpretations vary. Some assume that the cactus is the "Israeli" one, and that his paintings represent his aspiring to become an Israeli "sabra," to assimilate, to be accepted, but finding himself alienated (like a plant removed from its natural environment) in the move from village life to fast-paced Tel Aviv. Others have read his work as more assertive of a Palestinian identity, interpreting his rendering of the "real" cactus as the Palestinian one, uprooted and transplanted into unnatural contexts because of Israeli hegemony, and reading as a subversive maneuver his "sneaking in" the Palestinian *ṣabir* in the guise of the Israeli *tsabar*. Still others have seen in his work an irreducible and inextricable co-mingling of both the Palestinian and the Israeli cactus, with layers of significance that fall outside of this binary dichotomy (Abū Shaqra 1994).

Memory of Trees, Trees with a Memory

A variety of other kinds of trees are objects upon which memory is projected in Palestinian discourse. Abū Salma's poem, "I Love You," a kind of declaration of love for Palestine from exile, illustrates the combination of sentimental lamentation and defiance:

The more I fight for you, the more I love you!
 The branch of my life turns greener when I uphold you....
 Has the lemon tree been nurtured by our tears? ...
 The little orchards weep for us, gardens grow desolate,
 the vines are forever saddened. (1978: 26-27)

Articulated here again is the notion that the trees and vines of Palestine wilt and grow desolate in the absence of their rightful tenders, while the exiled tender can himself be made green and alive by keeping the memory of Palestine alive in his mind and fighting for it.

In the earlier discussion of the "landscape reading" at Ghabsiyah, we saw how the very presence of the prickly-pear cactus and fruit-bearing trees on the site of the village served to "bear witness" to what had happened. The trees constituted living proof that the village and its people had once been there. The theme of trees bearing witness appears in poetic representations as well. In view of its longevity, it is not surprising that the olive tree is most frequently singled out for this role. It is presumed that the olive tree will survive the tragedies, outlive both perpetrators and victims, and remain to tell the tale, and as such is the most appropriate repository for Palestinian memory. In 1965, in a poem entitled "On the Trunk of an Olive Tree," Tawfiq Zayyād wrote defiantly of how every detail of the Palestinian tragedy would be carved as a lasting testament on an olive in the courtyard of the house.

... I shall carve the record of all my sufferings, and all my secrets,
 On an olive tree, in the courtyard, of the house....
 ... I shall carve the number of each deed of our usurped land.
 The location of my village and its boundaries.
 The demolished houses of its people, my uprooted trees,
 ... And to remember it all,
 I shall continue to carve all the chapters of my tragedy,

and all the stages of the disaster, from beginning to end,
 On the olive tree, in the courtyard, of the house. (1978: 287-92)

The olive tree appears frequently in visual representations as emblematic of Palestinian rootedness and of the revered quality of *ṣumūd* or steadfastness, an insistence upon remaining, a defiant refusal to be uprooted. A painting by Amīn Ishtai, for example (Figure 7), portrays the blended figure of an olive tree and a man, respective trunk and torso merged together, one "human" leg, the other incorporated as the lower part of the tree-trunk. This man-tree figure, whose feet extend into the ground to become the tree's roots is set in the foreground of the painting, against the backdrop of the village, embodying the assertion that Palestinian man, tree and village will not be moved or uprooted. Another rendering in the "man-as-tree" vein is a painting by 'Adnān Zbeidi (1977) which depicts a huge man's head draped in traditional Palestinian head-covering (*ḥaṭṭa*) emerging from the the ground up to the neck in the midst of a small cluster of olive trees, as if one of them. Large forearms with clenched fists hold fast to the trunks of the other trees, in a strong and defiant assertion of Palestinian rootedness and staying power. Still another painting (Zāyid 1995), which appears on the cover of a book about Palestinians in Israeli prisons, likens the imprisonment of the Palestinian to the bloody cutting down of a large olive tree. The painting presents the sawed-off stump of a thick olive tree, blood running from its "wounds" in rivulets into small pools on the ground. Resilience in the face of adversity is articulated in the form of new shoots and branches springing up with vitality from the sites of cutting/wounds on the trunk, as well as in the image of two human hands with clenched fists raised into the air above the severed trunk which have broken the shackles still dangling from the wrists. Representations conflating the identity and experience of Palestinians with that of trees, and the olive tree in particular, are ubiquitous, frequently incorporating the features of the tree being cut at its base, bleeding human blood, and having sprigs of new growth.

Anton Shammas has recently written an essay entitled "Auto-cartography: The Case of Palestine, Michigan" (1993) in which we see what becomes of nostalgic longings for Palestine as they are



Figure 7 As Rooted as the Olive Tree. Amin Ishtai, Untitled, Oil on Canvas, 1977. Reprinted with permission of artist.

passed on to successive generations increasingly removed from the "primal site". A Palestinian-American woman living in Dearborn, Michigan becomes aware for the first time of a desire to "go home to Palestine," which she has never seen. She tries to conjure up an image of a Palestine based on her grandmother's memory of it. All of Palestine has been reduced to one image of a lemon tree

for her:

For A.'s grandmother, an old refugee in Lebanon, Palestine is no more than a lemon tree in the backyard of the house she left in Jafa... Not even a room, not even the facade of a house, but just a tree in the backyard, hidden away from the bustle of main street politics; the tree under whose shadow she always imagines herself sitting, dreaming away her days. Say Palestine to her, and all she sees is herself, as she is now, sitting under that tree, breathing in the scent of its leaves and its early flowers. (1993: 4)

Ultimately, the only fragments of her grandmother's memory of Palestine that A. could "salvage" or make her own was the sound of the word *lamoon* (lemon), and imagining herself going instead to the "Palestine, Michigan" that an American friend of hers has discovered on a computer atlas.

* * *

It is clearly not the case that the Palestinian representations cited above are simply instances of indulgence in nostalgia for the lost or ruined homeland that would serve merely to lull to passivity. In fact, the examples given (and many others not cited here) would seem to undermine the theoretical dichotomy about nostalgia mentioned above as "either" escapist/inducing passivity "or" enabling/encouraging action. Both among and within these representations, one finds threads of nostalgic recollection in a sentimental or lamenting mode, as well as bitter nostalgic memory, articulations of discontent with the status quo, and sometimes the promise or threat to take action to change that status quo.

Palestinian Tree-Planting

A new kind of Palestinian tree-planting has been increasingly reported over the last decade, distinct from traditional Palestinian tree-planting in agricultural contexts and around the homes of individual families. In a number of areas in Israel and the West Bank, Palestinians have organized community "tree-planting campaigns," in what in all likelihood is an appropriation of Israeli tree-planting. In these instances, the campaigns have been organized as attempts to prevent Israeli expropriation of contested lands,

or of Palestinian land that has been slated for expropriation. Majd al-Kurūm, a village in the Galilee, has received considerable public attention as a village whose lands have been expropriated particularly extensively by Israel over the years. In response (and in consultation with Israeli leftists), Majd al-Kurūm has sponsored a community-wide "Galilee Olive Tree Day," a kind of Palestinian "Tu B'Shvat," in which participating members of the community go out to an area charted for expropriation and plant olive saplings on it, in an attempt to re-assert connection to and ownership of their land. This strategy of organized tree-planting by Palestinians as an attempt to defend territory, not necessarily on such specially designated days but as the need arises, has been utilized on an increasingly regular basis as the pace of land expropriation for construction of Israeli "by-pass roads" in the West Bank has picked up dramatically in the shadow of the final status stage of the 1993 peace accords.

Burning the Forests: Deracination

Another variation on the theme of racination and de-racination is found in the Palestinian practice of burning "Jewish" forests, alluded to above in discussion of the A.B. Yehoshua story, "Facing the Forests." While this is said to have gone on sporadically before the *intifāda* as well there was a widespread outbreak of instances of Palestinians setting fire to forests planted by the JNF during the earlier years of the *intifāda*, and more isolated instances as recently as the summer of 1995. If the JNF forests were living assertions of Jewish rootedness in the country, this Palestinian protest took the form of severing those roots, of de-racinating symbolic Jewish presence and connection to the land, through torching these forests.

In 1988, one particular instance of this kind of "politically-motivated" arson struck a raw nerve among Israelis, when vast regions of the forests of the Carmel in the area outside of Haifa were set on fire and burned out of control, causing unprecedented destruction. In the wake of this incident, the cartoonist of the "Dry Bones" comic strip in the Jerusalem Post depicted the PLO as giving

out "Tree Burning Certificates" to those who set fire to JNF forests, a play on the "Tree Planting Certificates" traditionally given by the JNF to those who plant trees in their forests.

* * *

I will close with a final example of "contested roots" which further illustrates the political potential of "multiply-inhabited" practices and repositories of collective memory. In 1980, a song by the Israeli songwriter Naomi Shemer was released and became quite popular. It was, in part at least, a somewhat sentimental and nostalgic Israeli folk song, entitled "The Honey and the Thorn." The song recounts some of the good, simple pleasures in life, calls upon people to appreciate and cherish these things, and makes an ardent appeal to God to safeguard all of these precious things in life, simple, bitter or sweet as they may be. The words to the refrain are as follows:

Please, dear lord, protect all of these things for me,
The honey and the thorn, the bitter and the sweet;
Please do not uproot that which has been planted, do not forget hope,
Return me, and we shall return to the good land. (Shemer 1980)

While Shemer claims she did not write the song with the following in mind, it became a kind of 'anthem' for Israelis who had settled in the Sinai (conquered by Israel in 1967), who fiercely resisted being removed from Sinai towns before the peninsula was returned to Egypt as a result of the Camp David peace accords. Apart from this particular sector of Israelis, the song enjoyed a tremendous popularity among the general Israeli public, with its sentimental echo of the old fear of being uprooted, or "rootlessness anxiety."

In 1980-81, as in other years, Palestinian students at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem were allowed to have social gatherings with entertainment and music, as long as they were deemed by the university authorities as being strictly "non-nationalistic" and apolitical. In the event that nationalistic songs were sung, the authorities would close the gathering. This particular year, a scheduled gathering with musical entertainment by a group of students was approved. One of the numbers the group sang at this gathering,

however, was the same song just mentioned, written by Naomi Shemer, and sung by Palestinian students, in Hebrew: "Do not uproot that which has been planted, don't forget hope; Return me and we shall return, to the good land." By the time the refrain came around a second time, the entertainment was deemed subversive, and the party was broken up.

Notes

1. *Ṣabir* being the term for the prickly-pear cactus in Palestinian Arabic, *ṣabar* being the term for the same in Hebrew, and *sabra* being a commonly-used Anglicized form of the word used with the meanings and connotations of the Hebrew variant.
2. Such as the appropriation of Jewish religious tradition into secular Zionist discourse in the re-construction of holidays with an agricultural component, for example.
3. The Tomb of the Patriarchs/Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron, for example; the site of the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, and intense tree-planting competition between the Jewish National Fund and various Palestinian villages on lands claimed by both.
4. In response to being asked about his 'roots,' in a conversation in a Cambridge common room, cited by Simon Schama (1995: 29).
5. *Irgun Tsva'i Le'umi*, the pre-1948 underground Jewish terrorist organization in British-ruled Palestine.
6. Based on visits to al-Ghabsiyah in the summer of 1994.
7. Interview with El Al Airlines spokesman, July 1994.
8. In Hebrew these songs are referred to as *shirei erets-yisrael* (Land of Israel songs) or *shirei ahavat ha-arets* (love of country songs), popular designations for a virtual genre of Israeli folksongs.

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