

CHAPTER FIVE



Dying to Live

In this new period of Al-Aqsa Intifada, Palestinian factions that engaged in martyrdom operations gained increased popular support and those that did not carry out similar operations in the resistance discourse compromised their support. Subgroups within the PLO, such as Fatah, formed their own wings and started participating in martyrdom activities in 2002. The Fatah leaders who supported these initiatives, like Marwan Barghouthi, gained wide grassroots support.¹ Other PLO factions like the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), historically secular and Marxist organizations, also joined in conducting martyrdom operations on Israeli targets. By 2002 the Palestinian martyrdom operations were no longer the unique practice of Islamic movements but rather a popular Palestinian form of resistance embraced, executed, and supported by Islamic, secular, and Marxist forces in Palestinian society. It was no longer necessary to recruit people for these operations: there were enough volunteers. In this chapter I uncover the cultural momentum that the martyrdom discourse generated in this period. I seek to understand how martyrdom became a cultural discourse that in effect forced itself on some of the factions rather than being a strategy of choice. I would caution the reader that my intent from these explorations is not to promote this form of martyrdom but rather to explain how it has become popular.

Al-Istishhadiyat: The Martyrous (Female) Ones

By January 2002 Fatah, the main PLO faction and a secular group, joined in executing martyrdom operations and introducing yet another dimen-

sion to them by sending women to carry them out for the first time. The introduction of Fatah into the organizing groups and of women as carriers helped to widen popular support for these operations. Fatah's introduction of women, *istishhadiyyat* (the feminine of *istishhadiyeen*), was related to Fatah's regional political goals and aimed at distinguishing Fatah's role in the Palestinian resistance as that of an innovator rather than a follower.

Since the 1960s pressuring Arab regimes to confront Israel has been a prominent part of Fatah's political tactics (Gowers and Walker 1991). Between January 2002 and April 2002 Fatah executed four martyrdom operations—all carried out by women (Wafa Idris, Dareen Abu 'Aisheh, Ayat al-Akhras, and 'Andaleeb Taqatqeh) and three carried out in the city of Jerusalem—and all of the carriers' messages referred to the silence of neighboring Arab states. During this same period there was intensified Arab diplomacy around a Saudi proposal backed by the United States that was the main subject of the Arab League Summit in Beirut in March 2002. Unlike the Islamic groups who construct martyrdom acts with aesthetics that can achieve a maximum impact on Israel and be more meaningful to Palestinians, the aesthetics of Fatah's operations are geared to create maximum pressure on Arab regimes. The performance of sacrifice by Arab and Muslim women in the occupied city of Jerusalem, thus making the sacrifice for Jerusalem, was intended to have the maximum embarrassing, pressuring, and destabilizing effect on the Arab and Muslim regimes in the region. This was clearly the political goal, as stressed by the martyrs' messages, and the timing of the missions to coincide with heightened regional diplomacy. Frances Hasso (2005) provides an insightful review of the wider impact that these operations had in the Arab countries and discusses in depth the significance of gender in these operations in particular. Hasso shows how the ways these women's acts were presented situated them as "gendered-political subjects." Barbara Victor (2003) also gives us a window into the intimate details of the female martyrs' lives as well as the lives of some of their Israeli victims. Victor reports on a rally held by the PA especially for women at which Yasser Arafat addressed a crowd of women and girls and praised Palestinian women's role in the struggle. Arafat reportedly said, "You are my army of roses that will crush the Israeli tanks" (Victor 2003, 19). Later that afternoon the first woman martyrdom operation was conducted in Jerusalem by Wafa Idris and credit was claimed by

Fatah's Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. The instrumentality of introducing women into the performance of martyrdom acts came to the fore.

In her analysis of the wide impact that these operations had on the Arab political scene, Hasso finds that three in particular resonated in the Arab media and on the Arab streets in the form of demonstrations. Hasso also wonders why the fourth operation did not have such an impact: "Since she was the first woman to undertake such an attack, Wafa Idris received more international and regional media attention than the typical Palestinian man bomber and more than two of the three Palestinian women bombers who followed her in 2002 (the exception is Ayat Al-Akhras). The lack of significant regional attention to Dareen Abu 'Aisheh is a puzzle, since she was the first to leave a videotape explaining her intentions and actions" (81). Hasso's puzzlement can be explained when the violent act is understood as a performance, of which aesthetics are an important component. Dareen Abu 'Aisheh's mission was the only one of the four that was not performed in Jerusalem. The Arab and Muslim connection to Palestine is symbolized in the historical connection to Jerusalem. Executing the operation in an Israeli settlement in the West Bank, as with Dareen Abu 'Aisheh, causes the performance to lose the component of sacrifice embedded in it. Palestinians do not have the connection to this particular Israeli settlement as a historical Palestinian site or city, much as the primary connection of the broader Arab and Muslim world is to the city of Jerusalem. In the other three operations Jerusalem was the object of sacrifice, the party to which the sacrifice was addressed. Similarly, the aesthetics of Ayat al-Akhras's performance were more pronounced because of her age (eighteen), the timing of the performance (on the heels of the Beirut Summit), the decision to stage her performance in Jerusalem, and the clear, overt reference in her operation statement to the Arab silence. All of this gave her mission added potency, which generated the strongest regional impact among the four. Prompted by the women's performances and right after Ayat's mission the Saudi government, to reduce the political pressures weighing on it, opened a public donation drive on public television that lasted a whole day: over \$100 million was raised to support the Palestinian intifada.

Locally Fatah regained credibility, as it was still engaged in the armed resistance and did not abandon the path of armed struggle. This involvement further gave the Fatah and the PA leadership political leverage in their continued engagement with Israel on the basis of the Oslo arrange-

ment. The political leadership of Fatah and the PA implicitly use the work of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades to give legitimacy to their dialogue with Israel as diplomacy backed by resistance, even though much of their dialogue with Israel focuses on security arrangements in general and the containment of resistance groups in particular. However, the idea of women's participation in martyrdom operations quickly took on its own cultural life. By the time Islamic Jihad and al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades executed the joint operation of Hiba Daraghmeh in the Israeli city of Afula north of Jenin in May 2002, women's participation had developed cultural meanings beyond the instrumental political goals set in motion by Fatah. Islamic Jihad later used women's martyrdom operations to project a maximum effect locally on Palestinians and Israelis as well as regionally and internationally in an operation in Haifa in October 2003, which I explore in detail later in this chapter.

Hamas and Islamic Jihad were resistant to sending women on martyrdom operations. Their reasoning was that there was no shortage of male volunteers. However, it is clear from the responses to Fatah's launching of a series of operations carried out by women that women wanted to take part in this form of resistance. The best example is Dareen Abu 'Aisheh: although she was a Hamas activist, her mission was organized solely by al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, and on a videotape she wore a scarf decorated with the symbols of Hamas's Izzideen al-Qassam Martyrs Brigades. Her willingness to do so demonstrates the eagerness with which some women wanted to take part in martyrdom operations: Hamas would not give Dareen the opportunity, so she carried out her mission under the banner of another group and decorated herself with the symbols of still another, even without shifting her political allegiance. The circumstances were similar with Hiba Daraghmeh's joint operation between Islamic Jihad and Fatah. Later both groups allowed women to carry out martyrdom operations, partly in response to women's desire to be participants and partly because of the significant impact that the performance of sacrifice by women had on the public.

The “Typical Suicide Bomber”

Many Israeli scholars and think tanks try to draw a profile of the “typical suicide bomber” (Mirrari 1990; Farkash 2003). Similarly, western media

commentators try to uncover the “mind of the suicide bomber,” hoping to identify some shared psychological characteristics. So who are the “suicide bombers,” and what do they look like? What is their psyche? What religious ideas drive them to carry out their acts? These and similar questions have been guiding much of the Israeli and western research and journalistic inquiries on the subject of martyrdom in Palestine and elsewhere (Davis 2003; Reich 1990; Robins and Post 1997; Reuter 2004; Victor 2003).

As I discussed above, participants in martyrdom operations willingly offer themselves to the facilitating groups. In an interview, Kamal, one of the local leaders of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades in Jenin, asserted that there were not only enough volunteers but too many: “We started to tell people to look after their kids.”² Why do so many people want to participate in an operation that will cost them their life?

The cultural processes associated with and generated by the performance of martyrdom operations construct a cultural discourse within which a pattern of motivation to carry them through has developed in Palestinian society under occupation. Most of those who volunteer for martyrdom operations are not active members of the armed resistance but rather ordinary members of society who are not necessarily active in politics. In an interview, a Fatah activist, Shalabi, explained that often members of the organized resistance would prefer to go on a shooting operation, in which they would engage with the Israelis until they die, rather than strap themselves with explosives in a martyrdom operation.³ People are motivated by a variety of reasons, depending on their personal history. But above all it is the discourse of martyrdom in Palestine that blends personal experience with local knowledge and situates cultural ideas in relation to mimetic encounters with Israel and opposition to its policies: this discourse generates a poetics rich in sensory meanings and political goals that provide a system of motivation.

I have reviewed the personal profiles of mission carriers who executed acts of martyrdom between 2001 and 2004 and interviewed some of their parents and family members. I found that many but not all of the mission carriers had firsthand experience with physical violence at the hands of the Israeli state. Furthermore, there are no special indicators that might identify participants based on economic conditions, education level, level of religious belief, or the presence of specific psychological

conditions. Participants included members of the poorest communities, the middle class, and, rarely, the affluent communities of Ramallah. Moreover, participants have been school dropouts, university students, and university graduates, people religious and secular, male and female, as young as seventeen and as old as forty-nine. As Reuter (2004) reports, the Israeli army think tanks as well as prominent Israeli psychologists have been trying to develop a profile of the “typical suicide bomber” and find that to do so is a mission impossible. The Israeli psychologist Ariel Merrari of Tel Aviv University, who has been studying suicide bombers for a long time, could not come up with any narrow profile of a Palestinian martyrdom mission carrier.

Mission carriers may be motivated by the history of social suffering, their own experiences with state violence, a fascination with the notion of sacrifice for the land and the symbolic, sensory meanings of sacrifice, a fascination with the concept of martyrdom and ideas about the after-life, a preference for the cultural life of the martyr over their present lives, or a commitment to or fear of the Divine. In addition, they can be motivated by ideas of prestige and social grouping, or the prospect of reclaiming one’s honor after being suspected of collaborating with the Israelis. But these experiences can only motivate a person to execute the martyrdom operation within a cultural discourse that melds personal experiences with cultural ideas. In this respect, the individual is not separate from the social analysis, and the cultural representations are not separate from firsthand experiences (Kleinman, Das, and Lock 1997). Martyrdom operations have a fully developed cultural form beyond the political goals of the organizing groups and the motivations and experiences of the individual actor. Alongside their multiple performances, in different multiple settings and with different aesthetics, martyrdom operations are given meanings by multiple Palestinian and regional viewers and cultural performers, and they generate social and political processes within which this form of violence takes its own cultural form. The martyrdom operations gained their popularity through the multiple articulations that accompany their application in the broader Palestinian cultural discourse of resistance, the sensory meanings embedded in the aesthetics of their performance, the nature of the encounter with the state of Israel, and the ways these operations mimic Israeli state violence. This discourse is not a calculated strategic construction by groups and

individuals but rather a product of the natural reactions, expressions, and social processes that the performance of martyrdom operations generated in various sectors of Palestinian society when conceived against a backdrop of Israeli practices.

It is precisely within this cultural discourse of martyrdom in Palestine that a system of motivation arises, a product of personal experiences melded with political goals and cultural ideas through symbiotic articulations, manipulations, and transformations over time, along with mimetic encounters with the “enemy” over the landscape of Palestine. Once this motivation system is fully developed, it becomes real for everyone that lives in the habitus. It is within the habitus that this cultural discourse takes place once the individual becomes socially integrated into it and the cultural representations of the experiences of others are no longer separate from the process of experiencing. In my analysis I refer to this system of motivation as the “poetics of the resistance,” building on the notion of Whitehead (2004) of a “poetics of violence” to refer to the effects of the semiotic performances over time. Still, the articulation of this discourse does not necessarily illuminate the agency of individuals and groups. All that the analysis tells us is that participants can come from any group integrated into this cultural discourse. But participation is still the result of individual and group choice. People may conceive of the same similar cultural ideas expressed through martyrdom as the martyrs do but choose to express them differently. Participation in martyrdom is still a choice, even though the choice may have been made within a cultural discourse that paved the way for making it. This chapter explores the articulation of this martyrdom discourse and uncovers its magnitude.

The Life of the Martyr

I begin by looking into the life histories of three participants: Ragheb, a seventeen-year-old *istishhadi* (masculine) mission carrier, Hanadi, a twenty-nine-year-old *istishhadiyya* (feminine) mission carrier, and Eyad, an organizer of martyrdom operations with Islamic Jihad who was eventually assassinated. Since the identities of the martyrs and by association their families, whom I interviewed, can easily be found in numerous articles and other publications about the acts of martyrdom, I asked for

and obtained permission from the three families to use the real names of the participants.

I chose my interview subjects to obtain a representative sample of participants in martyrdom operations. Eyad was an activist from the first intifada who during the Oslo peace process changed his allegiance from Fatah to Islamic groups; many of the leaders who organize martyrdom operations have similar histories. Ragheb is representative of many istishadiyeen who are young and not active in politics, and whose participation in carrying out an operation came as a surprise to family and friends. Hanadi took part in an atypical mission as a result of undergoing unusual life experiences. Exploring the life histories of these three participants will enable us to see what they had in common as well as how they differed.

The families of all three participants subsequently had their homes destroyed by the Israeli army. Some family members have been arrested and released. During the interviews, I refer to the parents of each martyr based on the Palestinian tradition of calling the father *Abu* (father of) and the mother *Um* (mother of), followed by the first name of the martyred son or daughter.⁴ For example, I call Eyad's father Abu Eyad, and Eyad's mother Um Eyad. All three subjects are from the Jenin area, and all carried out operations for which credit was claimed by Islamic Jihad. In the following pages I examine their personal profiles, activist profiles, personal experiences with violence, conceptions of martyrdom and sacrifice, and ideas about land, whether in their thoughts or in the cultural contextualization of their operations.

Most of the information that I present about the participants' lives is from my interviews with their families and friends. I explore two martyrdom operations by examining their preparation and execution, as well as the cultural discourse created by their performance. I chose not to interview people who were preparing to go on a mission for ethical reasons and because of security concerns. The ethical dilemma would arise if I knew of a specific mission that would cause physical harm to others and were in a position to prevent it. And there were security concerns because even if an organization planning a mission were able to conceal its details and the identity of the mission carrier, if the mission failed (and many missions do), I would become suspected of being responsible for its failure and might be viewed as a threat to the organizers.

Eyad Sawalha

The information presented here on Eyad's life history is based on interviews with his family members (father, mother, and younger brother) and leaflets and publications issued by Islamic Jihad.

Personal Profile

Eyad was born on 2 February 1972 in the village of Kufor Rai'i. He was a member of a family of fifteen, with five boys and eight girls. He was the sixth child in the family. His father started working in the Gulf in 1953.⁵ After his parents got married in 1960 the father continued working in the Gulf but left his wife behind in Palestine. The father started as a plumber but later opened his own electric supply shop in Abu Dhabi, which he called Sharikat al-Fida' (Sacrifice Corporation). The mother, Um Eyad, brought up the family alone, the father visiting only in the summer for a month or two. His mother described what it was like to be the head of the family, manage the orchard, and build the house on her own: "There was no electricity, no water, and no gas. I used to collect twigs and use it to heat water to wash cloths, cook, and everything." She added, "I built the house. I used to sift the nai'meh,⁶ get it ready, get the water, and get everything ready for the jableh."⁷ Abu Eyad said, "She also planted the olive trees." In addition to raising her children, Um Eyad took care of eight dunums⁸ of plum and cherry orchards and planted forty-five dunums of olive trees, maintaining them and harvesting them.

Eyad finished the eleventh grade, then transferred to Qalandia Technical Institute in the fall of 1988 and spent one year learning welding and mechanics. His family and friends describe him as having a very cool temper and an exceptionally generous soul. His mother said, "I would be screaming at him and he would keep his smile and cool." Eyad stayed in touch with his family throughout his time on the run. His mother said, "Under the worst circumstances he made sure he stays in contact with us, especially his mother, and in contact with the needy in the village."

The Activist Profile

When the first intifada started in 1987 Eyad was fifteen years old. He became active in the intifada, making Molotov cocktails. He once got



One of several posters for Eyad Sawalha distributed in the Jenin area.

arrested and spent eighteen days in administrative detention. After he moved to Qalandia he became more closely connected with larger groups of activists and activists from different regions. His mother reports that many of his friends were killed during the intifada, especially in the Nablus area. Later during the intifada Eyad joined al-Fahad al-Aswad (Black Panthers).⁹ During his time with al-Fahad al-Aswad, Eyad became active in interrogating alleged collaborators and setting up ambushes for the Israeli army in the Jenin area, especially the army base near 'Arraba known as Tudan. Eyad was carrying a piece of a weapon called a gallila. Eyad was accused of killing the mukhtar¹⁰ of Jabaa', a village across the valley from Kufor Ra'i (Eyad's village). Eyad's mother says that he "did not kill him, but the man had a heart attack during the interrogation." Eyad was arrested on 9 June 1992. After confessing to carrying weapons, shooting at the Israeli army, and interrogating collaborators, he was sentenced to two life sentences by the Israeli army court.

Um Eyad says that Eyad was in solitary confinement and subjected to torture for six months during his sentence: "There was a constant red light shining on his face, after a while his ears were dripping liquid, he almost lost his sight, and the handcuffs remained on his arms. He stayed in this condition for a long time and was not released out of this torture

until after a long campaign that involved the Red Cross and Arab members of the Israeli Knesset, like . . . who got involved through the Red Cross. I was always running around and writing to people and getting people and institutions involved until I got him out of solitary confinement.” In jail Eyad shifted his affiliation from Fatah to Islamic Jihad. Jihad reports in a booklet released after Eyad’s assassination that the shift started through a friendship that Eyad developed with one of Jihad’s members in Jnайд jail, and that he then learned more about Jihad and Islamic thought and ideology during his time in Asqalan jail, where he read *kayfa nata’amel ma’a al-Qur’an* (How Do We Treat the Qur’an), a dialogue between Muhammed Ghazali and Omer Obeid Hasaneh, and *al-mustakhlas fi tazkiyat al-anfus: nazariya mutakamila fi tazkiyat an-nufous* (The Extracts of the Purification of Selves: A Comprehensive Theory in the Purification of Selves) by Said Hawwa.

Eyad did not declare his change of allegiance to Islamic Jihad and kept his official membership in good standing with Fatah so that he could be included in prisoner releases as part of the Oslo process. His mother noticed a change in his behavior; he started praying and fasting but would not tell her about his organizational shift while he was in prison. The release of prisoners during Oslo mainly included Fatah members, a few from other PLO factions (the left), and rarely any representation from Islamic groups like Hamas or Jihad. These selective releases, co-ordinated between Israel and the PA, were driven by the PA’s needs for soldiering to build security apparatuses. The activists of the intifada, and mainly those of Fatah, were the primary pool from which the PA built its security structures. Eyad was released from prison on 9 September 1999.

The Violent Profile

When Eyad was released from jail he was planning a mission along with a friend he had met in jail, Mu’tasem, from the village of ’Anabta west of Nablus. Their mission was to kidnap Israeli soldiers and use them as a bargaining chip to secure the release of Palestinian prisoners, especially those with Islamic group affiliation, who were not included in releases connected to the Oslo process. A few months after his release Eyad traveled to Mecca in December 1999 for Omra,¹¹ and a few weeks after his return he enrolled in Shahid Abu Jihad College in Nablus. According to his family the PA paid his enrollment fees. He had told his family that

he was training as a jeweler (his mother made a gesture that suggests that he was fooling them). He spent a year at the college. “Who knows where else he was enrolled at the time,” his mother wondered.

Eyad spent time looking for a cave where he could hide the Israeli soldiers he was planning to kidnap. The start of the second intifada in September 2000 led to direct, daily confrontations with the Israeli army, and Eyad began to set up ambushes of Israeli army vehicles, mainly on the road from Jenin to Nablus. His family reports that after a while the Israelis cleared the sides of the roads of trees and shrubs, making it difficult to get close enough to the road to harm the army, so Eyad decided to move to the Tulkarem area to join Mu’tasem in his activities there. Mu’tasem at the time was already “wanted” by the Israeli army.

The Israeli Secret Service, Shabak, went after both Eyad and Mu’tasem and recruited one of their friends, Murad Abu el’Asal, to spy on them. According to Eyad’s family, the Shabak recruited Murad by offering him a permit to work in Israel. Murad apparently was very close to Eyad and told him about the recruiting process. Eyad instructed him to play along and so he did. (Um Eyad made some gestures to indicate that Murad had some mental problems.) Murad was used by Eyad to give confusing information about himself and his friend, Mu’tasem, to the Shabak. The Shabak would search Murad every time he met with them and checked under his shirt. After repeatedly asking Murad to give details of how he was searched when he met with the Israeli officers, Eyad set a small bomb made of three hundred grams of TNT in Murad’s underwear. In the next meeting with Murad the bomb was not detected by the Israeli officers. Murad set off the bomb while in a car with the two Israeli officers in the village of Taybeh west of Tulkarem, across the 1967 border. Eyad’s family and Islamic Jihad report that the Shabak officers in the car were killed along with Murad.

In retaliation for this episode Israel launched an air attack on Tulkarem that targeted Mu’tasem’s house with missiles, killing him and destroying the house. Eyad’s mother reports that the loss of Mu’tasem “burned” Eyad. After the killing of Mu’tasem, Eyad printed T-shirts with Mu’tasem’s picture and the words *wa’adan wa ahdan* (a promise and a pledge) on the top and *lan nansaka abadan* (we will never forget you) on the bottom. From that time Eyad shifted his attention away from conventional ambushes targeting Israeli army convoys to martyrdom operations. By then Eyad was already on the run and was no longer able to be

active while blending into the community for cover. Resorting to martyrdom operations became the “appropriate” method of engagement from Eyad’s perspective, his father explained.

Two months after the invasion of Jenin and a sustained Israeli assassination campaign that claimed the lives of many of Eyad’s friends—especially since the assassinations concentrated on his organization, Islamic Jihad, and Hamas—Eyad set up some of the most lethal car bombs that exploded in Israel. This was a new strategy: using a car allowed for bigger bombs than could be detonated by a bomber wearing an explosive belt. Eyad organized two major bus bombings that inflicted enormous damage. The first targeted an Israeli bus at Megiddo Junction on 5 June 2002 using a car loaded with a hundred kilograms of explosives. The car was driven to the bus and set off by Hamzi al-Sammoudi. The explosion destroyed the bus and killed seventeen Israelis, mostly soldiers, and injured forty-two others. The second bombing occurred at Kirkuk Junction on 12 October 2002, where two Palestinians drove a car set up with explosives into an Israeli bus and exploded it. Fourteen Israelis were killed along with the two Palestinians who carried out the mission, Ashraf al-Asmar and Muhammad Hasanain, and fifty-six others were injured.

After the Israeli assassination of Salah Shehadeh, Hamas’s leader in Gaza, by an air strike with missiles at an apartment building that killed fifteen Palestinian residents in addition to Shehadeh, Eyad rigged a car with five hundred kilograms of explosives to blow up one of Tel Aviv’s high-rise buildings, to match the Israeli strike on Gaza in both form and magnitude—a goal that is consistent with the mimetic nature of the violence performed by Palestinians. The Israeli police caught the car in the Khedara area on its way to Tel Aviv after chasing it because of suspicions that it might be stolen, thus preventing an explosion with catastrophic capabilities.¹²

The Position of the Family

While Eyad was on the run the Israeli army searched his family’s house nearly twenty times, according to Eyad’s family. One time they exploded the doors of the house (Eyad told his family not to fix them because the army would ultimately demolish the house). Um Eyad would verbally stand up to the Israelis when they came to search the house. Abu Eyad

said that one time an Israeli officer told him, “Aren’t you a man? She should shut up. You talk.” The Israelis held up and arrested his mother and sister several times. Um Eyad reports that one time family members were held at the ’Arraba junction near Jenin and the Israeli army officer told her, “We will keep you here. Eyad will come to look for you and we will kill him.” She said that she told them, “In your wildest dreams. My son knows his mother and knows your tactics.” She said she challenged the soldier to face him instead of taking her and her daughter: “If he is arrested he is in God’s guard, and if he gets martyrdom the pride is mine.” Eyad’s younger brother, who was present at the interview, had been arrested and released four times. Two days after my interview I learned that he was arrested yet again.

On the night of 21 April 2001 over twenty-five Israel soldiers came to Eyad’s family home to demolish it. The family claims that everything in the house that was Eyad’s survived the demolition of the house, his framed picture lying in the rubble unbroken, his clothes and his engagement ring found intact (Um Eyad now wears his engagement ring). “Everything that is his came out intact, our belongings were burnt,” Um Eyad asserted. This account circulates within the community and creates a social understanding that a higher power is working on the side of the fighters.

During the interview Um Eyad kept saying *niyyaluh*¹³ while talking about Eyad’s tales or describing him. She seemed proud of Eyad and his accomplishments, even though he was her only son who did not complete high school and did not enroll in the university. His older brothers are all university graduates or students, and his sisters are either married or at school. Most attended the university. Um Eyad feels that “Eyad brought the best certificate.” He is being glorified in an Islamic Jihad booklet that honors him as the engineer, the leader. His mother said, “He earned his engineering degree.” Two weeks after the demolition of his family’s house Eyad was caught and killed by the Israeli army in the old part of Jenin.

Ragheb Jaradat

I spoke with Ragheb’s father, mother, and sister at their home in Jenin in March 2004. Their house is decorated with pictures of Ragheb, who had

gone to a local photographer and made several nice pictures of himself a week before his mission.

Personal Profile

Ragheb was born in 1985 to a middle-class family. His father owns a pharmacy in Jenin. Ragheb lived very comfortably. His father asserted, “He did not need a thing. Our financial situation is good.” Ragheb had two brothers in universities abroad. His family reports that Ragheb was a good student throughout his school years. From first grade until the first term of twelfth grade Ragheb was the first in his class. In the second term of twelfth grade he was doing poorly, and his teachers were baffled about the sudden change in his performance. His family described him as very personable and helpful to others. He used to open their pharmacy by himself and operate it, which he was fully trained to do. His father stated that Ragheb would not let him go to work during the times of unrest and would insist on running the business by himself. While the father was describing Ragheb’s personality, his mother started crying.

Activist Profile

Ragheb was not politically active in any group. The only sign of political activity that his family noticed was that a few months before his mission he started hanging the posters of martyrs in the house. Yet Um Ragheb recalled that during Ragheb’s early childhood, in the intifada years, an Israeli soldier harassed Ragheb: “He was in the entryway of the house. He was only four years old. One soldier held his head and twisted his whole head and told him, ‘Don’t you become a terrorist.’ ” When Ragheb was six, a play about the intifada was staged at his kindergarten’s summer camp. According to his teacher, Ragheb would not accept any role other than that of the martyr.

Once there was a funeral in the village for someone whose body had been held by the Israelis for some time. Upon the return of the body Ragheb composed a speech that he read at the funeral. His family stated that this was the only time they saw Ragheb involved in a political activity, and it seemed to have affected him. Like other episodes—an assassination, the destruction of a home, a large-scale attack on a city that



Ragheb Jaradat playing the role of martyr in a kindergarten play at the age of six. Courtesy of Ragheb's family.

forces people to smuggle food supplies from the villages—the funeral of a martyr is a site where new commitments are forged. It is a site where the impact of the martyr's life is most pronounced and where participants are best able to imagine and connect with the life of the martyr.

Martyrdom and Sacrifice

Judging from accounts of discussions that he had with his family the day before the operation and comments that he made regarding his surprisingly bad performance in the twelfth grade, Ragheb seems to have placed a high value on martyrdom. His mother told him once, "With these grades you will live between the feet of your brothers who are all doctors." He replied to her, "By God, my certificate will be better than their certificates." The principal of his school had also talked with him about his grades and he told the principal, "I promise you, Uncle Abu Yusef, that I will get a certificate that you will take pride in." The "certificate" is highly valued in Palestinian culture, and a university diploma is a well-regarded credential to which Palestinian youth and their families aspire. All parents want to see their kids succeed and have a certificate.

From the 1960s to the 1980s the Palestinians were known for having a high percentage of university graduates.¹⁴ A high social value is still placed on gaining a certificate, even though many Palestinian graduates no longer find employment opportunities that enable them to put their certificates to good use.

The Arabic word for “certificate” is shahadah, derived from the noun shahid (“witness”) and the verb shahada (“to witness”). The shahadah certificate is a form of witnessing or certifying an accomplishment. Related words include musha’hadah (“seeing,” past tense sha’hadah) and istishhad (martyrdom). Shahadah (martyrdom) is dying for the shahadatayn (dual of shahadah) and is the first pillar of Islam. Shahada (they bear witness) that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is his messenger. In early Islamic wars the goals were to get the other side to recognize and state the shahadatayn, after which they become Muslims. When a Muslim recognizes that death is imminent he or she recites the shahadatayn. Saying istashhada (he was martyred) means he stated the shahadatayn, that is, he said *ashhadu an la ilaha illa allah wa anna muhammadan rasulu allah* (I witness that there is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is Allah’s messenger). The word shahid (martyr) was originally applied to a person who died witnessing the shahadatayn and in pursuit of the shahadatayn from others. Today anyone who dies fighting the “enemy” is considered shahid. So the two meanings of shahadah—“certificate” and “martyrdom”—are both indications of socially appreciated accomplishments. When Ragheb assured the principal of his school “I will get a certificate that you will take pride in,” he sized up the two certificates in his mind and assigned a much higher value to the certificate of martyrdom. This is a common belief in Palestine today, since diminished job opportunities have made the university certificate more valuable in social terms than economic terms.

Ragheb left two notes before his death, one addressed to the Palestinian public through Islamic Jihad and the other to his family, his father in particular. In the note to his family Ragheb wrote:

Father hear me . . . Hear the echo of my voice . . .
I am alive between the people . . . Fighting . . . In spite of my death . . .
No, I did not die . . . I now started living . . . Along with the beloved in
heaven . . .

Here we clearly see the life of the martyr through the impact of the sacrificial performance. Being “alive . . . in spite of . . . death” brings the martyr a form of living in death, a preferred form of living over the crippled present life. Ragheb sees himself fighting in spite of his death, and further sees that his strength in death is more than what he can project in his living life. Conceptualized as such, death becomes something not feared but a form of living that is more meaningful than life of the physical sort. In this context, death is about living, and to die is to live. The sacrifice of the body and its concentration through the performance of this form of violence against the backdrop of the encounter with Israel and its histories is a concentration of the sacrificer, here the social person performing the sacrifice. Thus the social person is made an icon through the sacrifice of his body. Hubert and Mauss (1964) note that the sacrificer is the moral person whose conditions are modified by the sacrifice for bearing the cost of sacrifice. The *istishhadi*, the performer, is idealized. This concentration is further extended to the community at large through its representation in posters produced for the *istishhadi*, the distribution of the *istishhadi*’s picture, the documentation and narration in booklets of his or her life, the poetry and obituaries that idealize them, and so on. All of these representations produce an iconic image of the *istishhadi* that concentrate the social person in a way parallel and complementary to the concentration of the body through the ritual of sacrifice as performed through the application of the martyrdom operation.

Not only does this form of living make the social person alive in the immediate community, but as we see in Ragheb’s message, there is a consciousness of the broader ability of the life of the martyr to shape the cultural order at national, regional, and potentially global levels, an ability that “begins” with the dying of the body. Thus the conceptual space that the martyr’s life occupies is much wider than the physical and social space that the person occupies in life. It is primarily this social life of the martyr that is constructed in the cultural discourse of martyrdom, in the poetics of the resistance that makes death through sacrifice sought after. As martyrs become immortalized in the representations and the poetics that these representations produce, the Palestinian people, whom these icons signify, become immortalized. Hence the immortalization of martyrs’ physical fusion in the land of Palestine through the “blood

covenant” of sacrifice becomes an immortalization of Palestinian peoplehood and the rootedness of the Palestinian nation in the land of Palestine.

Most martyrdom mission carriers are described, like Ragheb, with a heightened sense of awareness, as thoughtful rather than impulsive actors. Thus it is not surprising that martyrdom operations carriers should often be characterized as above the norm in personal qualities and intelligence, though this pattern has puzzled some observers of the Palestinian resistance (Reuter 2004). A public opinion survey by Khalil Sheqaqi points out that approval of violence rises with the level of education among Palestinians.¹⁵

The cultural life of the martyr in the social world is distinct from the other life promised by the Divine in heaven. It is precisely this cultural life that explains why both Islamic and secular groups organize martyrdom operations and both religious and nonreligious individuals carry them out. Most participants, including Ragheb, believe in an afterlife in heaven, but I find that the cultural life of the martyr is most prominent in the motivation process. It is about the life in the living world and not about the lives of the dead. People can “go to heaven” many different ways, and they can do so without giving up their present life. In contrast, the cultural life of the martyr with the capacity to extend well beyond the biological life of the body and the present social life of the person can only be achieved through the sacrifice of the body. This makes the act of martyrdom connected more to the cultural discourse of its poetics rather than to the belief in life in heaven. This cultural discourse is materialized through the various cultural productions for every martyrdom operation: news of the performance, a political statement from a group claiming responsibility, and the process of placing the act in a political context through posters, postcards, five-day funerals, booklets about the martyr, stories about the martyr told at his or her funeral, obituaries, poetry, and political commentaries in the media, all of which create the new life of the martyr.

The Night of the Mission

During the battle in the Jenin Refugee Camp in the first week of April 2002, Ragheb was fasting. His father recalled, “One evening he brought

a Pomila¹⁶ and he said, 'I want to peel this for my father.' He sat next to me and wanted to get close to me." Abu Ragheb continued:

On Tuesday, April 9, he came in the late afternoon and had a new Marines haircut. He told his mom, "I need to take a shower." So I decided I am going to get on his case about this Marines haircut. He came out of the shower and I forgot. He was wearing jeans and a long white undershirt. He is tall and wide so one of my cousins was around and said, "By the grace of God, what a body!" Ragheb said, "This body impresses you; this body will impress you tomorrow." He called his brothers in the Ukraine and Jordan and he told them: "Do not forget the Jenin Camp." In the evening he broke his fast, which was strange for us that he had fasted on a Tuesday. About the 'asha¹⁷ time before he left he asked me if I wanted cigarettes or anything and he asked his mother whether she wanted anything and she said, "No." I told him just come back by 9:00 or 9:30; he said, "insh'allah (God willing)." Apparently he had stopped by his cousins and had tea with them. He also stopped by his aunts. About 11:00 p.m. I got worried about him as he did not return yet. I got all the kids of the neighborhood looking for him and asking about him and no one knew where he was.

The dynamics described above of Ragheb's preparedness to carry out the operation reveal a sense of excitement for the moment. His remark that "this body . . . will impress you tomorrow," alluding to his plans to offer his body in sacrifice, reveals his excitement at being a moral person who would gain new social status for bearing the cost of the sacrifice.

The Operation

Ragheb was dropped off by a fairly new car next to a bus stop near Haifa where many army personnel take the bus. He was dressed in an Israeli army uniform. Ragheb cocked the gun as he got on the bus to Jerusalem.¹⁸ He carried on him an Israeli army card and an Israeli army bus pass. Ragheb knew little Hebrew. His family said that according to the Israeli media a female soldier was exchanging looks with him on the bus. Abu Ragheb says, "The girl told the press that she was planning to get off the bus wherever Ragheb gets off in order to meet him and hook up with him. She reports that he was chewing gum and flirting with her through blowing bubbles and exchanging looks with her." Ragheb

stayed on the bus for about twenty-five kilometers before he detonated himself. The explosion killed twenty-two Israelis and Ragheb.

The Aftermath of the Operation

Normally, shortly after the organizing faction reveals the identity of the mission carrier, hundreds of people from the town gather at the mission carrier's home and begin the process of making the carrier an icon. Abu Ragheb described how the family learned about the operation and then found out that the mission carrier was their son:

On Wednesday morning, the next morning we heard on radio Monte Carlo that there was a suicide bombing in Haifa. Even though I am convinced that my son wouldn't do such an operation, but when I heard the news, it was as if you have dumped cold water on my back. A doctor who is a friend of mine called in a joking manner and said, "Do you believe that your son Ragheb carried out this operation?" He asked where Ragheb was, and I said Ragheb had slept outside the house. My friend said I was joking and that he did not believe the people. He told people, "I know this boy and he cannot kill a chicken." I felt that my head was split. The phone dropped from my hand. Within minutes there were over two hundred people in the house. For us our God has dignified us, he gave us this goodness, I had worked hard in raising him. I spoiled him. I did everything for him.

Um Ragheb's first reaction: "For me it didn't occur to me at first. I was very pleased when I heard about the operation. But later me and this daughter [pointing to her daughter present at the interview], we started exchanging looks of suspicion. Once I realized it is Ragheb, I made coffee and made tea, and kissed the hand and the head of Abu Ragheb . . . I swear I did not weep over him; I did not pull my hair, nothing." Um Ragheb sought to demonstrate control over her emotions toward the death of her son because the death of a martyr is not supposed to be a sad thing. However, she did cry during my interview with her. Her repeated insistence that she demonstrated control, even as she was in tears while narrating her experiences, points to the polarization that is created in the performance. Ragheb's funeral was to be celebrated like a wedding. These polarizations generate the poetics, a cultural force, by means of which new meanings are sought and formulated. They are lived not only

by Ragheb's family but also by the community at large that mourns him and celebrates him at the same time. The struggle to balance the cultural expectation of restraint, pride in the son's or daughter's act, and the emotions brought on by loss is strongly felt among most of the families I interviewed, especially mothers. Um Ragheb stated: "If he had told me that he wanted to go, I wouldn't have let him. Our religion says that if martyrdom is accepted then he will go to heaven. At his funeral I carried his picture and walked out in the street. There were some men who were crying. But for me, God gave me patience. My sister was crying. I told her: 'Stop it, he is a martyr.'" Today she wears a gold pendant with Ragheb's picture inscribed on it. She says that Ragheb stays with her all the time: "His voice stays in my ears while I am awake and through my sleep. I see him a lot in my sleep."

After the operation much of the discussion at the funeral and at gatherings at the homes of the mission carrier's relatives focuses on where the operation took place, how many were killed, and who got killed. The people in the village describe the fluctuation in numbers and who were among the dead. Ragheb's family reports that according to Israeli papers the total number of people killed was eighteen. Then the number is changed to twenty-one. It is later reported that four of the wounded died later, bringing the total to twenty-five. According to an Israeli press report one of the soldiers killed in the operation was just leaving Jenin after the invasion and being sent home, having been relieved of duty. Another report states that among the dead was the daughter of the Israeli ambassador to the UN, and that the Palestinian ambassador to the UN had offered her father his condolences. These narrations and descriptions make the event more meaningful: it reached one of the soldiers in Jenin and the daughter of one of Israel's top diplomats, and it killed twenty-five Israelis the week after the invasion of Jenin, where the operation was planned and from which it was sent out. The more the act reaches the Israeli political system and its army personnel, the more legitimate it becomes in the perpetrator's locale. However, the meaning is not limited to the application of mimetic violence. Other operations performed in a civilian setting become more meaningful and carry a wider impact, as I will explore in looking into the dynamics of the operations.

The Israeli army arrested Abu Ragheb on 17 April 2002 and held him for three days. Abu Ragheb describes the arrest:

When they came to the house they took Ragheb's poster down from the wall and the officer told me, "I am captain Jamal. I destroyed Jenin." He said to me, "Your son is a terrorist." He said, "Your Qur'an is fake." He said, "This Qur'an that says Moses rather than Israel is the book that taught you terrorism." I said to the soldier, "He is not a terrorist. He is not a terrorist." He asked me, "Why didn't I look after my son?" I said that he was a good boy and nobody ever complained about him. There was no reason for me to keep an eye on him. Then the soldier opened Ragheb's room, searched it, and didn't find anything. They took whatever documents they found in the house, our land titles, our marriage certificate, and so on.

When he took the poster down he said: "Get up," I said "Where to?" He said, "I want to take you and teach you a lesson the hard way." I said, "I need to go to the bathroom." The soldier said, "If there is another operation, from al-Sileh I will tear down your house, I will burn your pharmacy, and explode your car."

Um Ragheb added: "The soldier said to me, 'You are his mother, you brought a terrorist.'"

The narration of these encounters is in itself a source of social prestige. People hear their stories about facing the Israelis and enduring harassment, which are seen as signs of courage and heroism that add to the family's heightened social status. The narrations also add to the life of the martyr that begins in the community after his death. This life, which starts with the martyrdom operation and continues with the funeral procession, is represented in posters, poetry, booklets, and statements issued by the sponsoring organization, in graveside memorials, and in the cultural poetics that create a new life for the martyr. This new life takes its own course, partly material and partly imagined, within which new meanings emerge.

The Meaning Making

After his operation, the posters of Ragheb pointing a gun filled the walls of his village. One of these posters still hangs on the front window of his father's pharmacy in Jenin. His friend, his teachers, and local poets wrote poems of his martyrdom. The posters, the funeral procession, the bulk of literature produced about the mission after his death—whether by the organizing groups or by local poets, friends, and teachers—all

build the iconic status of the martyr and give his act meaning beyond the goals of the organizing group. The organizing group often refers to the operation as retaliatory violence in response to Israeli state violence. In this case the operation immediately followed the invasion of Jenin, and the enormous destruction and killing of over sixty Palestinians that the city suffered during the invasion.

Islamic Jihad titled this operation '*'amaliyyat kasr al-sour al-waqi* (the Breaking of the Protective Wall Operation). The message is being conveyed to the state of Israel, to Israelis, and to the Palestinians that the wall erected by Israel will not be its savior and, more importantly, that Palestinians can break out of confinement and siege. In the words of the Jihad statement:

We emphasize the ability of our heroic warriors to penetrate and break all the security barriers of the criminal enemy, and no wall or fence will bar us from reaching the enemy's security depth.

*Saraya al-Quds*¹⁹ emphasize that this heroic qualitative operation is part of our painful retaliation to the massacres in Jenin, Nablus, Bethlehem, and Hebron.

The statement by the organizing group sets out the meaning-making process. Every operation has a title. The reference to the ability to “penetrate and break” barriers is a formulation that connects the bodily practice of sacrifice and violence to conceptions of unconfined life, unsegmented peoplehood, and unfragmented Palestine. These aesthetics create a polarization between on the one hand the ontological conditions of encapsulation and fragmentation and on the other hand the unity and freedom of Palestinians and Palestine. Statements like this one normally contain other information regarding political goals as well as sensory meanings. But statements are only the beginning of the meaning-making process. The broader cultural productions in the poetics of resistance and the commentaries broaden these meanings, reflecting a wide range of perspectives. In the statement quotes above Islamic Jihad gives the operation several meanings: political goals as a challenge to the geographic isolation and encapsulation that Israel is imposing on the Palestinians by building a wall; retaliatory violence in response to Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Jenin, Nablus, and Hebron; and the challenge to Israeli identity itself. The term “hitting in Israel’s security depth” came up again and again in my interviews with Brigades members. The strikes on

Israel's secure spots—the inner city, the transit systems—are seen as a challenge to the whole presence of Israel and its normalcy in Palestine. Since the territorial violence is a battle over which people occupy the territory, disturbing the normal life of the Israelis who occupy these places poses a challenge to Israel's identity itself. The challenge to Israeli identity in these contested places is an assertion of Palestinian identity. Thus the operation takes on a sociopolitical space and a cultural meaning beyond the instrumentality of the act and the organizing group.

Poems evoked by the events, each from the point of view of a different writer, put the act in a context and attach other meanings to it. A local resident from the nearby village of Berqin wrote in a poem that was published in a booklet about Ragheb:

The lion of Jaradat²⁰ as a volcano rocked them
and returned the Rabbi of Zion to his past.
Reminded by the fear shocked in his Khayber,²¹
There in no longer a bunker in the volcano to save him.
The Rabbi of Zion is fearful, hysterical,
no longer knows the sleep in his night.
Oh, Ragheb of the glory, my poem when I write it for you,
I feel my heart beat in it.
Welcome to your courage, welcome to your stand,
About your glory the lips of the flowers will tell.

You exploded yourself, belief and sacrifice,
the vengeance awakens in the highest of its meanings.
And the bird chirped his peek in happiness,
Oh the Sila²² of glory in the arms hug him.
The olive trees of Berqin in the valleys were whispered
by the winds, and they were told to kiss him.
The *sanabel*²³ of wheat sang wheat tones,
and the flowers rejoiced dancing to the rhythm.
Here Palestine returns, in spite of the chains,
to hug him and to form a ring of flowers to gift him.

In most of the poetry about martyrdom operations two themes are prominent: the heroism of mimetic, retaliatory violence; and the landscape. The retaliation is an opportunity to apply the same violence that is

presented by continued Israeli practices. The violence of martyrdom operations projects terror on broader Israeli society that mirrors the fear that Palestinians experience because of Israeli state violence. The landscape dimension is related to the historical Palestinian positioning of the act of sacrifice for the land of Palestine.

The poem carries the consistent theme of *penetrating barriers*, as exemplified in the volcano. The wheat singing, the flowers dancing, the wind telling the olive trees to kiss Ragheb—all are images depicting the happiness of Palestine (in the cultural imaginary) for the sacrifice. This happy life comes to Palestine through the exchange of the martyr's blood to nourish the plants and make the birds happy. Ragheb is placed in a homological relationship with the land of Palestine as his body parts transform into corresponding parts of Palestine. The last two lines of the poem—"Here Palestine returns, in spite of the chains, to hug him and to form a ring of flowers to gift him"—mean that the captivity of Palestine did not prevent her from taking the Palestinian sacrificer into her soil, and that she will reciprocate by blooming a ring of flowers, continuing the poetic relationship between the Palestinians and the land of Palestine in spite of captivity and isolation. The notion of unity with the land is illustrated in the image of Palestine hugging the martyr. The scene of joyous Palestine renaturalizes Palestine, reunites it, and presents it as being full of mercy and love to its people, the Palestinians. Palestine is also appreciative of the heroes who sacrificed for her. These meanings assert a sense of conceptual rootedness in a Palestine from which Palestinians have been uprooted and excluded, and the unity of Palestinians and Palestine in the face of fragmentation and segmentation. Thus the polarization of sensory meanings and political goals pronounced through the application of violence generates a poetics through which a fusion occurs. This fusion in the Palestinian context is a fusion of Palestinian lives in land (of Palestine) and history (of Palestine), achieved through the violent sacrifice of a Palestinian body and violence against Israelis that disturbs their sense of normalcy.

Hanadi Jaradat

The first operation three days after my arrival in Palestine was carried out by Hanadi, from Jenin, in the coastal city of Haifa on 4 October 2003.

She exploded herself in Maxim restaurant overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. The explosion killed twenty-one Israeli restaurant patrons and injured fifty more. The information I present here about Hanadi's history and mission is based on an interview with Hanadi's family in Jenin in addition to a review of responses and commentaries in the Palestinian and Arab media, most of which was also recirculated in Palestine as handouts by activist groups.

Personal Profile

Hanadi was born on 22 September 1975 in the city of Jenin and grew up in Jenin city. She attended school in Jenin and she graduated from the law school at Jarash University in Jordan in 1999. Hanadi worked for two law offices in Jenin over the span of three years as a trainee lawyer. Her family described her as kind, loving, concerned about others, outgoing, and articulate. She was an opinionated person who defended her views. Her family describes her as resolute; when she set her mind on something she followed through. She did not engage in any formal political activities before taking on the mission. She held a "typical" Palestinian political position that "this land is ours and our rights to it will be restored at some point."²⁴

Her father, Abu Hanadi, was born in the Palestinian city of Bissan²⁵ in the northern Jordan Valley before it was depopulated of its Palestinian residents in 1948. Her mother, Um Hanadi, comes from the Palestinian town of Zir'in, in the central plains north of Jenin. The village also was depopulated of its Palestinian residents by Jewish militias in 1948 and subsequently destroyed by the Israeli army (Khalidi 1992). Abu Hanadi explained that he was too young when the family was forced out of Bissan to remember life there, but his father constantly talked about it, so a picture of life in Bissan has always been a vivid image in his life. He in turn always talked about Bissan to his children. Abu Hanadi became active in the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine in the early 1970s. During six years of activism he was arrested by the Israelis several times, and Hanadi as well as two of her sisters were born while their father was in Israeli jails.

After the activism period Abu Hanadi focused on working to provide for his growing family. He described working hard to improve their economic situation, but they were constantly under the pressure of mak-

ing ends meet and coming up with rent for their apartment. The family had seven girls and two boys. The eldest boy, Fadi, quit school early to help the family, especially after the father became ill and unable to work. Fadi provided enough money for Hanadi to go to college in Jordan. She was the smartest of the children, with consistently good grades. The family was excited for Hanadi's university education. She graduated in the summer of 1999. Hanadi got engaged to one of her cousins in 2000. Her fiancé was killed by the Israeli army in the beginning of the second intifada.

Her father became severely ill with a liver ailment and needed medical treatment that was not available at the local hospital. Hanadi tried to get him a permit for treatment at the Israeli Rumbum hospital in Haifa and was repeatedly turned down by the Israeli military coordination office in nearby Salem. The father, accompanied by his wife, left for medical treatment in Jordan. The family had a cousin, Saleh, who had been on the run from the Israeli army for several years, charged with being a local leader of Islamic Jihad. Saleh had a wife and a toddler whom he had seen only a few times, both of whom lived in the village of Al-Sila al-Harthiya. While Hanadi's parents were in Jordan for medical treatment, Saleh's wife and her child came to Hanadi's home in Jenin to meet her husband. While they were sitting at the front doorsteps of Hanadi's home, an Israeli special force unit surprised them with gunfire that killed Saleh and Hanadi's brother, Fadi.

The details of this incident were narrated by Hanadi herself in an interview with a local website (*AbrarY*) after the assassination on 13 June 2003 that was recirculated after Hanadi's martyrdom:

Saleh came to our house to visit his wife and child. We sat in front of the house as normal. We were drinking coffee and he, Saleh, was playing with his son, hugging him and kissing him when a white car with an Arab license plate was passing by. The car suddenly stopped. I thought it must be some of Saleh's friends. Two men came out of the car and directly started shooting at Saleh. Another car came in a flash and started shooting. We all went down on the ground. Saleh's wife grabbed her son and ran into the house. My brother was wounded and bleeding. I held his arm and started pulling him to cover behind the seat we were sitting at to shield him from the bullets. I started screaming Fadi, Saleh. Fadi was asking with difficulty help me, help me . . .

[After fifteen minutes of tearful crying, she continued:]

One of the armed men came over me and threw me down on the ground, he took Fadi from me and told me, “Go inside to the house or I'll kill you” . . . I screamed, “Leave me, this is my brother, he needs help, he is bleeding” . . . They attacked and asked, “Where is his weapon?” I said he has no weapon, by God he is going to die!!! . . . They forced me down on the ground with the gun on my head and face on the ground. One of them said, “You bitch, you terrorist, we'll kill you with them.” . . . Then I heard one saying, “Pull them and pile them to the side here.” . . . I could not bear, I started resisting and screaming, “You terrorists, you dogs, leave them! Leave them!” . . . They hit me and threw me down to the ground again, dragged both of them a few meters, shot several shots again to insure their death.

The Israeli army simultaneously launched an attack on the city of Jenin as a whole, concentrating on the Dabbus neighborhood where the assassinations were carried out to provide cover for the safe exit of the army's special unit. In the attack the Israeli army stormed the neighborhood with gunfire and three other Palestinians were wounded, among them a young girl. Hanadi asserted to her interviewers that the units that held her surrounded the house and went through it; they could have simply arrested her brother but were determined to kill him. She described the bodies of Saleh and Fadi filled with gunshots from all sides. According to another report from the same site Hanadi is reported to have called a *zaghruda*²⁶ during her brother's funeral and declared, “His blood will not be shed in vain. The killers will pay the price. We will not keep crying alone. Damn the whole world if our people will continue to be denied freedom and dignity.” These words were echoed four months later in Hanadi's martyrdom note.

Martyrdom and Sacrifice

Um Hanadi told me about a dialogue between Hanadi and her brother Fadi, who was killed by the Israeli army four months before Hanadi's mission. The dialogue concerned news of a martyrdom operation carried out by a girl. Hanadi asked her brother, to whom she was very close, “If this operation was by Hanadi Jaradat, what would you do?” Her brother replied, “I will fill the magazine and empty it for you,”²⁷ referring to the act of shooting the magazine of his M-16 gun in the air as a celebratory

expression. But Hanadi's brother was killed before the mission, which she carried out in part to avenge his killing.

In the note that Hanadi left behind for her family, she explains her choice to carry out the mission:

I have chosen this path for myself by my own determination. I have worked for this until God rewarded me with martyrdom, God willing. Martyrdom is not for every human on earth, only for those who are dignified from God. Are you sad because God has dignified me in martyrdom!? Do you repay God by what he does not like and I don't like either!? Give me to God. . . . We are all dying. No one is eternal on this earth, but the rational who gives himself to God's call. This is a jihad country only. We live in it for jihad. It is incumbent upon us to lift the oppression we live in over the past years. I know I will not bring back Palestine. I know this fully. But I also know that this is my duty and I have done my duty in front of God. I have answered the call after my belief in my religion . . .

My main concern has become to see the light of God. This is his country and this is his religion and they want to extinguish his light and we know that. My duty towards God's religion and his obligation on me is to defend him. Nothing is in my possession other than this body, which I will turn into shrapnel, that will uproot the heart of everyone that tries to uproot us from our country. Everyone who plants death for us will get it even if it was a small fraction . . .

Here Hanadi expresses several aspects of her conception of martyrdom. First, martyrdom is a reward from God, which he grants to good people who gain it through their good deeds. Second, martyrdom is performed through a sense of responsibility toward ongoing events. Here the responsibility that lies with Hanadi is toward the Divine for all that she has witnessed and for her beliefs. Her assertion that it is her duty to defend God, "My duty towards God's religion and his obligation on me is to defend him," indicates her fear of the Divine's greater violence if she were to remain silent. She offers all that is in her possession—her body—to defend and express her commitment to the Divine: "Nothing is in my possession other than this body, which I will turn into shrapnel, that will uproot the heart of everyone that tries to uproot us from our country."

From another angle, the reference to the body as the only possession with which Hanadi can express herself shows how grief is expressed

through the body. As Veena Das (1997) points out, “Transactions between body and language lead to an articulation of the world in which the strangeness of the world revealed by death, by its non-inhabitability, can be transformed into a world in which one can dwell again, in full awareness of life that has to be lived in loss” (68–69). Hanadi expresses through her body what she could not communicate in language. The overwhelming suffering, accompanied by a discourse of ignorance, silence, and complicity with the conditions of suffering, makes the world uninhabitable. The cultural meanings associated with martyrdom and sacrifice for the land, the people, and the Divine make more life in the loss of life. Hence the loss of life through a martyrdom operation is *dying to live*. Dying to live describes two sensory meanings. The first is that death is a form of living preferable to the lived life of suffering. The preferred living is in the iconic life of the martyr in the community. This form of living also generates new lives. This iconic image of the martyr brings life to the community as well as the promised better life if the sacrifice is accepted by the Divine. The second meaning is that *dying to live* expresses love for life. Here the deep love of life in conditions that deny life drives people to the extent of death to seek a good life worthy of living, such as that of the idealized martyr. Through the cultural conceptions associated with the performance of sacrifice physical boundaries are broken, political boundaries are broken, psychological boundaries of fear are broken, and cultural boundaries are broken. The sacrifice creates the naturalized Palestine pre-boundaries and pre-occupation as a united landscape; *dying to live* this life in freedom, mercy, and unity is achieved in the cultural imaginary. Along these cultural conceptions a motivation for sacrifice emerges.

The Night before the Mission

In the evening Hanadi spent time with her sisters laughing, chatting, and talking about the plans for the wedding of one of her sisters, which was scheduled in ten days. The sisters described Hanadi as very happy for her sister, helping her to think through her wedding plans and decide whom to invite. Hanadi stayed up after her sisters went to bed, and read the Qur'an for the rest of the night. When her father asked her to go to bed she said that before doing so she wished to read the last section of the

Qur'an. At 7:30 a.m. on Saturday Hanadi left home for work. She told her mother that she would be handling a land sale in the village of Qabatiya and expected to be late, but that her mother should not worry about her.

The Operation

The operation was orchestrated by the Islamic Jihad group, the same faction with which Saleh and Hanadi's brother Fadi were associated. The operation was timed for the Jewish holiday Yom Kippur. Hanadi was set up by a Jihad member from the nearby village of Zbuba. Hanadi apparently had requested the mission, according to a leader of al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades. He reported that Hanadi insisted on going on a mission and threatened the local Jihad leader at the time that if he did not set up an operation for her she would go with a knife to the nearest checkpoint.²⁸ The Israeli military was already on a state of alert—a normal procedure on Jewish holidays—but there were reports that the state of alert was heightened because the Israeli secret service had received tips that an operation in Haifa was under way.

On the afternoon of Saturday 4 October 2003, Hanadi was dropped off by a car with an Israeli license plate in front of a beachfront restaurant called Maxim in the coastal city of Haifa. There are reports that she ordered food and dined at the restaurant and paid for her dinner before detonating herself. The explosion killed twenty-one Israelis and injured fifty others. A number of children were among the Israeli victims, as was the former head of the Israeli navy, General Zai'v Almong.

The Meaning Making

As with every other mission, the meaning making begins with a statement claiming responsibility for the act. The Islamic Jihad issued a statement calling the operation "The Bride of Haifa Teaches the Zionists a Lesson They Will Not Forget." Hanadi's new title, the "Bride of Haifa," gave sensory meaning to the act and became inspirational in the meaning making for many sets of viewers. Much of the literature produced about her mission referred to her as the "Bride of Haifa," "Bride of Palestine," or "Bride of the Sea." This title has a Palestinian historical

reference. The city of Haifa was known as the “Bride of Palestine” before 1948 for its vibrant cultural and economic life. This description of Hanadi as a bride offered in sacrifice to the captive Haifa, Palestine’s bride, likens Hanadi’s sacrifice to the ancient Egyptian ritual of sacrificing a bride to the Nile River so that the Nile would reciprocate with flood water for the Nile Valley’s fields. Here the Bride of Haifa, Hanadi is sacrificed so that the city of Haifa can live as a Palestinian city.

The “Bride of Haifa” operation evoked emotions and inspired an enormous number of literary productions in Palestine and the Arab countries. I collected twenty-eight poems, obituaries, and essays published in newspapers and journals by authors from Palestine, Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Libya. The aesthetics of the operation contributed to the ability of the performance to permeate many spaces, where it left audiences with a curiosity that generated multiple articulations of the act. That the operation was carried out by a woman—and a mature woman, twenty-nine years old and a lawyer—made it unlikely that she had been manipulated by organizing groups. The site of the performance, on the seashore, provided a poetic, theatrical setting. The photo of the martyr released by Islamic Jihad showed her with a glowing smile, made up with deep red lipstick and facial powder, and bore a caption describing her as a bride. Hanadi’s operation produced more literature because it was more influential, and it provides an example of the performative properties of violence. From their different perspectives, literary contributors contextualized the mission and attached sets of meanings to it. These meaning makings and articulations extend the force of the violence to multiple regional and global cultural spheres (Appadurai 1997; Tambiah 1996). However, it is important to point out that these contributors are not pursuing a strategy of meaning making: they are commentators in their own right, and their reactions and perspectives contribute to the articulation of a cultural discourse of martyrdom.

In what follows I present some of this literature and analyze the meaning making that is generated by it. All this literature was written and published in the Arabic language and translated into English by me.

In a piece entitled “The Seagull Returns to Haifa” by Haytham Abu el Ghozlan, the author attaches meanings related to the notions of sacrifice, renewal, and rootedness in the landscape. Here is an excerpt:

The soul earthquakes with worries and sorrow, so strong that it rips the pupils of the eyes apart, and it explodes, tearing down the walls of silence that besieged us. And the bridging waist rises and shakes to revive dead people where death has long passed, where they lived dead/alive walking in humility, shriveling leaves in a fall that awaits falling . . .

We share the wounds and the pain squeezes us. The distancing kills us longing and missing, but it does not defeat us. The knife does not slaughter us even though it is placed on our necks. The seagull is returning to Haifa, carrying the indicators of a new period. He sees Haifa by his eyes, and sees Jaffa, al-Majdal, Deir Yassin, and all of Palestine, without thorns, or fire, and without permanent sadness. In his eyes you find the shine of martyrs slaughtered from the wrist to the wrist and their tears fill out oceans and valleys but don't find who will write an obituary on their death or pity them.

The seagull returns again, shining, destroying the boundaries of misery; challenges the impossible; looks closely at the homeland, kisses its soul, does not fear it; and calls it, with calmness and revelation; bated in anomie of missing; hyper, shivering from the excitement of the meeting and the passing of the days of the open doors; the time for the harvest has come; the beating of the hope has increased; the funeral is like the wedding; ruins, shadows, and sorrow; and a wound whose red drops water our crops poems and homeland love . . .

The seagulls have returned to answer the Jerusalemite call, hugging the horizon, spreading the perfume of the poppies and sprouting the moaning of the wounds into diamond rhythm, into a morning breeze, into daisies covered behind it a journey of silence and a violent tornado, and a coffin that blooms into beautiful flowers and blood.²⁹

The first paragraph presents the mission as an “earthquake” challenging the silence that “besieged” the Arab nation. It picks up on the theme of “tearing down the walls,” penetrating the confinements of the ontological conditions. It presents the death of the sacrificer as a means to “revive” people who are dead in silence. The dismemberment of her body at the “waist” is to “bridge” disunited peoples. In the second paragraph the author brings out the social suffering of Palestinians subjected to Israel’s violence, and takes up the issues of uprooting and displacement by talking about the pain of distancing from the Palestinian cities “Haifa,” “Jaffa,” and “Al-Majdal” that are now inhabited by Israelis. He makes further reference to “Deir Yassin,” a Palestinian vil-

lage that was the site of a massacre of its Palestinian residents in 1948, bringing out the length of the history of suffering.

Then the “seagull returns.” The “seagull” represents Palestinians’ lives before the establishment of Israel and the consequent displacement of the Palestinians, which deprived them of access to most of the Palestinian seashore except Gaza. Before the loss of the seashore the seagull was part of the Palestinian landscape, its image included in many Palestinian depictions of pre-Israel Palestine. Thus the seagull returning represents the Palestinians’ return to Palestine, as well as the freedom of flowing, of crossing borders and barriers. The seagull “hugging the horizon” brings out senses of unity, harmony, and mercy. That Palestinians sacrifice themselves in Palestinian cities evokes a sense of belonging and rootedness in these places. The illustration of a “coffin that blooms into beautiful flowers and blood” uses cultural ideas of the martyr’s blood blooming into flowers in the land, keeping alive the relationship of distanced Palestinians to the land of Palestine.

This representation is an example of a cross-cultural conception of sacrifice as a ritual sequence connected to patterns of creation. Lincoln (1991) explored similar conceptions among ancient peoples such as the Persians, Indo-Europeans, Scythians, and Celts and demonstrated how sacrifices are acts that effect transformations from the microcosm to the macrocosm. Lincoln uses the term “alloforms” to refer to dismembered parts of the sacrificed victims that create parts of the universe. There is thus a “homologic relation” between the human body and the universe. This relationship is conceived of through the breakdown of the human body and the universe into “parallel sets of their constituents parts” (Lincoln 1991, 186). Similar ideas are found in the Palestinian conceptions of martyrdom. In the excerpt above about Hanadi’s mission of “tears” and “oceans,” “red drops” and “water,” flesh and earth in a “coffin that blooms into beautiful flowers and blood,” the dismembered body parts of the martyr create a new universe in which Palestine is alive. Through the poetics in imagining the performance, sensory meanings are polarized between realities and aspirations. The polarizations are further emphasized in poetic turns of phrase: “bridging” through dismemberment; the “shine” of a “slaughtered” martyr; a “funeral” likened to a “wedding”; the “moaning of the wounds” that gives rise to “diamond rhythm,” “morning breeze,” and “daisies”; and the journey

of “silence” and of a “violent tornado.” All these polarizations generate poetics within which a fusion in the new generated life in the cultural imaginary is achieved. The performance of every ritual of sacrifice by a Palestinian martyr in the land of Palestine repeats this process of transforming “microcosm to macrocosm,” shifting substance from the sacrificed body of the martyr to the “alloformic” parts of Palestine, sustaining a Palestinian life with Palestinian characteristics against the decay of captivity and attempts at reconfiguration.

Another Palestinian writer, Rashad Abu Shawer, comments on the mission with a political analysis that presents the mission in the context of three primary dimensions in the production of violence: the violence of the state of Israel, global complicity, and cultural ideas such as rootedness mediated by the performance of the mission. The piece is entitled “Hanadi’s Litigation”:³⁰

If Felicia Langer³¹ gave up on the Zionist system, distanced herself from it, and withered away with its citizenship so she can keep her honor as an attorney and her concessions as human, what can the Palestinian attorney Hanadi Jaradat do? Does she litigate in the courts of the thieves that occupy her homeland? Should she ask for justice from her people’s oppressors? According to the articles of what law would Hanadi litigate before Sharon’s, Mofaz’s, and Yalon’s courts? How would she persuade the bulldozer drivers to stop tearing down homes over the heads of their Palestinian residents? How would she go by invoking mercy and humanistic feeling in the hearts of the Apache leaders, and the leaders of the Markava tanks that harvest Palestinians daily and terrify their children and daughters, and humiliate them at the roadblocks!?

Should Hanadi litigate before the Security Council? Before the representatives of the five Great Powers? By what language would Hanadi convince the American representative of the extent of suffering and injustice that Palestinians are subjected to? The injustice that is supported by the American blessing, is executed by American aircrafts, and is protected by the readiness of the American Veto all the time?

Why are Hanadi’s people denied a free homeland with a simple life where the human has the right to drink tea with his relative, or his wife, or fiancée under the olive tree, or a fruiting fig tree, and instead is being taken over by death decided and executed by the occupiers? Why do Hanadi’s people have to pay daily in death, destroyed homes, uprooted trees while the Zionist

assembly continues to live near the seas of Haifa, Jaffa, and Acre, clear of worries and relaxed in their security, feeling secure as long as their war machine grinds the Palestinians and as long as their defense army harasses Palestinians!?

What a litigation Hanadi exploded in Haifa. Destroying the sense of calm from the life of a reckless human assembly that shows off carelessness, relaxed for the wisdom of its generals, police, and security apparatuses that sentence Palestinians based on the security needs of the settlers . . .

Hanadi's litigation is one of the Palestinian litigations that say in the articulation of blood that the roots in this land are Arab Palestinian roots that will be impossible to uproot. These roots are protected by sacrifice and not by the litigation of writers, journalists, and corrupt leaders. It is time for this litigation, Hanadi's, to be the pointer and the statement of truth in a court hall that extends through the continents, so it is heard in the ears of the oppressed whose moaning or complaints are not rescuing them. Hanadi is executing Hammurabi's law and what was revealed in religious and the humanistic laws that are absent in this Sharonite and Bushian era.

In the first paragraph the author presents the situation in which the Palestinians find themselves locked, in their local setting, where the only recourse is the very system that is violating their lives—the very same system of regulations and military orders that strip Palestinians of access to their places, restrict their life, harass them, and project enormous fear in them. The passage brings out the daily violence that Palestinians suffer at the hands of the Israeli army from house demolitions, tanks that invade towns, uproot trees, and destroy fields, roadblocks, and constant harassment and humiliation. In the second paragraph the author brings out the global system's complicity with these forms of Israeli state violence against the Palestinians. The author implicates the UN Security Council, which pays lip service to Palestinian complaints with a six-decade history of not doing anything practical to stop Israel's violation of the Palestinians. He also notes the American role, in particular its history of protecting Israel against international pressure by using its power at the Security Council.

Abu Shawer highlights the contrast between Palestinian lives in Palestine, lives with no sense of calm, normalcy, or space to enjoy the simplest of daily activities, and Israeli lives in Palestine (Haifa, Jaffa, Acre), where Palestinian life no longer exists. He continues with Hanadi's "liti-

gation,” an explosion targeting Israeli civilians whose effect is that of mimetic terror and fear projected on the Israeli public. This positioning of the martyrdom operations sets it apart from other forms of conventional violence aimed at Israeli army personnel. The targeting of civilians in public spaces threatens the entire Israeli civil order and Israel’s sense of normalcy. The force of the violence permeates Israeli society and lasts well beyond the moment of impact.

Abu Shawer makes two other points: the power of cultural assertion through sacrifice and violence in a morally failing global system, and the resurgence of tradition as a form of resistance to a global order that asks a people to live with injustice. Abu Shawer regards Hanadi’s mission as applying humanistic law and religious law at a time when just laws are absent. Sacrifice, traditions, and religious laws are contrasted with the uniform legal embodiment and the “new world order”: “Hanadi is executing Hammurabi’s law and what was revealed in religious and humanistic laws that are absent in this Sharonite and Bushian era.” This positioning of the act makes clear the failure of the global system and local discontent with it, which leads to a resurgence of tradition and shapes the form of violence applied. “Hammurabi’s law,” the first known code of law to be inscribed in Babylon, called for *al-aynu bil ayn wa essinu bi essin wa badiu’ azlam* (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and the one who starts is the harsher), an explicit justification of violence that mimics the form of violence suffered. In Palestine the Palestinian civil order is ruined by Israeli state violence, and therefore the violence applied through martyrdom operations in Israeli public places attacks the Israeli civil order. In the absence of a system to seek justice, such old ideas can be revived and asserted, not only to deal with the “enemy” but to affect the cultural order of the society of the actors as well.

Another article from the *al-Hayat* newspaper in London by an Egyptian writer, Amin Huwaidi, comments in a piece entitled “The Bomb Hanadi”:

Her grandfathers’ land is occupied, its groves are being destroyed, their homes are being destroyed, her people are being killed. Cities are besieged, people are on sidewalks with no cover or food. As we know the environment forms the thoughts of people who live it . . . Hanadi found that everything is permissible. Everything is legitimate and the international legitimacy is silent and further partners with the criminals and supports them, or at least does not stop them! So what is Hanadi to do in her logic of the destroying

belt as it is clear that she would be a killer and killed?! Hanadi is no longer a human like the rest of the humans. She no longer feels that she walks like a human, thinks like a human, or feels like a human. Hanadi transformed into a human bomb. Humans do transform into wolves sometimes, or into vampires, or killers sometimes. But she refused to become like Sharon and Mofaz and chose to become the bomb . . .

And you, General Sharon, when isolating the Arabs you isolate yourself. Did you gather from every place on earth to live in a walled place so you live in the walls of steel and hatred?! Where is the Maginot Line? Where is the Siegforb Line? Where is the Berlin Wall? Where is the Bar Lev Line? You jail yourself, General. You are the jailer and the prisoner exactly like the human bomb, the killer and the killed at the same time. You are building the Ghetto where your fathers and grandfathers lived. Hanadi passed all the barriers, lines, and checkpoints to hit in the depth because she knows if you have the advantage in the power scale she has the advantage in the scale of fear. If you have the exclusive rights to the aircraft and the tank she has the exclusive ownership of the human bomb. No one but her owns this weapon and it is homemade, it walks in every landscape, space, and all directions.³²

Huwaidi anchors the mimetic act to state violence and points to the conditions to which Hanadi is subjected, in which all sorts of violence and violations against her and her people are permissible. The habitus in which people grow up can condition all kinds of violators, but Hanadi's habitus gives her act the moral high ground: she was not a killer who killed and continued to kill but one who kept her humanity by ending her life at the same time as she took the lives of others. Margalite (2002) also makes this point when he argues that Palestinian martyrdom operations are motivated by vengeance, and that by blowing themselves up Palestinian bombers assume the moral high ground. Positioned as such, the act of sacrifice gets further cultural meaning in the dynamic of the encounter with Israel and the process of differentiation from the "enemy." Huwaidi also notes the cultural power of sacrifice and how it affects the dynamic of the encounter.

In the second paragraph Huwaidi presents an argument that Islamic groups in Palestine often use to explain the political strategy of martyrdom operations. That strategy is based on achieving a balance of fear and terror with the Israelis, since the Israeli monopoly on technology prevents the Palestinians from achieving a balance of power. How this fear

is to lead to a political outcome is not fully explained, but the groups argue that fear deters further violence. (I present excerpts from my discussions with these activists in chapter 6.) The theme of penetrating and breaking down confinements recurs in Huwaidi's representation of Hanadi's mission. He states that "Hanadi passed all the barriers, lines, and the checkpoints to hit in the depth." This language will resonate with Palestinians who are unable to get things done because of the state of siege, or forced to undergo the risk and hardships of checkpoints and barriers. To them, breaking barriers is a worthy and meaningful performance.

Another Palestinian woman writer, Jihad al-Rajabi, writes in "They Are the Dead, Not the Sea!!":

The Bride of Jenin lights up the sea! She perfumes the clouds that extend to our wounds, and she rains on us from the clearness of tartil.³³ Hey, Bride of Jenin, the pain is tugged by pain! Cold in the links and the warmth is moaning . . . and longing to you, you the mirror of resistance from a dawn that we do not see! We feel its calmness as you depart us quietly in the whispering of your soul.

The sons of your patient nation have no horses to carry them to you as you hover from above, a woman of jasmine! They chew the silence and silence swallows them! They concentrate in the darkness of their souls and the darkness lives in them! Ashes topped by ashes and under it ashes and the coals in them is frost that burns them!

The odor of blood intensifies in the streets of Gaza, in Jenin and Hebron! The screams intensify! And the same careless face searching for leftovers at the dining tables of the powers. Confused walking, closed eyes touching the thorns with bare hands and bent down! Not as a heavy stalk of wheat but like those who hide their head in the sand. Goes by and the years have pecked his flesh and the nights chewed his bones and made his dreams carry black rain that drowned those who are waiting!³⁴

In al-Rajabi's depiction we see again the imagery of freedom and breaking out of confinement as the "Bride of Jenin lights up the sea" and "perfumes the clouds" that "extend to our wounds." We also see the worship qualities of the act, which is likened to reading Qur'an in the calmness of dawn, undisturbed by the activities of the day, a ritual of the most dedicated Muslims. The dawn prayer, the dawn tartil, and the dawn

tasbih have sufi qualities that permit a more intimate engagement with the Devine. The author describes the Bride of Jenin ascending to heaven, which all the grooms who hoped to seek her in marriage have no means to reach.

Al Rajabi characterizes the act as bringing “dawn that we do not see.” All the attributes of this new period are not necessarily clear, but the dawn is inarguably the end of night. This image is a prominent one in contemporary Palestinian resistance, which rests on the principle that *even if the future is unknown, we have to break out of this present.* (I return to this point in chapter 6.) Al-Rajabi presents the act against the backdrop of Israeli violence. “The odor of blood intensifies in the streets of Gaza, in Jenin and Hebron!” She contrasts Hanadi’s act with the silence of the Arab leaders and their “beggar” relationship to the “great” powers. These contrasts are typical of literary works inspired by martyrdom operations, as new articulations of Arab identity are distanced from “corrupt,” “silent” power structures whose leaders can only close their eyes and bury their heads in the face of “heroism.” The act of martyrdom is a rain that will drown them. Especially for Islamic groups, the act is thus seen as a form of liberation from corrupt political regimes and an assertion of Arab and Muslim identity.

Another commentator on Hanadi’s mission sees the operation as a source of empowerment to other Palestinian communities that face challenges and threats of destruction. Imad Awada wrote a piece entitled “I Am Hanadi, Hey Rafah” in the Lebanese newspaper, *al-Safir*:

Hanadi left with her blood. The birds chirped for her. The mothers cried and the moon sprouted grass. The jasmine massed at the windows of her wedding, the horses neighed and the procession started. The rain came, and the hearts of the flowers shivered . . .

I have decided to carry the death that they surround us with to surround them with death, so I make their mothers weep tears and blood . . .

Rise up, Rafah, and listen to Hanadi calling . . . Palestine is my country . . . I sacrifice for my Jerusalem with my body . . . My country is my wounds . . . Rise up Rafah . . . Rise up, Rafah, of the children I am Hanadi . . .

I am who I am . . . I am Hanadi . . . I am Hanadi coming from the eyes of the rain.³⁵

Here Awada presents Hanadi’s mission as an example of sacrifice and resistance and calls for the residents of the city of Rafah and the Rafah

refugee camp to take part in Hanadi's form of resistance. At the time, the Rafah refugee camp and the city of Rafah were experiencing a sustained campaign of home demolitions against Palestinian residents by Israel, which sought to evacuate Palestinians from near the Gaza Strip's border with Egypt. Falah (2005) presents an excellent analysis of these home demolitions and the extent of the geographic "enclavisation" that Israel hoped to obtain from these demolitions. Rafah city and camp suffered the most severe destruction of Palestinian homes and neighborhoods during the second intifada. This observation is yet another reference to mimetic violence. The mission projects onto Israelis the same fear that Palestinians experience from the state of Israel: "I have decided to carry the death that they surround us with to surround them with death."

Awada also articulates the sacrificial nature of the act, presenting images of the life that flourishes after the mission, or after Hanadi's death in sacrifice. Sacrifice entails renewal and the birth of new life. The coming of the rain, the happiness of the flower for the rain, and the chirping of the birds are not only imaginaries of life from sacrifice but also images of Palestine before Israel. These images bring to life the history of restricted access to water that led to the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of citrus trees and limited the farming and green life around it. The lack of water changed life as Palestinians knew it. The transformed landscape, the departure of birds that used to mass in the orange groves that no longer exist—these images are vivid in memories and narrations in which Israel stands as the obstacle to recovering life as it was lived.

Hanadi's mission became the medium for artistic expression beyond the Middle East. It was the subject of a multimedia work of art featured at the exhibit "Making Differences" at the Stockholm Museum of Antiquities in January 2004, which accompanied an international anti-genocide conference sponsored by the Swedish government. The art, by the Israeli expatriate Dror Feiler and his Swedish wife, Ganilla Skold Feiler, was entitled "Snow White and the Madness of the Truth" and consisted of a sailboat floating in a basin of red liquid, its sail made up of an icon-shaped photo of Hanadi smiling (the same photo released by Islamic Jihad after her mission), while a recording played Johann Sebastian Bach's "My Heart Is Swimming in Blood."³⁷ The metaphorical use of "Snow White" recalls references to Hanadi as the Bride of Palestine. The artwork was attacked and vandalized on a visit to the museum by the Israeli ambassador to Stockholm, who denounced the artwork as "ob-

scene” and a “monstrosity.” In defense of his artwork Feiler stated that it had a message of “openness and conciliation” and that the text accompanying the artwork acknowledged that innocent people had been victims of the operation.³⁷ This incident prompted a series of commentaries in the Israeli and Swedish press. While one writer in the Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* argued that “violence” should prompt Israel to “take a closer look at its concept of tolerance,” the Swedish tabloid *Expressen* wrote that the ambassador’s action reflected “not only a strange view of the limits of freedom of expression, but also growing Israeli arrogance in relations with the rest of the world.”³⁸ Hanadi’s mission generated discussions worldwide on a range of issues, from Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians to its relations with the rest of the world and its claims on history.

Hanadi’s mission became a medium for artistic creativity in part because of the contrasts embodied in the performance of the mission itself. The violence was performed by a woman in a beachfront restaurant bordering a beautiful sea, and twenty-one people died. Violence of that scale, especially against a backdrop of such beauty, is a source of human fascination and a staple of Hollywood. The operation permeated several cultural spheres and prompted a dialogue between an Israeli expatriate and an Israeli government representative, and then between Israeli commentators and Europeans about fundamental issues of Palestinian-Israeli relations.

The aesthetics of Hanadi’s performance enabled it to enter all these spaces simultaneously. As a cultural performance, violence can permeate many cultural spheres and generate sets of social processes well beyond the physical space of impact or the immediately affected victims. These processes have an effect on the society of the actors, the society of the “enemy,” as well as regional and global allies. Different performances will have different results. And sometimes the performance of violence will affect social processes, but without guiding one way or the other: the processes have a life of their own, and the course that they take will be greatly affected by the existing power structures in the spaces reached by the performance of violence. Yet it is also true that the mere generation of these processes can disturb the status quo sufficiently to alter the power structures themselves. In other words, the performance of violence raises questions, but it does not necessarily present answers.

The Poetics of Martyrdom

The cultural ideas expressed through the performance of martyrdom and its cultural representations in Palestine are also expressed through performative expressions in media such as music, dance, and theater. I attended a dance performance of the Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe (El-Funoun El-Sha'abiya) on 13 May 2004 to commemorate Al-Nakba (the catastrophe)³⁹ at Ramallah City Hall. The piece was entitled “Haifa, Beirut and Beyond,” the three places standing respectively for pre-Israel Palestine, the Palestinian exodus and exile, and the continuing resistance and unknown tomorrow. El-Funoun is twenty-eight years old and was formed amid expressions of Palestinian identity through the revitalization of Palestinian folklore. The group made its greatest success in the early 1980s by performing folkloric dance and songs that narrate life in Palestine before the establishment of Israel. It depicted scenes of the Palestinian grain harvest with references to the Marj Ibin ’Amer Plains.⁴⁰ The group also reproduced Palestinian traditional village weddings in songs and dance and used history, folklore, symbols, and aspirations to articulate Palestinian identity. It represented the Palestinians as the Canaanites entrenched in the land of Palestine, as the olive tree, and narrated the life of a lively community with intense interaction with its landscape, telling stories of boys and girls meeting at the spring, dancing for the harvest, and making wedding plans, and stories of heroic Palestinians challenging invaders through different periods of Palestinian history. The group then moved more toward resistance songs during the first intifada.

It took El-Funoun eight years to prepare “Haifa, Beirut, and Beyond.” El-Funoun’s artistic production came to a standstill during the Oslo period of the 1990s, as did most Palestinian artistic forms of expression during this period. Several artists communicated to me that the Oslo period hampered their creativity and their ability to express ideas through their artistic medium. The famous Palestinian painter Suleiman Mansour pointed out in an interview in Jerusalem that many artists did not survive Oslo, that there was emptiness, a loss of direction, and hence a lack of expression. It was a time when some artists moved to abstract art, others expressing what Mansour described as “empty non-sense ideas” like painting “someone fucking a shoe.” Mansour explained that

there seemed to be a calculated attempt to gut Palestinian art of its local content and that he himself could not paint during that period but reverted to sculpting with mud instead; this decision was probably what enabled him to survive the Oslo period as an artist.⁴¹ This pattern—the huge impact of the Oslo process on society, and the new surge of expression by artists like Mansour—will become more clear as I further explore the dance performance of El-Funoun.

“Haifa, Beirut, and Beyond” was presented in 2001, during the Al-Aqsa Intifada. El-Funoun’s presentation was a complex Palestinian experience of love and life; dispossession, exile, and ruined nationhood; and a resistance filled with defiance, death, and dreams. The dance begins with a scene of pre-Nakba, or pre-Israel Palestine, in which the dancers, men and women, were mixing mud. (It is traditional to cover the roofs of mud homes in Palestinian villages every fall with fresh mud in preparation for the winter season, to cover any cracks that appeared over the summer.) This opening scene is followed by dances of dispossession, in which people are forced to flee into exodus, and then by scenes with themes of exile and the reformulation of Palestinian identity into a refugee identity. The fourth and last theme further articulates the refugee identity, as the key⁴² becomes the symbol of the Palestinian struggle for the right of return during the Oslo period, which threatened to compromise this right. The group performed several dances with large keys on their shoulders, representing a heavy weight, in spite of which the Palestinians mounted a determined struggle. The performance concludes with dances that fuse themes of death and dream. In this last dance the dancers mix the mud again, although not joyously as at the beginning of the dance. Here the mud mixing is tense and the dancers display fear and love, worry and resistance, strength and determination.

These themes of cultural expression reveal a strong link to the land at a time when the Palestinians felt that it was in serious danger of being severed. This threat came from Oslo and its attempts to resolve the conflict without acknowledging, let alone preserving, the Palestinians’ right of return, their entitlements in historic Palestine. The players in the Oslo process assumed that by brushing this hard issue aside they could keep the peace. In my view this brushing aside of a complex relationship to the land and history is a primary reason why there was such an outpouring of expressions of the Palestinian relationship to the land of

Palestine that is now Israel. The artistic expressions were paralleled in Palestinian performances of sacrifice that saw Palestinian bodies mixed in the mud of Palestine through missions of martyrdom. Both artistic works and performances of violence expressed the relationship to the land and sought to assert cultural fusion with it. The sacrifice represents the ultimate expression of that relationship by achieving a physical fusion with the land.

El-Funoun's performance made rich use of symbols, historical references, and folktales from Palestinian memory, performed in a mixture of traditional and modern styles to traditional and modern music. The performance contained a range of expressions: festive and happy, sorrowful and sad, rebellious and aggressive, powerful and strong, weak and fearful, yearning and loving. In its final form the performance is a rich mosaic of cultural symbols, history, and question marks that reflect the complexity of everyday life in Palestine. The performance itself becomes a form of identity embodiment rather than a collection of symbols manipulated by the art form. El-Funoun creatively projected time to give historical depth to the symbols, so that the performance came closer to representing the Palestinian presence than any of the symbols themselves could do. The art reflects Palestinian lives, their suffering, violence, resistance, defiance, worries, hopes, and love for a life missed. The poetics generated by the performance become cultural representations and cultural expressions that on the one hand reflect the Palestinian state of being and on the other generate an emotive force among audiences and inform future actions. This form of artistic expression also reflects the tension between the reality of the cultural order and the artists' aspirations. This tension parallels the polarizations generated by the acts of martyrdom and their cultural representations, as explored earlier in this chapter. The acts are a product of the historic moment at which Palestinians live, and the state of being within which they live.

The more successful the performance is in pronouncing this historic moment, the more people will connect with it. Here lies the power of the poetics of the performance: it moves the audience by interweaving history with the challenges, worries, fears, and aspirations of the present and questions about the future. The viewer who knows the past and understands the present will be affected more deeply. In interviews after the performance, members of the audience revealed the intense emo-

tions that the performance evoked in them. One woman described it as “too much to handle.” The performance also provoked the curiosity of the audience, generating a new, shared meaning. This same dynamic applies to the cultural conception of performances of martyrdom. The more the martyrdom operation pronounces the historic moment and Palestinians’ state of being, the more people will connect with it.

The program for El-Funoun’s performance was decorated with an old door key, the symbol of dispossession and the quest for the right to return. Also decorating the program was a wheat stem signifying the land, against a mud-brown background, the color of the Palestinian soil. The MC for the show introduced the dance performance in Arabic:

From Acre, Haifa, Jerusalem, and Jericho to where the winds have spread our souls. To exiles where we hide memories, dreams, and our little things. An old key, but not an incapable one. Old, but shines as a glass of heart. We carry it on our shoulders that are heavily weighted down with worries, so it may carry us to our home which we have not forgotten. And we dance with it, with wishes and excitement, holding onto language, history and stories. We open a door of a memory that will never burn out, and with [the key] we look for walls of mosaic of forgiveness.

In this work there will be a number of fields and spaces open. Imaginations that have been confined in the cocoon of shock will be born. The music that is pregnant with the pressures of the open tomorrow, and lived with longing of the prolonged moment, calms down and charges, domesticates and differs, gets ordered and gets loose on its own, as it wishes, and according to the echo of the collective tone that is forcefully charging in the unknown, through the painful wires of the sea and the charging land waves.

The held body spills out in the questions of existence and the limbs and eyes dislocate from the Iqal⁴³ of assertion and withdrawal. So it is frank and clear. So it swims through the horizon, declaring an opinion, a point of view, a hint, or a Mawwal.⁴⁴ Inventing the forms of living, with happiness and sadness, with love and life, with worries and calmness, and with all the machineries of survival and the preferred presence in spite of the laws of civilized death and the molds of the technology of modern behavior.

Samples of blood and flesh, the love for the place has mixed them, and the intrinsic chains of details have formed them. They came out of the land’s mud so that they draw the characteristics of the place but no longer are its face . . . will they finish??

In this work the questions of Palestinian fate come out and remain, setting the sail before the sun's eyes and in the face of the wind so that the picture does not stay blurred and to balance the scale.

These same words could have introduced the performance of martyrdom in its Palestinian formulation and cultural conceptions. The memories of the Nakba and its tales represent a field that defines the making of the contemporary Palestinian identity. It is a history that the Palestinians inescapably carry on their shoulders, in good times and bad. They sing and dance these tragedies so they may heal their suppressed collective trauma, so they may come to terms with their past and move beyond it. But with a history that never stops, an encounter with an expanding state that continues to ruin their peoplehood and places, dreams that continue to shatter, the dances and songs become a means of transforming history into defiance and resistance.

At the same time the introduction refers to Palestinians “inventing the forms of living,” implying that acts of resistance have a sacrificial nature, that life is lived culturally though the life of the identity. Such assertion of identity and forms of living challenge the modern order, the modern “civility” that requires negating identity and conforming to modernity and its order. Here the Palestinian narrator makes clear his awareness of the “moulds” of “modern behavior” and the “preferred presence,” but death of the body is his preferred form of living, a choice that may seem incomprehensible to the “civilized” order. These constructions, which are also conceived of in the performance of martyrdom, are formulated in a polarized global order that demands “civility” from the occupied, oppressed, dispossessed, squeezed Palestinians—in response to the modern technology of war and numerous cultural invasions, they are to make their diverse cultural representations conform to fixed molds. Challenging this global order and the forms of modernity itself becomes a meaningful act. Martyrdom operations, which do not conform to the rules of “modern behavior,” become a means of asserting difference from the molds into which everyone is expected to fit.

The ideas expressed in this dance are similar to the ideas expressed in the commentaries, obituaries, and poetic representations of martyrdom explored earlier: fusion with the land, breaking free while under siege, and resistance to conformity, among others. These ideas are generated by people’s realities. The idea of birth from “the confinement in the

“cocoon of shock” parallels the penetration of barriers and the process of breaking free from confinement. In an interview, Marwan, the person who introduced El-Funoun’s dance performance, stressed the importance of place in their work:

The odor of the place is fragrant in our work. It is clear in the picture, in the music, and in the song. This mosaic in Palestine is rich and complex in this country. We try to embody the place in particular characteristics through the dance. The place means a lot to us. It is a form of our embodiment, a form of our identity. The most important element in the elements of our existence and our identity is the place, through our presence in it or love for it and bond to it. The Palestinian is not living a state of no place. The Palestinian is outside of the place, working for the opportunity to live inside of the place. The Zionist project is realized through the isolation of the Palestinian human from his place and then the isolation of the Palestinian from himself, from the family. If you are happy for a happy occasion, you find a barrier, a checkpoint. If you are sad, you will find a barrier, a checkpoint. If you love, you find a barrier, a checkpoint. In order to work, you find a barrier, a checkpoint. Barriers and checkpoints that split us into shrapnel. This tearing apart even when you are inside the place, you are torn apart, until your relation to the place ends. We embody the importance of the connection to the place and we remind people of our isolation from the place. We have a strong tie to it, but forcefully are forced out of it. This place, we made it, we formed it. We love it and any fusion with it means an end to the [Zionist] project.⁴⁵

The relation of Palestinians to their place lies at the heart of the Palestinian struggle to realize Palestine. As they are squeezed more and more from their place, performances that exemplify this strong bond to place become popular. Marwan’s comments emphasize the Zionist attempt to disrupt Palestinians’ cultural relations to their place, and Palestinians’ struggle to maintain fusion with the land as a counter to the Zionist project. But more importantly, his conception of the relationship to place points out the dialogic relationship between Palestinian identity, place characteristics, and constructions and the ontological conditions of confinement and isolation. The attempts to isolate the Palestinians’ from their identity, community, peoplehood, and culture are also attempts to isolate Palestinians from their physical place with roadblocks, barriers, and checkpoints.

The poster produced by the Palestinian Independent Commission for the Protection of Citizens Rights in response to the massacre in the Jenin refugee camp in April 2002—showing a poppy blooming amid the debris of destruction—draws a relationship between the victims who died in the attack and the land. The poster bears the statement *muhawelet qatl al-makan* (The attempt to kill the place) placed over the scene of destruction. The words *muhawelet* (the attempt) and *al-makan* (the place) are in red, while the word *qatl* (to kill) is printed in black and seems to have fallen from its place, now occupied by the poppy flower, shown in red bloom. Next to the roots of the flower two young girls play in the ruins. The illustration interprets the violent Israeli attack on the camp as an attempt to “kill” people’s relationship to their place and environment, to their acculturated space and homeland. At the same time the flower raises the hope of renewal and a stronger relationship with place. The symbol keeps alive those who die, embodied in the place, and later generations are strengthened through representations of the martyrs’ experiences.

These cultural actors, whether they are painters, poets, writers, dancers, or fighters, express similar ideas and engage in similar social processes. Each chooses his or her own medium to make that expression. Martyrdom will not be the medium of choice for everyone. But what gives martyrdom its potency is its capacity to make these expressions and to be noticed by a wider set of viewers. The conditions of containment and confinement that I explored in chapter 4 and mentioned here by Marwan are the main conditions against which the conceptions of place and space are generated. Through the performance of martyrdom, physical barriers are broken, penetration is achieved against the “enemy,” and cultural conceptions of freedom and rootedness are generated. So my mother’s comment to me on the first day of my arrival in the field—“See how they took the road from us?”—turned out to be at the heart of my inquiry into violence and martyrdom in Palestine.

A number of common themes and processes of polarization recur in the performances of martyrdom and their cultural representations explored in this chapter, as may be seen in the commentaries, *istishhadieen* notes, and poetics that I have cited. These cultural themes and meanings associated with martyrdom operations in Palestine and the polarizations generated by these performances can be summarized as follows:

1. *Transcendence of Boundaries.* These performances transcend all boundaries, physical and conceptual. The *istishhadieen* “penetrate” the Israeli segregation wall, “break” all the barriers, and “pass” all checkpoints. By simply reaching an Israeli town, the *istishhadi* achieves the breaking of boundary conceptions in polarization with the ontological conditions of encapsulation and confinement. Furthermore, he or she conceptually transcends the oppressive political order, the negligent international order, the moral order, and even the imagination.

2. *The Revival of Palestine.* The sacrifice of Palestinian bodies in Palestinian places from which Palestinians have been expelled recreates life for Palestine. The sacrificed Palestinians’ body parts create corresponding parts of Palestine—streams, nurturing fields, blooming flowers, moving and shaking olive trees and wheat stalks—and bring back birds, singing, perfumes, and weddings. In these cultural conceptions of sacrifice Palestine is revived in Palestinian memory and the cultural imaginary to regain its Palestinian characteristics and retain its Palestinian identity. Palestine is recreated in its natural setting: pre-Israel, pre-colonization, open, free of boundaries and walls, filled with water, birds, and abundant life. This revival of pre-1948 Palestine is a polar opposite to the Israeli erasing of Palestinian signs from the landscape and the process of reconfiguring Palestinian territories into Israel through the Israeli settlement program and of intensifying Palestinians’ isolation and alienation in their own homeland.

3. *The Unity of Palestine.* The combination of the above two conceptions—the transcendence of boundaries and the revival of Palestine—is a template for the conception of the unity of Palestine. This unity is expressed through physical reach and physical sacrifice, as well as through the cultural representations of birds flying through the sky of Palestine, trees whispering to plants, and sea waves dancing. These cultural conceptions of the unity of Palestine are in opposition to intensified Palestinian geographic fragmentation and isolation, and persistent conditions of exile and denial to exiled Palestinians of the right of return.

4. *Assertion of Palestinian Rootedness.* The physical spread of Palestinians’ flesh and blood in the land of Palestine in sacrifice for it and for the Palestinian people fuses Palestinian peoplehood with the land of Palestine. This process asserts a rootedness of the Palestinians in Palestine against the denial of rootedness, accessibility, and physical attachments

and experiencing of the land. The sacrifice further configures the land of Palestine by attaching new historical events to places, as the sites of explosions become sites of martyrdom and sacrifice by Palestinian icons, thus building stronger bonds between Palestinians and the place of sacrifice. This process stands in opposition to political processes that seek to finalize the exclusion of Palestinians from historic Palestine in the calls for recognizing Israel as a “Jewish state.”

5. *Assertion of Palestinian Peoplehood.* The concentration of the sacrificed victim concentrates the sacrificed identity, creating the immortalized iconic image of the istishhadi. The istishhadi is a Palestinian sacrificed for Palestine and its people—thus, by extension, the act asserts Palestinian identity and immortalizes Palestinian peoplehood. This immortalization of Palestinian peoplehood is generated in opposition to political processes that deny Palestinian identity, as the Israeli and international orders turn their back on Palestinian entitlements to identity. These assertions of a distinct Palestinian identity are a challenge to globalization and the processes of identity “hybridization.”

6. *Assertion of Palestinian Independence.* The Palestinian sacrificers who take their lives into their own hands assert agency, control, and independence. Their performance communicates control over self-destiny in the face of political domination, curfews, imprisonment, terrorizing, and constant harassment and abuse that Palestinians are subjected to through their encounter with Israel.

7. *Securing Inner Peace.* The performance of sacrifice or istishhad is a religious ritual performance that fuses Palestinians’ Muslim lives with the divine life. The martyrs live in the divine world and also in the cultural world of the Palestinians, leading two lives and fusing Palestinians’ lives with the life of the Divine. This conception creates a sense of calmness, harmony, mercy, purity, and certainty, in contrast to the conditions of occupation, which are characterized by brutality, the ravages of war, the harshness and boldness of daily encounters with soldiers, and the resulting “contamination” of self, mixing-up of categories, and fear of an uncertain tomorrow. The fusion with divine life that is achieved through the sacrifice is a repurification of the self. As the system fails to work, a move toward tradition reasserts a sense of control and direction.

8. *Application of Mimetic Violence.* The application of violence at Israeli targets and publics in the “Israeli depth” spreads terror and fear through-

out Israel, just as the Israelis reach the Palestinian depths and spread terror throughout Palestine. In this mimetic process Palestinians spread and expand throughout Israel as Israel expands and spreads throughout Palestine. This mimesis of enemies asserts the power and capacities of Palestinians and further consolidates their legitimate political aspirations.

In combination, these processes represent the poetics of martyrdom that are created between the poles of ontological and cosmological conditions and political aspirations. The cultural discourse within which acts of martyrdom are constructed melds personal experiences with cultural ideas, whereby the individual is not separate from his or her social setting and cultural representations and performances are not separate from experiences. In the Palestinian context there is a prominent landscape dimension in the construction of the act of sacrifice. This landscape dimension makes the site of martyrdom an important component of its performance; together with the timing and cultural references of the mission, it represents a semiotic grounding for the poetics of the performance as a whole. The system of motivation for martyrdom operations is generated through symbiotic articulation, manipulations, and transformations over time, along with mimetic encounter and opposition to the “enemy” over the landscape of Palestine. Thus the mission asserts the unity of Palestine, Palestinian conceptual rootedness in Palestine, and Palestinian identity. It does so by destabilizing the identity of the “enemy” whose presence threatens the very identity of the actor and the community of Palestinians in their place: Palestine.