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Author(s): David A. McDonald
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Poetics and the Performance of Violence in Israel/Palestine

David A. McDonald / Indiana University, Bloomington

> I know exactly what my music can do. My music brings people out into the streets, chanting, singing, dancing, demanding their rights. This is why I was arrested so many times. The first thing they [Israeli soldiers] do is arrest the musicians ... I hope that my singing inspires more people to fight, to take back their lives. Music is resistance. Look around you. Look at how all of these people have come together for a single cause. What I do on stage and what martyrs do on the streets are one and the same, just with different instruments.
>
> —Intifada Singer, Ramallah, Spring 2004

Towards an Ethnomusicology of Violence

Assessing the state of the discipline in 2006 on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Samuel Araujo correctly inquired whether or not ethnomusicologists have gone far enough to better understand the politics and inequalities of difference, as well as structures of physical and symbolic violence, pervasive around the world (2006:289-91). And while this oversight has only recently begun to change, with the emergence of several provocative ethnomusicological studies on issues of violence and trauma (e.g., Araujo 2006; Cloonan and Johnson 2002; Cusick 2006; Meintjes 2004; Pettan 1998; Ritter and Daughtry 2007), the designation of the 52nd annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, "Music, War, and Reconciliation," and the 2008 formation of a SEM special interest group dedicated to issues of music and violence, the broader question remains: Why haven't ethnomusicologists sought to better understand the histories of death, displacement, and dispossession effecting and affecting the societies within which they work? Utilizing the most sophisticated theoretical and methodological approaches, ethnomusicologists have long contextualized processes of music making against a vast array of local, national, and global forces. Yet, the performative capacities of violence to generate culture,

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to structure bodies and bodily practices, and to refashion conceptions of self and other have only recently been the subject of ethnomusicological research.

In this article I seek to contribute to the nascent ethnomusicological literature on violence and terrorism via a performative analysis of the immense repertories of protest media (music, poetry, dance, cinema, literature, graphic design, graffiti, etc.) emanating from within the Palestinian nationalist movement. I believe that an ethnomusicological approach, centered upon critical ethnographic inquiry into cultural performance, signification, and the social construction of place, self, and other through aesthetic experience may in fact provide a far richer understanding of the many forms that violence may take, the legitimacy of its means, and the overall impact of its articulation. As a discipline dedicated to understanding cultural identities and subjectivities through aesthetic and performative experience, documented in participant observation and cognizant of the emics of social interaction and integration, ethnomusicology is well situated for theorizing the performative capacities of violence, and the ensuing meanings violent performances carry for victims, perpetrators, and witnesses alike.

Central to this performance-based approach is the idea that violence occurs as a mode of structuring relations of power between victims, perpetrators, and witnesses, drawing from a common lexicon or vocabulary of symbolic action. This lexicon must in some way communicate meaning to its specified audience. Whether it is local, regional, national, or transnational, violence must be performed for an audience in order for it to have any social meaning (Schmidt and Schroeder 2001:5–6). That is to say, that the power of violence lays not in its capacity to kill, but rather in its capacity to communicate meaning, to instantiate power, legitimacy, and history, over those *not* physically or directly targeted in the act itself (Whitehead 2004a, 2004b). The efficacy of violence is not measured in its casualties, but in its capacity to transform the subjectivities of those indexed in its performance. The ultimate goal is to create anew or reinforce existing regimes of power that govern relations between perpetrators, victims, and witnesses.

Where I depart from much of the current anthropological literature, however, lies in its overemphasis on comparativism and the strategic functionality of violence. To be sure, violence is a form of pursuing material, political, and economic interests. However, the forms violence takes, the impact it carries, and the effect and affect it has on individuals can not be measured in purely politico-economic terms. Violent behavior, violent performances, are laden with cultural meaning, drawn from a repertory of culturally salient forms and practices. These various forms and practices constitute a poetics through which violence comes to take on meaning for its participants. Apt examples of this would be the questions: Why do Palestinians choose to throw stones?

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Why has one specific pizza place in West Jerusalem been the site of no less than three suicide attacks since 2001? Why are olive groves routinely the site of terrorist attacks by Israeli settlers? Why is it that depictions of graphic suffering and victimization, plastered on virtually every conceivable surface, inspire sincere feelings of community among Palestinians but antipathy in the international media? What effect has the forced use of Israeli-issued identity cards had on perceptions of the Palestinian body, community, and nation? None of these questions can be answered in purely politico-economic terms, yet each is absolutely essential, I would argue, to understanding violence in Israel/Palestine.

If we are to better answer some of these questions, the task is to unravel the processes through which the individual subject is constituted against a broad array of violent experiences. Here an ethnomusicological emphasis on the performative allows traditional models for examining violent contexts and behaviors to be extended into realms that have often been the province of other academic disciplines. Highlighting the meanings of violence through performativity brings to the discussion a much needed focus on the cultural meaning and the cultural construction of violent acts, not just the broader social, political, and economic factors that provide the opportunity for violent expression. A cultural exploration into the phenomenology and ontology of violence, both in how it arises and comes to be known as such, necessitates a repositioning of our focal awareness onto individual experience where meaning, emotion, and subjectivity are studied against a range of performative bodily practices (Axel 2001; Butler 1993; Feldman 1991; Nelson 1999; Patraka 1999). A study of violence nested within a deep/thick understanding of cultural practice, focusing on discursive poetics, allows for a greater understanding of the rituals of violence and the processes through which they take shape.

However, what I am in essence calling for here, and what I find lacking in the current literature, is an aesthetic criticism of the performativity of violence, focusing on its discursive amplification (its poetics) as communicated through bodily practices *across various aesthetic fields.* That is to say, while many have studied violence as a form of cultural performance, few have studied performance as a form of cultural violence. Here is exactly where ethnomusicology must situate its understanding of violence and sociocultural conflict, within the discursive interplay of performance, experience, and memory. This is not to say that a music concert should be considered an act of violence against communal outsiders, but that performances, aesthetics, and other artistic practices structure in many ways how violence becomes meaningful, beautiful, and appropriate. The quotation that begins this article summarizes this point exceptionally well. Speaking before a political rally in 2004, a prominent intifada singer stated to me his belief that "music is re-

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sistance." Through performance music has an incredible capacity to "inspire ... people to fight, [and] take back their lives." However, more than simply focusing national sentiment in performative gesture, this musician made the claim that music performance has the same societal impact, the same psychological affect, as direct (violent) encounters with occupation forces. "What I do on stage and what martyrs do on the streets are one and the same, just with different instruments" (interview, 10 February 2004, Ramallah).

What can a powerful statement such as this mean for the ways in which we conceptualize violence, resistance, martyrdom and terror? What is the relationship between an act of violence carried out on the streets of Tel Aviv and its representation performed on a stage in Amman? How might a study of aesthetics influence our understanding of the epistemological and experiential dimensions of violence as discursive practice? And in what ways does poetics govern the social constitution of participants (victims, victimizers, and witnesses) and the bodily codes and rituals necessary for their successful articulation?

Traversing Two Worlds

So much of my time in the field was spent traversing between two contrasting yet mutually constitutive worlds: *al-balād* (the homeland) and *al-manfā* (exile) or *al-ghūrbah* (diaspora). To move between these two worlds, between occupation and exile, between the real and the performed, required a constant sensitivity to the differences between the ***kinesis*** of living the occupation and the ***mimetic*** processes and practices of those longing for it. For those living the occupation, daily life involves navigating an ever-constricting matrix of apartheid-like checkpoints, depravity, and the pervasive threat of violence and terror. Such conditions have fostered a discourse of suffering, whereby collective victimization and appeals to "bare humanity" are the primary means of fostering national intimacy and communal sentiment (Allen 2005; Khalili 2007; McDonald 2006; Peteet 2005). Graffiti, graphic imagery, commemorative posters, music, and other arts narrate and instantiate this discourse of suffering throughout the occupied territories and the near diaspora (Oliver and Steinberg 2002, 2005; Peteet 1996). For many Palestinians living in exile it has become necessary to reenact such suffering through performative media (music, poetry, film, literature, cinema, and dance) so as to articulate their distinctly Palestinian identities, and to express solidarity with friends and family living under occupation. For example, while musicians and activists often choose to perform in front of the Israeli apartheid wall/security barrier to protest restrictions of movement and collective punishment, in Jordan it is quite common for demonstrators to construct a makeshift apartheid wall, or its opposite a heritage wall, outside of the performance space so as to bet-

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ter articulate their Palestinian-ness as well as to call greater attention to their cause. Other forms of mimesis commonly included dressing as suicide bombers or masked para-militants, reenacting a martyr's funeral procession with a surrogate corpse, and throwing stones at imaginary Israeli watchtowers.

The fundamental goal of my research was to delineate the ways in which music and musical performance have been historically utilized within the Palestinian nationalist movement. However, what became apparent over the course of my fieldwork was that both the experience of living under occupation as well as the performative representations of such experiences formed a seamless aesthetic loop, a *poiesis* of violence rendering relations between structure and event, performance and act, fluid and variable. In looking critically into the poetics of violence—present across various modes of performative sociality—I began to document how conceptions of both place and the subjects who pass through them are constituted in truly remarkable ways.

Al-Nakbā Commemoration 2005

In May of 2005 I attended an *al-ḥaflah al-thōwrah* (revolutionary concert/political rally), commemorating the 57th anniversary of the Palestinian *al-nakbā* (great catastrophe) of 1948. In structure and content this event was not unlike the hundreds of similar nationalist protests and rallies I attended over the course of my fieldwork. On this particular spring day national sentiment for Palestinian issues was extremely high. The recent death of Yasser Arafat left widespread anxieties as to the future leadership of the national movement, and opened spaces for public discourse on the rise of Hamas in the upcoming elections. Arriving at the front entrance of *jam'at al-zaytūnah* (Olive Tree University), a private university on the outskirts of Amman, I noticed the main courtyard was literally covered in nationalist posters and banners reflecting these anxieties. Encapsulated in the many flags and banners representing the various Palestinian political factions, the performance environment took on a brightly colored hue. Their various colors (green for Hamas, red for the PFLP, black and white for Fatah) collectively signified the colors of the Palestinian flag. Foremost among these banners was a two story quilt, deemed a "wall of Palestinian embroidery" (*jadārīyah filisṭīn al-maṭrazah*), memorializing each of the approximately 450 villages depopulated during the ethnic cleansing of Palestine in 1947–48 (Pappe 2006). Each village was represented by its specific embroidered pattern (*maṭrazah*) with the name of the village placed in the center of each square. From afar, the brightly colored squares blended together to form a beautiful mosaic of indigenous Palestinian needlework. Yet, as I approached my eyes began to refocus onto each individual square/village. Embodied in brightly patterned threads, I began to see each of the approximately 450 squares as a unique

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place each with its own local histories, families, practices, and politics. My imagination wondered about the material bodies that once wore these patterns, their stories, and their voices. Seen in its unity and diversity this "wall of Palestinian embroidery" was a powerful sign of loss, exile, and dispossession. In brightly colored needlework it indexed both the places represented in the patterns as well as the bodies who once wore/inhabited them, and by extension the intimate connections between history, memory, and the body in exile. To my sides (and between my legs!) young children clamored to

Figure 1. A photograph of the "Wall of Palestinian Embroidery" [jadārīyyah filisṭīn al-maṭrazah], Amman, Jordan. Photograph by the author.

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read the squares, trying to locate ancestral villages, names, and places they had no doubt heard about in countless tales and melodies.

Around 4:00 pm the festivities formally began with a series of obligatory speeches given by political officials and other community leaders on the necessity of collective resistance and steadfastness against the occupation. Following these speeches a local intifada ensemble began a music performance, drawing the majority of the approximately 300 audience members out of their seats to form *debke* lines throughout the venue.[1] For the next two hours the musicians fluidly shifted between participatory debke suites of indigenous folk songs and more presentational contemporary war songs. In addition to the many banners and posters lining the walls of the performance space, participants inserted their bodies into the political environment through creative costuming. The performers on stage wore army fatigues in an attempt to draw out a perceived iconicity between soldiers and musicians each fighting for the nation. A professional debke troupe was clothed in the *qumbâz*, a traditional Palestinian robe associated with pre-1948 villagers. Children and teens were dressed as soldiers or suicide bombers, carrying plastic toy weapons or wearing makeshift explosive belts, and older adolescent men wrapped their heads and/or shoulders in the black and white checkered headscarf (*kūffīyah*) to emulate the appearance of stone throwing activists (*mulathammūn*).

The collective movement and gestures of these various participant groups was equally communicative of cultural meaning. In addition to the several rotating debke lines making their ways through the aisles, several young men attempted to emulate a funeral march by carrying a symbolic martyr on their shoulders wrapped in a Palestinian flag. Teenagers passed out leaflets memorializing the acts of martyrs, and advertising the platforms of the various political factions in attendance. Soon the performance space became littered with these pamphlets, carpeting the grounds with brightly colored paper. Others paraded through the crowd carrying commemorative posters of martyrs or various political figures. Foremost among these were posters memorializing the martyrdom of Yasser Arafat, Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, and Mohammad Al-Durra.

Although usually well-behaved, during one particular moment a group of Fatah followers tore to shreds a poster memorializing Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. In an instant, rival groups of *shabāb* (youth, male implied) erupted into fighting, causing many to flee the area. The music and dancing abruptly stopped as university security guards attempted to restore order. In an attempt to pacify the crowd, the music ensemble quickly launched into a dance suite incorporating a series of songs associated with each of the major political factions (Hamas, Fatah, and PFLP). Ultimately, cooler heads prevailed, and within minutes the crowd returned to exuberant singing and

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dancing as if nothing had happened. Amazed by the transformation, I later asked the leader of the ensemble to explain how he was able to calm the fighting so quickly.

> AK: Things like this sometimes happen. Everyone gets so excited, the shabāb get a little too wound up ... and before you know it somebody starts a fight. Honestly, I don't think the music had much of an effect on them. They would have stopped [fighting] sooner or later ... I just wanted to play songs that everyone knew. When I saw it [the fight] begin I looked over at Yusef, to start "Hubbat Al-Nār" [As the fire swelled].
>
> DM: Why "Hubbat Al-Nār?"
>
> AK: It's a great song to get people dancing, and I knew that most of the shabāb [in the audience] were from Zarqa [an industrial city on the outskirts of Amman] and Al-Weḥdet [a refugee camp near downtown Amman]. "Hubbat Al-Nār" talks about Al-Tīrrah [a village depopulated in 1948], and there are a lot of people from Al-Tīrrah in Zarqa and Al-Weḥdet. I guessed maybe it would remind them of their [shared] history. (interview, 17 June 2005, Zarqa)

While the bandleader dismissed the notion that his music had any tangible effect on the fighting crowd, his choice of song in this particular moment was incredibly insightful. "Hubbat Al-Nār," while not one of his compositions (nor is it a standard in his usual set list), is a famous intifada song drawn from the repertory of *sh'abī* (indigenous/populist) nationalist performances of the early 1980s (McDonald 2006). Based on a common Palestinian debke rhythm (*maqsūm*) and melodic mode (*sīkah lā*), "Hubbat Al-Nār" presents a particularly fitting example of this repertory of resistance music and poetry.

Hubbt al-nâr wa al-bârûd ghanâ	The fire Swelled and the rifles sang
Aṭlab shabâb yâ waṭan wa tamanâ	Calling to the youth, oh nation, give hope
Hubbt al-nâr min 'akkâ lil ṭîrah	The fire swelled from 'Akkā to Al-Tīrrah
Kamshah ṣaghâr rabîû 'âl- ḥaṣîrah	A handful of children raised on straw mats
Wa hây ṣârû kabâr wamâ nasyûsh al-dîrah	Became youth and never forgot their homeland
Wa mîn al-lî yansâ filisṭîn al-janah	For who could forget the paradise of Palestine?
Hubbt al-nâr karâmah karâmah	The fire swelled, dignity, dignity
Ṭalû fida'îah wa wîlhu al-lî yata'âmâ	They became martyrs and woe unto those who blind themselves
Fajar al-ḥurîyah bal-damâ yataḥannâ	The dawn of freedom will come through drawing the henna in blood.

To a crowd of boisterous youth "Hubbat Al-Nār" is a powerful testament to violence, self-sacrifice, and martyrdom. As the young children "raised on straw mats" matured (a reference to the difficult living conditions in the refugee camps), they never forgot the "paradise" that was their homeland. For dignity, those youth became martyrs, seeking "the dawn of freedom ... through drawing the henna in blood." To "draw the henna in blood" is a powerful metaphor

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of masculinity, the body, and the nation, calling forth the common practice of drawing intricate designs of henna on the hands of the groom the night before his wedding (McDonald 2007).

The third verse seemed particularly appropriate for the context of this performance. As two rival political factions erupted into melee, many concertgoers joined the on-stage performers in singing:

Hubbt al-nâr yâ ahl al-'arûbah	The fire swelled, good tidings
Wa hal-sh'ab wâḥad mesh 'aîl wa 'ashâîr	The people are united, not families or tribes
Bidemhu jâhad wa taḥamal khasâîr	By their blood, struggle, they bear much loss
Wa 'al-thowrah 'âhad tanḥarar mowṭanâ	And upon this revolution they make a contract to liberate our nation.

By their blood and their loss, the people must remain united in their struggle, loyal to the nation above and beyond family or tribe (or in this case politics). Framing the revolution as a "contract to liberate *our* nation," drawing upon direct references to ancestral villages ('Akkā and Al-Tīrrah) and indigenous Palestinian wedding practices, "Hubbat Al-Nār" positions the violence of the intifada as an inclusive social process/performance, and a powerful means of drawing together participants into a shared communal environment for the satisfaction of collective (i.e., national) goals and the amelioration of collective traumas.

Figure 2. "Hubbat Al-Nār," transcribed by the author.

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Musically, "Hubbat Al-Nār" is adapted from the repertory of indigenous debke songs and dances typically performed at Palestinian life-cycle celebrations. In performance, such songs typically elicit associative feelings of home, family, village life, and rural purity based on their co-occurrence with the events from which they are derived (Barghouthi 1963, 1979, 1994; Sbait 1982; Ladkani 2001; McDonald 2006). To dance the debke often calls forth associative feelings and experiences of celebration, familial intimacy, and indigenous Palestinian life-ways among participants raised in a *min al-turāthīyyah* (traditional) Palestinian home.

Through repeated articulation, however, indices of experience come to take on new meanings (Turino 1999). Over time, as these songs and dances are performed within new social frames, such as political protests and demonstrations, feelings of home and family become layered with new associations of nation, resistance, and martyrdom. The associative links between private life-cycle celebrations and nationalist rallies serve to extend feelings of familial intimacy into national frames. The nation becomes circumscribed as an extended family, related by shared history, ancestral land, and a common cause or affliction. Moreover, the juxtaposition of indigenous Palestinian songs and dances with emblematic acts of violence and resistance imbues the resistance movement with a sense of sacral and historic legitimacy. Texts are rewritten to articulate with nationalist goals, and resistance becomes the primary means of expressing and assuming national identities and subjectivities.

Throughout this performance participants were confronted with powerful signs of martyrdom, resistance, and violence articulated through performative action. Music, dance, and poetry served as the primary modes through which participants acted out various roles and relations of violent conflict. Performers wore army fatigues on stage, children and teens dressed as freedom fighters, and acts of martyrdom and lament were symbolically recreated in the aisles or projected on the walls. In dress, speech, and gesture participants iconically embodied signs of the resistance, suffering, victimization, and victory in performance. They acted out fields and relations of their own dispossession, and through collective performance embodied alternative aesthetic realties through which dispossession could be mediated and transcended.

The corpse of the martyr, displayed and referenced continuously throughout this event in image, song, and text, was perhaps the most powerful sign of Palestinian suffering and dispossession, and as such formed a nexus of intense feelings of national intimacy. Within the performance environment virtually every available surface was inscribed with national meaning. Physical surfaces were covered in banners, flags, graffiti, leaflets, and graphic posters depicting broken and torn bodies, indices of the brutality of Israeli occupation. Sonic/aural surfaces were filled with a constant barrage of music, chant-

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ing, and recited poetry, equally graphic in its depiction of suffering. Even the corporeal surfaces of the participants themselves, their bodies, were inscribed with national meaning through costume, collective movement, and gesture. For an outsider to enter into such an explicit environment, confronted with ubiquitous signs of suffering, required a certain level of emotional fortitude. Yet, for many Palestinians the inscription of such signs of suffering indexed powerful associations of the sacred, transcendence, and national intimacy.

All of these sentiments were exemplified in the mimetic performance and reproduction of victimization exhibited in this musico-political event. The desired transformation of the political sphere rested upon the performative transformation of the body, and by extension the body politic, through resistance, suffering, and self-sacrifice/martyrdom. What is more, for these Palestinians in exile participation in such events constitutes essentially the only means of expressing solidarity with the national movement. Hence, such music performances offer an important forum for symbolically resisting foreign occupation, protesting social injustice, and beseeching international intervention. Palestinians in exile are left virtually no active role in their nationalist struggle. The performative action constitutive of these events is particularly important in its capacity to engender powerful associations of shared history, suffering, and dispossession between disparate (and desperate) communities. Violence, musically performed in mimetic acts of martyrdom and resistance, is a fundamental contingent for these events to communicate meaning among participants. The collective feelings of community engendered through performance bring forth the potentiality for the nation to exist within a concrete social space. Confronted with signs of national intimacy across various aesthetic fields, participants are brought together into a shared communal arena for collective catharsis and release, creating a felt synchrony in movement, thought, and action. This social synchrony allows for participants to experience the nation, if only temporarily, and transcend the political realities within which they live. In this way these concerts become an embodied sign of the nation, a powerful means of supporting those living the occupation, respecting the families who have suffered, and constructing a public forum for the socialization of national political debate.

Presentational Debke Performances: Ibda' and Hanouneh

Persistent formations of violence compel individuals to seek ways of expressing crises of meaning and instability in extremely innovative ways. Over the last sixty years Palestinian artists have generated immense repertories of performative media, narrating individual and communal histories of dispossession and displacement. Such performances are a fundamental means of cultural survival, a way to wrestle with the unstable dialectics of history,

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politics, and the body in exile. Yet, for many of these artists, performance provides an extraordinary tool for subversive poetics, a means of inculcating counter-normatives of truth and history among participants.

For example, the children's dance group Ibda' (*ibda'* means to create something from nothing) based in the Dheisheh refugee camp just outside of Bethlehem, routinely incorporates scenes of Israeli occupation and violence into its presentational debke performances. Established in 1994 as a grassroots cultural organization, this dance troupe formed as a means to benefit the many women and children living in the refugee camp. Today the ensemble is based in the camp's cultural center, home to a women's arts and crafts cooperative, children's library, and guest house available to international visitors wishing to experience for themselves life in a Palestinian refugee camp. Visitors (ethnographers, journalists, and activists) are often astounded by the deplorable living conditions, overcrowding (11,000 refugees contained on a hillside approximately one-half square kilometer), and constant threat of violence. Without question, living conditions in Dheisheh are extremely difficult. In addition to daily restrictions of movement, curfews, and late night incursions, Israeli forces routinely cut off water and electricity for extended periods of time. On several occasions the cultural center and rehearsal spaces were destroyed by tank shells and Israeli raids. Yet despite this, since 1999 the debke group has toured internationally, performing debke as a means to raise money and awareness for the camp and its many humanitarian projects.

During one very powerful scene of their international tour, an elder member of the dance troupe (perhaps 14 years of age) dressed as an Israeli soldier, wearing sunglasses to disguise his face, pursues and captures several children wearing traditionally embroidered Palestinian gowns (*thôwb*). As each of the young children tries to escape, the soldier casts a large rope around their bodies and drags them across the stage. He then binds their hands and feet with rope, and places a black hood over their heads. If the children attempt to escape, he forces them down to the ground into a submissive posture. Each of the children wear a different embroidered pattern representative of villages destroyed in *al-nakbā* (catastrophe). After subduing each of the children, leaving them incapacitated and helpless on the stage, the soldier gloats at his accomplishment, smiling over his prey. In scenes such as this Ibda' routinely incorporates a diverse combination of indigenous debke and modern dance, theater, and colorful costumes. Their unique method of storytelling chronicles Palestinian history specifically for a non-Palestinian cosmopolitan audience. Moreover, Ibda''s use of children as the main actors in such performances instills a sense of legitimacy, virtue, and purity among international audiences. A group representative, speaking after a recent performance in Chicago, explained the important role children play in depicting Palestinian suffering. In such performances children are widely seen as pre-

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political bodies, expressive of innocence, and worthy of empathy. To depict suffering among children to an international audience speaks to common assertions of humanity and human rights.

In similar fashion, the Jordanian-based debke group Hanouneh also depicts the historical dispossession of Palestinians through indigenous dance. Although Hanouneh is comprised of Palestinian teenagers drawn from middle class, cosmopolitan Amman, the group is equally known in international circles for their performances of "traditional" Palestinian song and dance (Ladkani 2001). In one of their most widely performed dance suites a female dancer with covered face fends off the attacks of various male dancers using indigenous debke steps. The young woman is draped in Palestinian embroidery, taking on the persona of the "Mother Palestine" (*umm al-balād*), repelling waves of colonial attackers. One after the other, each of the male dancers attempts to conquer the nation with virulent gestures of aggression and sword waving. In this version of the story, however, the young female dancer is victorious, and concludes the scene with a florid display of celebratory kicks and leaps over her vanquished pursuers. Upon dispensing with the final attacker the crowd typically erupts in applause and cheers at the victorious "Mother Palestine." As is true in virtually all of Hanouneh's dance and theater performances, Palestine suffers greatly at the hands of colonial aggressors, but through steadfastness (*sumūd*) eventually emerges victorious in the end.

Each of these two debke performances articulate very different conceptions of history, resistance, and violence. The first example, the children's debke group Ibda', is representative of a performance of suffering intended to educate international audiences to an often forgotten consequence of Israel's declaration of statehood. Couched within an international discourse of human rights, expressive performances such as these make unabashed appeals for sympathy and support for Palestinian causes. The second example, the Jordanian-based debke group Hanouneh, is a performance of historical alterity, rewriting the scripts of Palestinian history and enacting an alternative aesthetic reality where the Palestinian nation may be actualized victorious, if only temporarily, within the prescribed performance space. While both Ibda' and Hanouneh are well known for incorporating historic battles between Palestinian and Zionist forces into their performances, and for using children as the primary actors in such portrayals, unlike Ibda', Hanouneh typically performs before an audience of cosmopolitan Palestinian refugees living in urban centers throughout Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. As such, their performances are intended to engender national sentiment among second and third generation refugees seeking an aesthetic connection with the homeland. Hanouneh's performances, while equally devoted to preserving histories of dispossession, routinely celebrate Palestinian aesthetics and indigenous cul-

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tural practices as a means of ensuring victory through steadfastness against colonial aggression.

In both of these examples, performance offers a powerful space through which varying subjectivities, histories, and identities are negotiated. Each of these performances of indigenous dance serves as a template for the patterning of new and existing socialities among differing exile communities. What is more, these performances constitute a performative archive of cultural history through which varying socialities are linked to discourses of the body and the nation. Acting as what Paul Connerton calls an "inscribing practice," these performances preserve cognitive and corporeal information in the body politic, articulating nuanced strategies for survival and remembrance (1989:73).

However, a close reading of the performances above reveals a significant disconnect between Palestinian communities (Ladkani 2001; Kaschl 2003). Hanouneh's reluctance to incorporate cosmopolitan elements (modern dance, theatricality, and Western instruments) into their performances testifies to a deep-seated belief in exilic cultural preservation. In contrast, Ibda', embraces cosmopolitan aesthetics as a means of reaching out to a larger international audience. Living under occupation the young artists of Ibda' need not defend themselves in arguments over cultural authenticity and assimilation in exile. Hamid Naficy, in his work with Iranian exiles in Los Angeles, identifies two distinct threats that face refugee communities: "the threat of the disappearance of the homeland and the threat of themselves disappearing in the host society" (1993:129). As a means to thwart both of these threats, refugee artists frequently condense "all the meanings of the home and the host societies into substitute fetishes and frozen stereotypes" (Naficy 1993:129). The fetishes and frozen stereotypes Naficy identifies act as a powerful means of constructing history in and for the present. "Through identification with these fixed images ... [the exile is] united with the motherland. In this way the exile remains psychologically whole. Through controlling 'there' and 'then,' the exile can control the 'here' and 'now'" (ibid.:132).

The fetish of historic Palestine as pure, uncontaminated by colonial encroachment, rooted in tradition, and acted out by young children, takes different forms in each of these two dance performances. Ibda' is extremely concerned with the constant threat of losing the homeland, as evidenced by their great efforts to perform Palestinian history abroad. However, since Ibda' and by extension the 11,000 residents of Dheisheh remain under occupation, there is little chance of disappearance into any host society. While displaced from their ancestral villages, they remain in occupied Palestine. Through collective suffering, their "Palestinian-ness" is beyond question. Hanouneh, on the other hand, is very concerned with both threats. A victorious Palestine, even if it relies purely on frozen stereotypes that have little

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resemblance to the homeland "here and now," assumes a much stronger position against the threat of cultural assimilation into the national imaginary of the host (Jordanian) society. The fetish of the "pure" Palestine, portrayed in the performative actions and gestures of these two dance troupes, should be interpreted not by their differing accounts of Palestinian history per se, but rather by the various ways in which their accountings of history, the "there and then" serve to help seize control of the "here and now" (Naficy 1993:132).

Performances are filled with competing assertions of the "pure" Palestinian nation, even as they admit internal instability, fractures, and fissures along multiple lines of class, gender, religion, and politics (as seen in the fighting at the political rally above). Yet, despite such internal differentiation the importance of performing the "pure" nation points to a much larger connection between performance, place, and time (Swedenburg 1995). Performance rewrites the materiality of bodies with respect to the intersections of place and time, and in the process rewrites constitutive relationships within the participating community. Spaces and the bodies who pass through them are each transformed, constituted in the act of performance. As surely as Palestine is made and remade in the performative space, the spaces and bodies who inhabit them are each recreated, remodeled, and reimagined in the process.

Checkpoints: Qalandiya and Bethlehem

As these dance troupes perform two very different versions of Palestinian history, culture, and subjectivity, in similar fashion the movement of pedestrians through Israeli checkpoints can be described equally in performative terms (Baumann 1977; Kapchan 2003; Schechner 1988; Turner 1986). Though the dance steps are far less poetic, the ritualized movements of removing one's bags and in some cases clothing, the subjugating oneself to interrogation, and the presentation of state-issued identification cards coalesce into a ritualized dance performed continuously in everyday life under occupation. Participants in this ritual production must follow strict protocol, or risk severe consequences. Similar to the presentational arts described above, the scripts of these performances are rehearsed to perfection, sedimented in everyday practice, including platitudes of feigned respect and deference to Israeli authority, memorized words and phrases in the "other's" native language, and the mutual recognition of assigned roles and expectations (Scott 1985, 1990).

In arguing for a reading of the Israeli checkpoint as a constitutive site for Palestinian performativity, I draw specifically on the work of Judith Butler and the many scholars who have applied her theories in the field of performance studies (e.g., Diamond 1996; Hamera 2007; Patraka 1999). Writing

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in, ***Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex,*** Butler characterizes the performative as, "not a singular or deliberate 'act,' but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names" (1993:2). Performance, in this sense, is seen not as a singular gesture or utterance, but rather as a compelled reiteration of regulatory norms that constructs individuals through their iterability. Performativity is thus a dynamic citational practice whereby the "stylized repetition of acts" repeats themselves into invisibility, instantiating and affirming the discourses from which those acts are derived. Such performances are always a reiteration of a set of norms, "scripts" if you will, "and to the extent that [performances] acquire an act-like-status in the present, [they] conceal or dissimulate the conventions of which [they are] a repetition" (ibid.:12).

The reiterable actions necessary to successfully traverse an Israeli checkpoint, by this formulation, constitute citational practices that, through their repetition, instantiate a prescribed Israeli discourse of Palestinian subjugation and criminality. Each individual performance is itself an embodiment of reiterable norms that serve to inscribe Palestinian subjugation directly into the geographic, social, and somatic landscapes. Indeed, it is within these performances, as Butler would have us believe, that the body takes on its very "materiality": the effects of power, the forms, contours, and movements the subject assumes within the regulatory norms of the performative (Butler 1993:4-5). Imposed restrictions of movement, the incarceration of nearly four million Palestinians in what amounts to open air prisons, and the carving up of the natural landscape with hundreds of miles of concrete barriers, barbed wire, and watch towers are a powerful means of constituting Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and bodies. Late night incursions, curfews, and routine house-to-house searches extend the criminalizing force of the occupation into the private spaces of the home and family. There simply is no escape. Living in the shadows of Israeli occupation, Palestinians are reminded of and determined by their subjugation in virtually every aspect of their daily lives. Under siege, the occupation encroaches into every conceivable facet of Palestinian life, revealing layers of physical, symbolic, and ideological domination. All of which serve to reinforce/reiterate the pervasive doctrine of Palestinian criminality and subjugation to Israeli control (Taraki 2006; Reinhart 2006).

In passing through an Israeli checkpoint Palestinians participate in a performative ritual that, through its citationality to the Israeli discourse of Palestinian criminality, affirms and constitutes the very subjugation it compels. In such sites of capillary engagement between Palestinians and the occupying state, the discourse of Israeli domination intersects with (and gives material form to) the individual bodies of those subjected to its power. Here control over one's body, one's identity, clothing, and freedom of movement, becomes

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an instrument of domination, a citational practice of subjugation. Traversing an Israeli checkpoint Palestinians must assume a political identity assigned to them by the occupying state in the form of an identification card, which ultimately determines one's access to healthcare, employment, and/or groceries. Hours spent waiting in endless lines, culturally insensitive searches, and the potentiality for detention and physical violence, all serve to instantiate through reiteration the materiality of the Palestinian subjugated body and the discourse of Israeli occupation. This performative citation of power is now firmly embedded into everyday experiences of living under occupation. It is a performance of an Israeli prescribed reality, an Israeli normative, reiterated as a display, narration, and assumption of power.

In Butler's formulation of the performative, hegemonic cultural definitions (normatives) are not self-generating or self-sustaining. Rather, they must be continually cited in practice by individuals in order to remain effectual. As the presentational debke troupes discussed above draw upon varying stereotypes and fetishes of the "pure" nation, these fetishes must be continually reinforced in performance to remain meaningful. Hence, it is only through a process of iterability that the regularized repetition of norms comes to be fully appreciated (Butler 1993:95). This necessity of constant reiteration inevitably opens up spaces for subversion, reiterations that destabilize the very norms they are supposed to reinforce (Allen 1998:462). For Palestinians living under occupation, this process of iterability, the constant necessity of performative reiteration, allows for the scripts of performance to be improvised in dialogue with regulatory fields of constraint.

For example, returning back to Jerusalem during the summer of 2005, my wife and I were dropped off approximately 200 yards away from the checkpoint separating Bethlehem from the greater Jerusalem municipality. Walking close behind us was an elderly Palestinian woman wearing an intricately embroidered *thōwb* (gown) displaying the colorful pattern of the nearby village of Beit Saḥour. Initially, we did not pay much attention to her as we approached the checkpoint gates. Navigating any of the approximately 72 permanent checkpoints that carve up the West Bank often brought deep feelings of anxiety even for obvious foreigners such as ourselves. Mild interrogation and detainment (and on rare occasion physical force) were common scare tactics deployed as a means of discouraging our presence in the occupied territories. Depending on the individual soldiers working the checkpoint, one never knew what to expect when attempting to cross.

On this particular day, while we each fumbled to retrieve our passports, visas, and any other necessary documentation, we noticed that the elderly woman behind us did not follow us through the main gates, but rather proceeded down a steep embankment in an attempt to circumvent the checkpoint through an area of thick shrubbery and a void in the barbed wire fence.

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After we successfully crossed the checkpoint, which included giving the appropriate answers to the soldiers' various inquiries and being thoroughly searched, we proceeded on through the maze of steel fencing and barbed wire to the other side. Watching us from the watchtower above were two Israeli soldiers, each laughing and gesturing wildly with their rifles. Both soldiers were delightfully entertained in watching the elderly woman crawl through the bushes on her stomach so as not to be seen. Her attempt at subterfuge was quickly revealed, as seen in the soldiers' reaction. However, neither made an attempt to stop her from crossing over to the other side of the checkpoint. Instead, they each sat and watched as she dragged herself along the ground, fully amused by her attempt to avoid detection. As we emerged on the other side and boarded a Jerusalem bound bus, the elderly woman scrambled back onto the highway, dusted off the collected dirt from her beautiful thōwb, and nonchalantly took the seat behind us.

My own embarrassment at the situation precluded me from talking with her on the bus ride back into Jerusalem. Although it was obvious to us that her attempt to avoid the checkpoint was due to some kind of inability to pass through the checkpoint legitimately (according to and defined by nebulous Israeli Army protocols), we were left to wonder, for what reason? Perhaps she didn't have the appropriate residency card or permit, perhaps her name, or a name from someone in her family, was on a list of those not allowed to leave the village. In any case, watching this elderly woman dressed in her beautifully embroidered dress crawl through the bushes was a powerful performance of ritualized subjugation to Israeli occupation. As we reflected back on the events that had just unfolded, my wife wondered, "Why didn't the Israeli soldiers attempt to stop her from crossing?" Did the soldiers see no reason to prohibit her crossing given her obvious age? Was this an act of leniency on an old woman who posed no real threat to Israeli security? Were the soldiers just too lazy, or too occupied in their conversation to do anything about it? Or, perhaps the mere spectacle of watching this elderly woman crawl through the bushes on her stomach was punishment enough, and required no further action on their part. Despite never actually walking through the checkpoint, in essence, the overall function and purpose of this performance was successful. Although the script was improvised, ultimately, the same story was told.

Or was it? Upon further reflection another question came to mind. Did this woman realize that her efforts at subterfuge were unsuccessful? Was she aware that, while crawling through the brush several soldiers were laughing at her expense and could have very easily decided to act upon her transgressions of Israeli military law? Perhaps she could have crossed the checkpoint "legitimately," but chose not to. Addressing the issue of constraint and subversion Judith Butler writes:

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> Performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that "performance" is not a singular "act" or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the force of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance. (1993:95)

This particular "ritualized production" clearly demonstrates Butler's point. The subversion of Israeli occupation/Palestinian criminality, here evidenced in the elderly woman's attempt to avoid detection, is accomplished "under and through" various material and symbolic constraints. As this woman literally crawled under and through the physical obstacles of occupation (barbed wire, concrete, bushes), under and through the symbolic forces of prohibition and taboo, with the threat of arrest and even assassination shaping her performance, she vividly demonstrates how the cultural meanings inherent in the passing of pedestrians through an Israeli checkpoint are generated by reiterations of bodily movement *in dialogue* with regulatory techniques and protocols. These techniques and protocols are intended to safeguard the mutual legibility of the body, the land, and the state within one prescribed discursive geography or landscape.

Reiterations of such banal activities as producing a state issued identification card, removing bags and articles of clothing for inspection, and waiting patiently in endless lines, can over time have the same constitutive meaning as more inflammatory measures such as arrest and harassment. State imposed identities become stabilized, sedimented in everyday practice, through such banal rituals and engagements. Yet, in such spaces there are equal opportunities to enact alternative identities, to assume alternate identifications, to challenge sedimented meanings, and to displace (or rewrite) the legibility of the performaitve body. In such engagements place (and the bodies that constitute it) may be transformed through subversive poetics in performance. While subjugation can be easily read from the perspective of the Israeli soldiers, making light of an old woman's attempt to cross a checkpoint unnoticed, a subversive poetics is equally revealed from the perspective of the woman. Regardless of the soldiers' reactions, her incredible desire, risking arrest or even assassination, to circumvent the occupying state's regulatory techniques illustrates the dialogic performative act, a poetics that seeks to re-imagine and re-materialize the Palestinian (female) body as a tool for resistance and national affirmation.

Another such example is worthy of mention here, a close friend living in East Jerusalem recounted for me his experience of being beaten to unconsciousness when traveling through the Qalandiya checkpoint for refusing

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to say the word "Yerūshalīm" (Hebrew for Jerusalem). When asked his destination by the Israeli soldiers, he would only answer, "Al-Quds" (Arabic for Jerusalem, literally meaning "the sacred"). The soldier repeated the question over and over again, each time getting the same answer, "Al-Quds." In absolute frustration at not getting the required response—a verbal affirmation of Israeli control over Palestine's most sacred city—the soldier and several of his fellow officers placed restraints on the man's wrists and beat him with their batons, breaking his leg and causing a severe concussion. Reflecting back on such a traumatic episode this musician felt that ultimately he was victorious in this engagement. Although his body was broken by Israeli violence, his spirit was rejuvenated in refusing to submit to the ideological and symbolic precepts of Israeli occupation: that "Al-Quds" must now be called "Yerūshalīm."

Experiences such as these were quite common among my informants. Stories abounded of men being asked to strip down to their underwear and crawl through the checkpoint, of pregnant women forced to publicly disrobe to prove that they were not hiding a bomb under their clothes, and of young musicians forced to play their instruments in front of jeering soldiers to justify carrying their large instrument cases. Young boys would often recount with great pride the stories of their scars, suffered at the hands of Israeli soldiers. Whether from participating in a nonviolent protest, to throwing stones, or simply walking home late at night, vestiges of Israeli occupation (wounds) inscribed onto the body were a powerful site for subversive poetics, performing an emergent Palestinian subjectivity of resistance based on the trope of "victory through victimization." As Julie Peteet has demonstrated in her ethnographic work during the first intifada, the inscription of violence onto the body offers a site open to polyvalent interpretation and re-appropriation (1994). Many young Palestinians skillfully subvert their own subjugation by attaching new cultural meanings to their experiences of violence.

However, more than simply allowing for multiple interpretations of violent experiences, a performative analysis reveals how those bodies are themselves given materiality within varying discourses of power. Whatever state ambitions for making bodies legible (material) within a determined occupied space, individuals inevitably resist such legibility in performance, constructing place differently by means of physical subversion, subterfuge, and re-appropriation of the state's power. In such performances individuals may transform prescribed spaces of the state into what J.B. Jackson terms, "vernacular landscapes," locally embodied/embedded geographies of time and place (1984:149). In contrast to the political landscapes of the state, vernacular landscapes are transitional, ephemeral, and continually adjusted to circumstances and practices developed over time. As a means of taking back the land from occupation, and of taking back their bodies from Israeli subjugation, the performative vernacular landscape seeks to re-member the body politic by embedding Palestinian

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bodies directly into the local topography, subverting the Israeli discourse of Palestinian criminality.

Poetics of Violence, Martyrdom, and the Palestinian Performative

Each of these performances communicate very different meanings, and inscribe in the bodies of their participants a specific regime of power and truth. In my brief discussion of political rallies and presentational debke performances, I delineate very different means of performing history, nation, violence, and resistance in the service of varying political agendas. As performatives, however, the final examples are perhaps the most compelling. Here hegemonic discourses of Palestinian subjugation are hard-wired directly into everyday practices and experiences. In this instance, Palestinian criminality is the effect of the citational practices that the discourse compels (traversing a checkpoint, presenting state identification, etc.). For the vast majority of Palestinians living in the occupied territories, the only face-to-face interaction one has with Israeli Jews is within the physical structures of the occupation (checkpoints, prisons, police stations, home invasions, curfews, etc.). As an everyday occurrence (at times banal, at others terrifying), traversing an Israeli checkpoint and engaging with occupation forces becomes a fundamental means for embodying Palestinian subjugation. State interrogation and other practices of ritual subjugation are derived from the idea that the inscription of violence on the body constitutes a performative display of history and truth (Feldman 1991). The occupation of Palestinian lands and the forced restrictions of movement placed upon millions of Palestinians have a physical and symbolic equivalence to the colonization of Palestinian bodies, materializing the body and the body politic within prescribed discourses of domination.

These examples, coupled with the above discussion on political rallies and presentational debke, suggest that the relationships between violence carried out on the streets and its representation enacted on the stage may in fact be closer than one might imagine. In fact, I argue that all of these performances serve the very same purpose, draw from the same stock lexicon of signs, and communicate meaning across social topographies in identical ways. In this assertion, however, I make no claims that participants in these performances operate under similar "rules" of engagement. For anyone who has personally heard the cracks of Israeli sniper fire overhead or the scream of fighter jets across the night sky immediately understands the visceral, intuitive differences between the two. However, I do believe that through a careful study of the performative means through which Palestinians mediate their subjugation, we may come to a better understanding of that visceral, intuitive experience. As much as the daily forms and practices of navigating

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the occupation reinforce a prescribed Israeli history and truth, so too, music and dance performances embody alternative aesthetic spaces—vernacular landscapes—where Palestinian history, truth, and agency may be actualized in collective movement, thought, and action.

Within this discourse of performative resistance to Israeli occupation, the *shahīd* (martyr) has become the ultimate sign for both Palestinian victimization and victory. Through repetition and co-occurrence within performative spaces, the image of the shahīd has become a type of currency in the production of political and historical alterity. In violently suffering at the hands of the occupation, the martyr articulates an emergent political reality through which power is claimed and cultural presence is substantiated. As is the case in music and dance each act of resistance is a performance of an emerging power, a reclamation of history and presence from occupying forces, instantiating alterity and displacing entrenched power structures. Stone throwing, collective protest, music and dance performances, acts of civil disobedience, and in more severe cases, direct violence against occupation forces are each modes of mobilizing spectacle for the purpose of demonstrating a reclaimed history and identity. Stones, posters, uniforms, dresses, walls, melodies, rhythms, and the like, are each artifacts of this historical alterity, new surfaces upon which the subversive poetics of violence may be imagined and inscribed. Writing on the confluence of violence, memory, and the body Allen Feldman writes:

> The body marked by discipline and punition serves as an exemplary site for the coming together of political forces and constitutes a formation of domination, a place where power is ordered and a topos where that ordering attains a certain visibility, a collective resonance and publicness. It is the determinate formation of the body by a variety of intersecting forces that establishes embodiment as the habitus, the holding place of social memory, and which allows social agents to develop an identity in relationship to the political utilities deposited in the body, such as the necrographic map of prior violence inflicted on and by the body. (2003:62)

The historical depiction of Palestinian subjugation, suffering, violence, and resistance can be articulated through myriad forms of performative bodily action. However, such histories are very much a contested object, situated within context and discursively performed by agents in time and space.

The various examples outlined here, music concerts, political rallies, debke performances, checkpoint engagements, and other acts of civil disobedience and violence, are each historicizing practices where new relations of power and truth are inscribed on various social surfaces. In this way both music and violence are a means of communicating/instantiating a particular historical narrative embodied in the gestural acts of its participants. As in the revolutionary concert, the debke, and the myriad forms and depictions of martyrdom, the body is the primary locus for the articulation of these histo-

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ries. Martyr operations, perhaps the most iconographic form of Palestinian violence/resistance against the occupation, and the least understood by the outside world, carries incredible symbolic meaning for many Palestinians due in large part to its usage of the body itself as the instrument of attack. As the matrix of Israeli historical domination can be read and interpreted in the "necrographic maps" of past violence on Palestinian bodies, the martyr operation is a performative means of rewriting these maps, redrawing the political lines of domination using the somatic lenses of the body itself. Much like the performance of Palestinian indigenous music and dance, such bodily performances are a means of transcending subjugation through the inscription of new cultural and historical alterities in performative action.

Over the course of the Al-Aqsa Intifada the image of the martyr, the corpse, has been the fundamental communicative sign for political and cultural performance. On the city walls political and religious factions attempt to delineate (and expand) their constituencies through the dissemination of resistance media: commemorative posters, graffiti, banners, t-shirts, music, videos, etc. To that end, each political faction understands the necessity of producing sufficient numbers of martyrs in order to be taken seriously within the resistance movement. The production of martyrs (and not necessarily casualties) corresponds directly to the perceived legitimacy of the political organization. While suicide bombers are commemorated publicly for their sacrifice to the nation, the number of casualties resulting from their violent act is rarely if ever mentioned. The salient meaning of suicide bombing is not found in the devastation wrought (number of casualties, buildings, or buses destroyed), but in the act of sacrifice itself. The willingness to offer one's body to the cause carries far more significance simply because it resonates with the subversive poetics of violence and self-sacrifice articulated across various performative domains (music, dance, poetry, theater, etc.). Within the local political sphere the discourse of suffering translates into an economy of signs whereby whoever demonstrates their suffering the most garners the political, social, and cultural capital necessary to represent national interests. The impact of commemorative media and the production of martyrs involves a very careful calculation that equates the production of suffering through performance directly to the assertion of political legitimacy.

The hyper-production and circulation of graphic media narrating Palestinian suffering is symptomatic of a specific humanitarian project intended to mobilize local, regional, and international communities. In the international sphere such media is intended to garner sympathy and support for Palestinian causes, and to check Israeli unilateralism in the occupied territories. Regionally, such media is intended to mobilize an anti-Western, anti-imperialist Arab nationalism alongside other anti-colonial movements in Lebanon, Iraq, and Afghanistan. And from a local perspective, the pervasive circulation of

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graphic media is typically interpreted as a way of inscribing intense feelings of national intimacy through collective suffering and the materialization of the body through resistance.

However, the ever-presence of graphically violent media spread across virtual, physical, and performative topographies, captured the attention of the international mediascape in ways that were unintended. Regardless of local intent, the international community largely interpreted such media as a glorified pornographic fascination with human suffering and death. Collapsed into the image of the suicide bomber, and the many posters which lined the city streets commemorating his/her actions, journalists, pundits, and other voyeurs were quick to label Palestinian society and culture as "diseased with violence," oppressed under the tyranny of a barbarous fundamental Islam, when in fact, such signs were intended to engender feelings of intense national intimacy and to reveal to the outside world the brutal reality of life under occupation (e.g., Brinkley 2002; Eastland 2002; Reiss 2004; Stalinsky 2004). The often sensationalized and unabashedly critical assessments of Palestinian culture and society were indicative of a very real misunderstanding of the Palestinian performative. This type of journalistic interpretation neglected the political and social value of performance, aesthetics, and other commemorative practices constitutive of the Palestinian body politic under occupation. Rather than seeking to better understand the questions for which such media were the answer, these depictions became mired in a discussion of what kind of people—diseased, illogical, and barbaric—would disseminate and even celebrate such horribly graphic depictions of human suffering. However, what was lost in the discussion was the acknowledgement that all cultures have the potential to generate extreme levels of violence and sociocultural trauma. Violence is not merely the work of the delinquent, pathological, or desperate. Rather it is a specifically staged cultural performance whose underlying poetics are derived from the historical and aesthetic subjectivities of its performers (both dominant and subaltern). As Michael Taussig reminds us in his work on torture and terror in Latin America, such acts are never spontaneous or an abandonment of the "values of civilization," rather, they "have a deep history deriving power and meaning from those very values" (Taussig 1987:133).

Conclusions

An ethnomusicological study of violence foregrounds the generative spheres of effect and affect missing from contemporary depictions of intersocietal conflict. Performative media (music, dance, art, poetry, film, and theater), graffiti, video clips, internet chat rooms, funeral processions, street rallies, dance troupes, blogs, and much more, should in fact be examined alongside

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military incursions, suicide operations, beatings, and various methods of physical and psychological torture, for each reveal the subjectivities of victims, perpetrators, and witnesses in their articulation. Performative media are not just about violence, but are a fundamental component of it. Not in the sense that any one piece of music or dance may directly cause someone to act violently, but that these media communicate and contribute to the poetics, the experiences, and the subjectivities from which certain forms of violence are deemed appropriate, meaningful, or even beautiful (Whitehead 2004b). In studying performative media we come to understand how experiences of violence influence aesthetics, and conversely how the aesthetics of performance contour modes of enacting and/or negotiating everyday violence.

As individuals navigate formations of violence, create their own understandings of conflict, and shape their perceptions of self and other, they formulate specific cultural narratives through which they communicate and act upon their situation. These cultural narratives, manifest in varying ideologies, histories, politics, and arts, demarcate a contested terrain wherein individuals may interpret or influence various understandings of their social reality. Within the Palestinian context, performance media constitute a primary means of nation building and collective identity formation. Both in their capacities to ameliorate the lingering effects of occupation and terror as well as to inspire the reproduction of violent acts, musicians, artists, and poets have historically served an essential role in shaping the Palestinian nationalist movement. Yet beyond illustrating the mimetics of performative practice, showing the iconicities between the performed and the real, the act and its representation, an ethnomusicological understanding of violence pushes us to conceptualize both as products of the same discursive practice.

An ethnomusicological approach to violence draws together many of these fundamental issues—culture, meaning, identity, performance, and social practice—and brings to light a considerable domain of performative sociality absent from conventional anthropological paradigms of violence and terror. In looking critically at the arts of violence (and the violence of art)—its sounds, steps, words, images, and ideas—we find an aesthetic field where formations of violence are creatively enacted and experienced. Such cultural performances communicate meaning through a carefully constructed *poiesis,* delineating victims, perpetrators, and witnesses from wider fields of sociality. To study violence as performance, and performance as violence, opens up significant spaces for understanding the cultural, historical, and aesthetic aspects of violence. Depictions of violence embedded in performative media create spaces for contemplation and interpretation of the events from which they were derived. To seek a better understanding of violence through performance foregrounds individual subjectivity, the aesthetics of conflict, and the production of cultural meaning in an attempt to move beyond simple pathologies

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of violence to achieve a more contextualized understanding of how violence communicates meaning and informs conceptualizations of self and other.

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Notes

1. The Palestinian *debke* is an indigenous participatory line dance comprised of a diverse repertory of song-types. In a debke line participants link their hands (either across their bodies, at their sides, or at the shoulders) and progress in a counter-clockwise circle, stamping out the rhythms of the music with a prescribed progression of steps, kicks, leaps, and stomps. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of the debke in the Palestinian national imaginary. It is widely considered to be the single greatest Palestinian cultural artifact, and is typically articulated as an embodied sign of the "pure" Palestinian nation prior to colonial encroachment.

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