BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY
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Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies

FORCED ENTRY:
MY FATHER'S EDUCATION INTO POLITICS

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Birzeit University Working Paper 2011/27(ENG)
Conferences & Public Events Module

2011

*** Co-Sponsored by the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (IALIIS) - Birzeit University (BZU), Welfare Association, A.M. Qattan Foundation, and Palestinian American Research Center. The views expressed in this publication cannot in any circumstances be regarded as the official position of the above mentioned organizations. The IALIIS can be reached at: ialiis@birzeit.edu**

Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies – Birzeit University
Birzeit University Working Paper Series

Forced Entry:

My Father's Education into Politics

Lila Abu-Lughod[1]

"Say goodbye." This is what the doctor said softly to us in the middle of the night. We had telephoned him in panic and he came out in the dark to his friend's apartment, despite the eerie emptiness of Ramallah's streets in the midst of the second intifada. He had followed the stages of our father Ibrahim's illness from the first crisis in February. Now it was May. The year was 2001. Mercifully, he had some morphine with him, which stopped the shuddering pain. My sister and I awakened our aunt. "Come say goodbye," I whispered. She had come from Jordan months ago, her first time to cross a border guarded by Israeli soldiers. She had fled Jaffa with her mother and other family members during the fighting in April 1948 when she was only thirteen. She had never returned until now, because her brother was ill. Shocked, she ran into his room. She'd been praying hard for him. Now he was in a coma. God had betrayed her.

As dawn lightened the sky, people began to arrive. So many of the people who had shared the nine years of Ibrahim's rich new second life in Palestine. He had moved back in 1992, after more than forty years of exile, most of it in the United States where he had gone by boat as a penniless refugee in 1949. After struggling to get a college education, then going to graduate school in what was then Oriental Studies at Princeton, he'd led a busy life as a professor of political science, teaching at Smith College, McGill University and then Northwestern, with interludes on educational projects in the Arab world. He taught about what he cared about: Middle East politics, nationalism, and national liberation movements. With my mother Janet,

[1] *Author's Note*: This piece would have been impossible to write without the contributions of many. My greatest debt is to Hisham Ahmed-Fararjeh, who conducted an extraordinary series of interviews with my father in 1999 and 2000. He edited and published these in his book, *Ibrahim Abu-Lughod: Resistance, Exile and Return: Conversations with Hisham Ahmed-Fararjeh,* published by Birzeit University, 2003. He also made available to the family the recordings of the original interviews and I have drawn heavily on these sources. Reja-e Busaileh generously shared with me the tapes of the long interview with my father in Beirut in August 1982. Roger Nab'aa and Dominique Roch are listed as having translated and edited the interview as it appeared in French, as "Fragments d'une mémoire palestinienne," in 1984. I have drawn on the original oral interviews to supplement the written texts because of my father's zest for storytelling. I am grateful to my mother, sisters, and brother for contributions, and to Ahmad Harb and Roger Heacock for their insights into my father's role at Birzeit. Elaine Hagopian recorded her own astute and affectionate memories in two articles that appeared in the *Arab Studies Quarterly*, the journal my father helped found and I learned from them. Finally, Mark Levine gave me good comments on an earlier version that he inspired me to write.

an urban sociologist who had come to do research in the Arab world through him, but whose commitments to justice and clear sightedness about Zionism were all her own, he had raised a family. He instilled in us a sense of our Palestinianness despite our deeply American lives and his own vivid participation in everything from academic politics (what he referred to as "village politics") to an intense marriage, suburban lawn-mowing, and the tribulations of shepherding teenagers into adulthood in the U.S.

Ever since he'd felt the stinging humiliation of Americans' glee over Israel's defeat of the Arabs in 1967, he had done public speaking and organizing in the U.S. about Middle East issues. He wanted to combat the deep hostility and ignorance he found all around him. Eventually, though, he came to focus his energies on the Palestine question. He talked and wrote about the historical injustice of Palestinian dispossession; he dreamt of liberation. He also spoke pragmatically about politics and worked to establish Arab-American intellectual institutions as alternatives to the mainstream. In the back of his closet in Ramallah we were to find a small brown leather suitcase stuffed with yellowed newspaper clippings documenting his appearances at everything from press conferences at the U.S. State Department to Arab community meetings in obscure middle-American towns. His international speaking had taken him from Ghana to Australia. A soft little kangaroo skin in his Ramallah apartment was the out-of-place memento of this last trip.

What had brought him to Ramallah was an unforeseen event. In 1990, a botched bronchoscopy and painful surgery for an unknown lung ailment had made him suddenly sense his mortality. He feared he might die before seeing Palestine again. At the same time, in the wake of the first US invasion of Iraq, the political situation seemed to be easing up in the West Bank—the Madrid peace talks had put the first glimmer of an independent Palestinian state on the horizon. He decided to return to Palestine. First he came for a visit. Then he decided to move back. Not to Jaffa, his birthplace and the city in which he had spent his first nineteen years. That was part of Israel now and he refused to submit himself to direct rule by those who had taken his country by trying to live there. (He did try, unsuccessfully, to get a post office box there, just to have the address.) And not through claiming his birthright, which Israel does not recognize, even when it lets any Russian or Ethiopian who claims Jewish roots into the country on that basis (and many others who don't make such claims, as long as they are not Palestinians).

Instead, he moved to the Occupied West Bank, to Ramallah. Although he came to take up a longstanding invitation to teach at Birzeit University, work permits are rarely given by the Israelis. So he had to use his American passport to go as a "tourist." For eight years, he would be forced to leave every three months and reenter on a new tourist visa.

Like many 1948 refugees, Ibrahim had no family left in Palestine, whether the Occupied Territories or within "the Green Line" that marks the borders of the part of Palestine that was declared the State of Israel in 1948. They had been scattered by the fighting of 1948 and the general expulsion of Palestinians. Some branches of his family ended up in Amman, some went to Lebanon, some to Egypt. Eventually some moved on to Kuwait and even Saudi Arabia, temporarily. He had tried to maintain contact with as many friends and relatives as he could over the years. Inevitably, like all Palestinians, he had lost track of others.

So his world in Ramallah consisted of friends and colleagues, not relatives. It was they who came to his apartment when they heard the news that he was dying. These were all people who shared his commitment to Palestinians and to building Palestinian national institutions. They appreciated his optimism in the face of grim realities. He had lightened up their tense world of curfews, insecurity, and humiliation with his affection and humor. As soon as he had arrived in Ramallah, apparently he had drawn the attention of the Palestinian press and for the next decade he was quoted on a variety of subjects, his critical political slant consistent. An early opponent of Oslo, he was wary of its institutions. His criticism extended to Arafat but in keeping with a self-proclaimed primacy of loyalty to the Palestinian cause, he never broke with him, and never stopped visiting him in the *Muqata'a* where he would offer advice, often unwelcome. Arafat was one of the many who came to the apartment after Ibrahim's death to pay a condolence visit, eulogizing him for his "steadfastness and principles."

As for those who already knew him or, in most cases, got to know him well, they were energized by arguing with his political analyses and talking strategy with him. For his part, he had embraced his new life in Ramallah and left behind the other worlds, including that of his marriage, that had involved him so intensely for so long. From the moment he arrived, he had insisted on traveling around historic Palestine, refusing to recognize the borders of "the Green Line." In this too he gave substance to his refusal of the Oslo formula, premised on the impossible act of forgetting 1948.

He succeeded in his own microcosm and in a short time, to bring these severed worlds back together, in his apartment, in the university, in the press, and in his life. He made new friends all over—'Akka, Haifa, Bethlehem, Jerusalem. He made a special point of going regularly to Jaffa, taking anyone who had the right kind of travel documents to get through the Israeli checkpoints. He loved the defiant but embattled community that kept Jaffa alive. Most of all, he liked to swim in the sea that he'd loved as a boy. He felt he was home.

From his arrival in 1992, he had dedicated himself energetically to a series of projects that he saw as part of nation-building. The Palestine National Authority set up shop in the West Bank and Gaza after the Oslo Accord in 1993 and gave the illusion, for a while, that there was going

to be something like a Palestinian state. Yet my father worked, for the most part independently of the PNA. He worked with other intellectuals to establish organizations that would defend citizens' rights and work against corruption. Mostly, though, he worked in education, which was, after all, his field.

Most of the individuals who arrived, one by one, at his apartment for the sad vigil were those with whom he had worked on these projects in education. First, there were his colleagues and friends from Birzeit University, the first Palestinian university, founded in 1972. There, as a professor and, for a short while, vice president, he had sought to revive academic life and set new standards. He had been forced to scale down his ambitious dream of setting up a national graduate school and a national university when he realized how difficult cooperation was in occupied territory divided by checkpoints and borders where everyone was struggling. But within Birzeit, he unsettled an established administration and did manage to establish graduate studies, first of all the Masters in international studies, followed by the now numerous graduate programs. His colleague and friend Roger Heacock described his impact in this way: "His appearance at the university helped to turn things around, especially at the very intangible level of morale. This septuagenarian appeared young as compared to a tired community, bruised by the efforts and frustrations of an increasingly passive resistance, in an environment where 'leadership' of the street had passed over to boys in their early- to mid-teens, organizing meager demonstrations and giving their strike orders to disgruntled shopkeepers. He rejected this situation from the start, and would insist on opening the gates and proclaiming the need to except education from the Spartan order of abstention and closure."

He was challenged in this new setting where there was little money to pay faculty salaries and where, for a decade, education had been totally disrupted. The Israelis had shut down schools and universities in the first *intifada* as collective punishment and to silence political dissent. As Ahmad Harb, another colleague of his, explained to me, the situation preceding my father's arrival had been unbelievably difficult. From the end of 1987 to the early 1990s, "All Palestinian universities and other educational institutions including schools were ordered closed by the Israeli military occupation. Teaching was banned…Birzeit challenged these restrictions and designed programs for underground teaching despite the risks of arrest or shooting. Birzeit actually took the lead in organizing underground education for schools through community groups. Life in general was paralyzed and there was hardly any formal education. With the advent of Oslo, things began to open up, but the situation remained chaotic. On the one hand, the occupation authorities allowed educational institutions to reopen, but the Israeli military forces remained in towns and cities and kept total control of everything, as before. On the other hand, the power struggle between the Palestinian factions became sharper and more violent." He added, "It was in this kind of atmosphere that your father worked at Birzeit University. To us, it was like a period of re-construction and Ibrahim, as Vice-President, played an important role, morally and practically. His mere existence on campus imbued new life to the university. He…had tremendous moral influence among students, professors, as well as other sectors of Palestinian society. He soon became our 'term of reference' in most issues."

Ibrahim was appreciated at Birzeit not just for his boundless enthusiasm or for jostling them out of the inertia bred by the years of closures and harassment by the Israelis, but for breaking their long intellectual isolation. One of the ways he did the latter was by organizing international conferences. These have become at least yearly events to the present. The highlight, I knew from my father's excited report of the event, had been the conference he and his colleagues organized in 1998. Called "The Landscape of Palestine," it brought together over fifty scholars from various disciplines, in a hall packed way beyond capacity, to think and talk about Palestine and its landscape. Everyone was inspired by the two distinguished keynote speakers he had persuaded to come: his friend Edward Said from Columbia University and Edward's own colleague and friend in literary studies, W.T.J. Mitchell from the University of Chicago. A book came out of it. The Ford Foundation had been instrumental in helping Birzeit begin in this period to have what is taken for granted at universities around the world, but not those in the Palestinian occupied territories: scholarly activities like international conferences and research programs.

My father had described to another colleague what it was like to teach at Birzeit University in the early 1990s when he first arrived: "I started teaching at a very exciting period. The Israelis were still in Ramallah. Every few days there was a curfew and I could see the tanks. It was an occupied country, no question about it. People were arrested and beaten by the army on a daily basis. Ramallah would close around two o'clock. Because of this environment, it was impossible for the university to function as other universities do. Birzeit could be closed at a moment's notice. The syllabus became useless. There were strikes. I could not expect the students to come to class because the roads were closed." It was not until my father's second or third year that the college's president, Hanna Nasser, who had been deported in 1974 by the Israelis, was allowed back into the West Bank from his long exile in Jordan and Lebanon. He and my father worked well together.

It was not just university education that was in trouble. Some of the other friends who arrived at Ibrahim's apartment as he lay dying had been part of the committed team he had assembled to design the first unified independent Palestinian national curriculum. His whole life had been in higher education but he was never afraid to take up new challenges. So when UNESCO asked him to help develop this curriculum for first grade through twelfth, by this time for the Palestine National Authority, he did it. Ali Jarbawi, the first to come to the Ramallah apartment that night, had been part of that group. So had Rana Barakat, the young woman with beautiful eyes who stuffed a note into his limp hand as she fought back tears. She came quite late because she now lived in Nablus and it was especially hard to get from there to Ramallah through Israeli checkpoints and road blocks. It was her sister in Jerusalem who had been trying to help us get him morphine patches. Like the painkillers he needed, these were controlled substances and thus not permitted by the Israelis to be dispensed in the occupied territories.

Even Raja, the dynamic woman who had often helped him get through the hospital visits at Hadassah because she knew Hebrew, was known to him through her husband, Said Zeidani, a scholar made brittle, I seem to remember my father telling me when I first met him, by torture in an Israeli jail. He too had been part of that curriculum team. She now has passed, untimely early.

For the past few years, my father's passion had been the planning of another major national institution: a Palestinian national museum. Not one that would focus on the *nakba* like a Holocaust memorial that dwelled only on the tragedy of one historic moment of loss and devastation, but a museum that would, as he insisted, communicate the continuous existence of the Palestinians on the land, assert a living national history, and serve as a resource for historical research and archiving. Others who came that morning or later sent condolences had been his partners in this project, pedagogic in a different way.

In and out of his room were also those old and new colleagues and friends who worked with him at the last official position he held-- at the newly founded AM Qattan Foundation's Qattan Centre for Educational Research and Development. He'd been as excited about the challenge of finding it appropriate headquarters as the work this foundation, set up by a long time friend, would support---education research, curricular innovation, professionalization of teachers, and support for Palestinian culture and the arts. During his years in Palestine, he had become devoted to the historic preservation of Arab houses. He loved what the French architects had done to restore this derelict stone building he'd found for them just up the road from his apartment. It gave him joy to go to his office with its classic arched windows and old tile floors, just like the tiles they had had in the houses in Jaffa when he was growing up. Fouad Moughrabi, the new director of the Centre, was an old friend from the U.S. and long-time contributor to the activities of Association of Arab American University Graduates, the organization my father had helped found when he realized in 1967 just how powerful Israeli propaganda was and how embattled Arabs were in the U.S. As Elaine Hagopian, another friend of theirs, would say later of his charismatic leadership at the AAUG, he inspired them with "a noble mission to achieve justice, a mission whose weapon of choice was first-rate scholarship." It was Fouad and his wife who had taken my father on his last outing to his precious Jaffa to look at the sea. By then, he was too weak to swim.

So many others were there in the Ramallah apartment: people who had worked with him, studied under him, or simply enjoyed the animated political discussions he always engaged in, accompanied by the good food he appreciated and often cooked himself. Mahmoud Darwish, Palestine's great poet, now also gone, had come to visit every day of my father's illness. In a few days, he would be eulogizing his friend, complimenting his warmth, his pragmatism, and his vision. "Like other great men with missions," he would say, "he did not write as much as he was actively involved in daily intellectual discussion, defending a hope besieged by powers that could only be defeated by optimism of the will." Many, like Jamileh, had waited until daylight

before coming, fearful of the insecurity of the second intifada that was triggered in late 2000 by Sharon's provocative visit with his soldiers to the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. This had spelled the demise of whatever illusions people had had about the possibility of Palestinian autonomy, which some, though not my father, believed the Oslo Accord in 1993 signaled. It was May 2001 now and the intermittent gunfire on the outskirts of Ramallah between the Israeli army and locals reminded us all that one never knew what was going to happen. Just a week earlier the Israelis had bombed a building near a hotel just a few blocks away from his apartment—an explosion that had set off the alarm on his oxygen machine and panicked him. "Quick, get in the corridor," he'd ordered my sisters and aunt. "That's what we did in Beirut when the Israelis bombed. It's the safest place." I was not there then.

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In the stories Ibrahim told about the past, especially when he was spinning them for his younger political admirers, he traced a seamless myth of his political trajectory back to Palestine. His mother was a surprisingly strong presence in these stories. Two sets of interviews, one in Arabic and one in English, the first recorded in August 1982 while Beirut was under siege and the second recorded over a period between 1999-2000 by Hisham Ahmad-Fararjeh in Ramallah, suggest that her inclusion in his own story of expulsion from Palestine and in the larger epic of the Palestinians' losses had a symbolic dimension. She was certainly a strong figure and herself a storyteller, like him. She was, my mother says, his real link to life in pre-1948 Palestine. But in his stories, she seems to both stand for what they lost and to justify his own politicization. I cannot help wondering if she appeared so often in his stories and memories because he was haunted by his powerlessness to restore to her what she had lost.

He had been only eighteen years old when the fighting broke out in Jaffa in 1947, fighting that would, with the British departure, result in the Zionist forces seizing Jaffa, the cultural and economic capital of Arab Palestine, despite the fact that the UN Partition Plan that "authorized" the partition of the land of Palestine into Jewish and Arab parts had designated it as part of what was to have been the Arab Palestinian state. As the most educated member of the household—he attended the prestigious Al-'Amiriyah Secondary School, almost the highest level of education possible in Palestine –and with his father already passed away some years earlier from heart troubles and his other educated brother studying in the U.S., he felt a special responsibility for his family's safety. When their neighborhood of Manshiyya--which was on the border with Tel Aviv and home both to Palestinian Arabs and Jews-- became too dangerous, they moved out to stay with an uncle for a couple of weeks. He lived in downtown Jaffa, in `Ajami, over the gold market and near the "Palace" (the local municipality building). But after one of the Zionist paramilitary groups, the Lehi, set an explosion in the Palace, killing 69 people while my father was sitting in the Islamic Youth Club nearby, he decided to look for another place for them to stay.

My father liked to tell the story of how he found his family a modern apartment as a temporary home, an apartment whose owners had, like most of Jaffa's bourgeoisie, had the money and connections to flee abroad in the early days of the fighting. They'd gone on their honeymoon. What he most vividly remembered was his mother's response: "My whole family started cursing—'What brought us to this house?!' It had a western-style toilet. And a shower! They wanted the ordinary familiar things. We told them 'Let's thank God we found somewhere to live.' But there were more complaints. 'And on the third floor? How are we supposed to go up and down?' They all gave me a hard time."

The apartment was in the "modern" part of town. His mother, he said, didn't like the neighborhood "with those worthless people who live their lives on the street in public." His was a conservative and respectable Muslim middle-class family and she was not used to the more Westernized ways of those with a more public life. Moreover, he remembers, "My mother was constantly berating me for removing her from her friends…She was upset. There were a million problems. There was no public oven [most families in traditional neighborhoods had made the dough at home but took the loaves to be baked in communal ovens]. We had to buy bread. But my mother refused. 'This is inedible!' They had a modern stove in the apartment. She asked me, 'What is this?' All we'd had in our [own] house was a kerosene burner."

As the fighting between the Zionist forces and the Palestinian Arabs of Jaffa intensified, with skirmishes between Jaffa and Tel Aviv getting worse, he and his eldest brother (who by April were working with the hastily formed, disorganized, and barely armed National Committee to Defend Jaffa against the Zionist forces) told the rest of the family they must leave the city. There was hardly any food and no end in sight to the fighting. He and his brother were finding it almost impossible to scour the city for food for the family. Everyone had heard of the massacre and the rapes in Deir Yassin and they feared for their young sister, Raja. Indeed, the Jewish Irgun had used Deir Yassin as propaganda to warn Palestinians to leave before they suffered a similar fate.

He reminisced, "My mother didn't want to leave. She was a fighter. She didn't want to leave. But we told her 'No, you have to. You can go to Nablus. It's not far and we'll soon follow. Things are sure to calm down.' (We were just leading her along.) So we brought them a truck. And we put them in it…. My brother was only [fifteen]. There was no one who could take charge except my mother. We thought it would be a matter of a week or two. It never occurred to me that we would never return." He himself finally left in May on what was rumored to be the last boat out of Jaffa. As he described it, the shooting was all coming from the other side. There was hardly anyone left in Jaffa.

My father used his mother's experience to symbolize all that was lost when they lost Palestine. "I'll tell you something," he said to his interviewers in Beirut. "I asked my mother many years later, maybe it was 1976. I said, 'Ya Hajja,' we've heard that they might be giving compensation. What do you think? Would you take compensation for what you lost?' She answered, 'God damn them, sons of bitches.' 'Why [do you say that]?' 'How could you compensate me? I want to live with my community. They destroyed my community. What do I want with the money?' There were a few families from Jaffa who lived near her in Amman. This was why she wanted to stay there. She'd come and visit us all [her sons] but she refused to live anywhere else. There were three families, her friends, who had been with her in Jaffa—on the same street, in the same neighborhood. They stayed together. They would visit her. She'd visit them. And when she died, they were the same families that came together. For her, Jaffa and the whole city, the whole country, meant this community. You see, we now make a big deal about the land and so forth. But the truth is, for us, I think it's much more important for us to have a community."

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My grandmother was also a recurring figure in the story of his political awakening, which, as he told it in the late 1990s when he himself was approaching seventy, culminated in his finding his community as a Palestinian. This happened first in the politics of liberation and later in his return (*'awda*) to live, work, and as it turned out, to die on Palestinian soil. She appears in an early memory of going to his first demonstration in Jaffa. He thinks it was in 1936 around the time of the general strike. The strike was called to protest the British failure to carry through on policies to halt Zionist colonization. He says the British called it a riot, as was typical of colonial politics. But he understood it now as an uprising, an *intifada*. He remembers taking his young brother on his shoulders. "It was a huge demonstration and I saw…the British army and British police mounted on horseback with big batons, beating the heads of our people. I saw blood streaming from the heads and was so scared by the sight that I kept saying to my younger brother, who was just an idiot, four years old: 'Did you see that!! Did you see that?' I was trying to reassure myself but he was screaming, the poor thing, 'Yes, Yes, I see. I see.'"

He recalls the chants: "'Down with British imperialism!' 'Down with the Balfour Declaration.' 'Down with Zionism.' It was all down with this and that." He jokes, "We never heard the word up!" The lesson for the present that he drew from his childhood story is that those who now accuse Palestinian mothers of sending their children out to throw stones, in the intifada, are absurd. "I remember that in my case nobody pushed me to go to the demonstration. I knew exactly that it was anti-British and anti-Zionist. There was no doubt at the age of seven who were the enemies of the Palestinians…The interesting thing is that when I came back from the demonstration after the British had succeeded in overcoming the uprising and beating the hell out of our people, arresting our people, injuring our people, my mother opened the door for

me and began to scold me. She wasn't scolding me because I went to the demonstration. She was scolding me because I took my younger brother with me. 'How dare you take your younger brother?' You see, he didn't understand anything. So, it was okay for me at the age of seven to go. *I* was old enough to understand." His commentary then turned to the present: "The mothers understand what their children are doing. They cannot restrain them or imprison them at home, because this is a national action for liberation."

His life story of political activism oscillated between marvel at the absurdity of his own ignorance and pride in his efforts and transformation. His conclusion to the 1936 demonstration story was, "Politics is your national assertion. And so it stays with you." Later, as a high school student in the final days of the British mandate, he was active in mobilizing students around the country. Sometimes he had to lie to his mother and tell her he was off studying. When he finished his matriculation exams in March 1948, he and some fellow students demanded a role in the National Committee to defend Jaffa. "Okay," they were told, "we'll post you at the borders where the cars come in from Jerusalem so that you can inspect the identity cards of those entering." He interjected an explanation for the interviewer in 1982, "Because those Zionists used car bombs in Jaffa, like those used today in Beirut." As Erskine Childers has documented, the tactics used in urban centers by the Zionist militias also included firing special "Davidka" mortars that hurled 60 pounds of high explosive into the city, rolling barrel-bombs of explosives and petrol that ignited as they went down the narrow streets, dynamiting block after block in Palestinian Arab neighborhoods, all accompanied by recordings of "horror sounds."

My father continued his tale about those early months of 1948: "We were told that you could tell the difference between the British and the Zionist Jews because of their identity cards. We knew, even in our ignorance at that time, that this was rubbish. It was unbelievable! How would I know the difference between a Brit and a [European] Jew? They would give me the identity card. I'd look at it. His name is John Jones. So what? What does John Jones mean? Or Shapiro? Who the hell knew at that time what Shapiro meant? How could I tell the difference? All I knew was how to decipher the English script…We would act tough and demand to see people's identity cards. If they were foreigners, we'd just look at them and say, Go… Well, we never stopped a soul. After they would pass through, we'd talk. I'd say, Did you see? That one's face was reddish. I think maybe he was a Jew. Because we didn't have a clue how to identify anyone!"

My father had had Jewish neighbors while growing up in his mixed neighborhood of Manshiyya—he remembers a boy who liked to play soccer with them but whose mother kept dragging him away; he remembers that he and his friends looked forward to Friday evenings when their neighbors would give them a piaster to switch off their lights, it being the Sabbath. But these European fighters were different; there was no shared history or space.

He talks about his disillusionment later, when it dawned on him in the months after they were all forced to flee Jaffa, that the Arab armies had no plans to take Palestine back. He talks of the humiliations he endured as a refugee in Jordan when his family finally settled there in 1949, Nablus not having turned out to be workable because of the huge influx of other refugees. Not only were they living crowded into one room, with no glass in the windows so that they either got wet in the rain or suffocated by stuffing the windows full of blankets, but they lost all the economic security they had had in Jaffa, the dreams of future education, and their social standing. This sudden loss of social standing was perhaps the worst: "You are in a place where no one knows you. And you have become part of a whole mass that you can't stand out from."

Because Amman had been inundated by hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, the monarch was afraid that Jordan would be destabilized politically. The Jordanian police would round them up, would insult them. It pained him to hear what they would say: "All of you are pimps, sons of bitches. All of you sold the land to the Jews. All of you collaborated. And I don't know what else they said. We had never thought of ourselves as part of a mass. We had been living in Jaffa; we were from such and such family; our family's home was in such and such a place; and we were connected to these other people. And we were respectable… My father was respected, a nationalist. People knew us. We had dignity. And then even as a Palestinian, it was different. In the past we would go to Egypt. We'd go to *help* them. We'd join their demonstrations. We thought we could lend support to others… Now if we were to go to a demonstration, we knew we'd be beaten for no other reason than that we were Palestinian."

He began to learn about the oppositional political groups that were active at that time, though clandestinely since the Jordanian government didn't accept them: the Communists, the Syrian National Socialists, the Ba'thists. He worked long hours at low wages in the customs house and couldn't bear to go home to the overcrowded house. The antagonism of the Jordanians and the depressing lack of any prospects for the kind of future he had dreamed of when a young student, as a lawyer ideally, were critical in his decision to try to get to the United States, where his older brother was studying engineering, having been sent before "the troubles" so that he could return and take over the family iron foundry. The foundry, of course, was now gone, though one of his father's partners had brought all the old machinery to Amman and set up a new workshop. He was employing my father's younger brother for 20 piastres a day, something that my father, who believed in education, thought was wrong. My uncle remains deeply grateful to this day that before my father left for the U.S. to escape this hopeless situation and finish his own education, he made his brother promise he'd register to go back to school.

My father finally escaped to the United States in 1949 by boat on borrowed money. He pursued his own education. His English was poor, though he had been among the smart students of the elite Al-'Amiriyah High School in Jaffa. But it improved rapidly. Like many an

immigrant to the U.S., he worked at a variety of jobs in his first years, mopping floors in a laundry and testing temperatures in a steel mill in Chicago. He won a scholarship after his first year at a mediocre state university in Chicago. He married my mother and they moved to the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana where he finished his B.A.. By 1954 he was doing a Ph.D. at Princeton, but he never forgot the hostility of the Jordanians, which was to be followed by that of the Americans.

Antagonism toward the Palestinians reappeared as a strong theme in his description later of one of the most significant turning points in his political life: attending his first meeting of the Palestine National Council. In the 1960s, he was living in the U.S. though he insists that he made a point to visit Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan most summers, usually bringing the whole family. He was attached to Egypt both by Arab nationalist dreams and what Gamal Abdel Nasser had represented and because he had lived there for four years that he described as his "golden years" in the late 1950s. Thanks to Ali Othman, his old roommate from Chicago, he had worked at a UNESCO Center for Arab development just after finishing his Ph.D.

On one visit to Egypt in August 1970, he was meeting, as he usually did, with the noted Egyptian journalist Mohammad Hassanein Heykal at the Ahram Center for Strategic Studies. After a while, Heykal asked him if he'd meet him in the cafeteria for lunch a little later; there were some people coming he would appreciate seeing. To my father's utter surprise, it turned out to be Yasir Arafat, accompanied by some key figures in the PLO, as well as a few other intellectuals and politicians. He was stunned. "I was shy: My God! This was our leadership!" he explained.

After some small talk, he says he summoned the courage to ask a question. Looking straight at Arafat, who was wearing his dark glasses and kufiyya, he asked, "Mr. Arafat, what role do you see for people like us who are living outside [in the Diaspora]? We are intellectuals, we work with ideas at universities. What role do you see for us in the revolution?" He remembers that Arafat looked at him quizzically. Then various people around the table said things he can't now reconstruct. But he says he can remember exactly what Arafat said. He was the last to speak. "He said, 'Dr., when we began our revolution, we didn't ask anyone. We were Palestinians sitting in Kuwait or Qatar thinking, What can we do for Palestine? We decided to make a revolution.'" In another version of the story, he paraphrases Arafat as saying, "Each of us thought about it and found ourselves a role. We organized ourselves and here we are. We are waging a revolution. Now, for you and your friends, think of what you can do. If you need help from us to do the kind of thing you want to do, let us know. But it is for you to decide how you can contribute to this revolution, which is yours." My father's response was, "It could not have been a better answer. In essence, he was saying 'Do you want me to tell you what [to do]?'"

As Arafat's group got up to leave, Arafat hugged him and told him he should attend the special meeting in Amman of the Palestine National Council. He'd read about it in the newspapers but it never occurred to him that he could attend. Three days later, he left us in Cairo and went to stay with his mother in Amman. He attended. Inside the conference hall Arafat flattered him by coming over to hug him and to welcome him, as if he'd known him forever. As he told the story many years later, he noted, "I was deeply touched by him. He has a way of manipulating people. He held my hand like I was a little boy: he was exhibiting me to others."

At that meeting in Amman in summer 1970, however, he had sensed again the Jordanian hostility towards Palestinians that he'd experienced in 1948 and '49, before he had left for America. The tension on the street was palpable as he had walked with some old friends toward the meeting hall. The Jordanian Army with its armored personnel carriers stood face to face with the Palestinian resistance fighters, unclear who was protecting whom from what. He said he was afraid that the Jordanians planned to surround and slaughter those gathered for the meeting. And his apprehensions at that time were well-founded: just after he left, the armed Palestinian resistance that had been based in Jordan was driven out. This was Black September, a dark day in Palestinian history. It was a decisive time for the Palestinian armed struggle, betrayed and forced to move its base of operation to Lebanon, only to be expelled twelve years later through the Israeli invasion.

It was also a decisive moment for him personally. My father says he had a strong reaction to the meeting: "This was the very first time I had ever attended anything—official, unofficial, or popular—called Palestinian. Since 1948. Arab yes, with Palestinians, yes, but something Palestinian? I was so happy, so thrilled, even though this was the worst meeting, a terrible moment, and the tensions were unbelievable… But for the first time I truly saw my people. They talked just the way I did, we chattered and talked, and we kissed and hugged each other." What was so incredible to him was that there was no other topic except Palestine. Everything was discussed in terms of its impact on Palestinians. "And then in the evening, you'd sit and eat Palestinian foods…Foods I'd forgotten!" In a dramatic conclusion to the narrative, he said, "I had found my identity. I became part of the movement….My loyalty was now with the resistance. Nasser died and I shifted my affection to Arafat. I became a full-time functioning Palestinian."

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To say that my father became fully Palestinian then is not to say that his cultural identity as a Palestinian had not always been central, or that he had not cared about the land of Palestine. As a boy from the city, he argued, he did not have the earthy attachment to the land that peasants are reputed to have. My mother says that his deepest fear was that if they did not

have their land, the Palestinians would end up like the Armenians or the Native Americans. He had long made analogies between Israel and other settler colonial states, in North America, Africa and Australia. His concerns surely must have intensified later with the Oslo Accords that created bantustans out of the Palestinian territories of Gaza and the West Bank.

My father explained to his interviewer, Hisham Ahmad, that he didn't talk to his children about what had happened in 1948 as much as about Palestine, his family, who he was, and who his parents were. Indeed, he was glad that we lived in the Arab world in those early years. In 1956 we moved to Egypt for four years. We knew our Palestinian relatives there, his maternal aunt and a cousin's family with whom we were extremely close. And we went to Amman often, even after moving back to the U.S. in 1960, where at least I, the eldest, felt at home with the whole extended family. We always stayed with his mother, sister, and his brother's large family who all lived together in a few rooms. We laid out mattresses on the floor at night, picked grapes off the arbor, and ate wonderful foods. I sewed doll clothes in the old storeroom with my cousin, fell off a swing, went for Qur'an lessons, and had crushes on the boys next door (a family from Jaffa, of course). I don't remember anything from what my father insists was his other important way of tying us to Palestine. He tells his interviewers that before 1967, we used to visit Amman regularly. "My mother was there," he explained. "We'd spend a night in Amman but then we would go to Jerusalem. I'd rent a car. What I was doing was, first I was tying my kids to our whole big tribe, uncles, aunts, cousins. They knew that I had relatives, that we were all Palestinians. But the second thing is that I was always determined to take them to Jerusalem. We'd rent the car and we'd go. This is our country. In Tulkaram we'd go to a high place and I'd say, 'There, there's my home.' You could see Jaffa, you could see the sea from there." This was before the Israeli occupation of the West Bank.

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It was his mother again who my father would invoke in his stories of political commitment to suggest later his political independence from Arafat, despite the flattery and his own loyalty to the cause. My father liked to present his mother as radical. She read the newspaper, he said, as he did, though I remember her in her later years more often reading the Qur'an. He got a kick out of telling people that she supported the more radical Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, though it was only because she liked George Habash, its leader, because she knew him personally and admired the fact that as a physician he had generously treated the refugees for free. But my grandmother was also more cautious than he was about politics. She always talked politics in a whisper; she had seen her husband jailed by the British, one son shot, and her eldest son jailed by the Jordanians. My father insists, though, that she never stopped them from working for the liberation of Palestine.

"As a Palestinian," he explained to Hisham, his young colleague at Birzeit who was recording his life history, "you can't escape politics." What that meant had shifted over his lifetime. From the demonstrations against the British to the humiliations of being a refugee; from scholarly work on the Arab world to sympathy with visions of national liberation shared in the 1960s by the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist nations of the Third World. From the crushing and pounding of the Israeli bombardment of the captive Palestinian population of Beirut during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 to the later violence in the West Bank and Gaza that would make him, only partly tongue in cheek, urge disarmament of the whole Middle East as the only solution.

After returning to the U.S. from his experience of living through the siege of Beirut in the summer of 1982, shaken by the apathy of the Arab countries like Syria that he passed through on his way out, he concluded, "The question of Palestine cannot be answered through violence." He was sobered by damage that the Israelis caused both to the Palestinians and the Lebanese. "They had weapons of incredible power: bombs, cluster bombs and all sorts of weapons of destruction. Talk about weapons of mass destruction!" He explained, "I experienced the ability of a population which is essentially defenseless to withstand this kind of punishment. I also experienced the damage that it causes to children, to adults, to everybody who is not engaged in the fighting. The fright in the eyes of the children, the long lines of children carrying buckets to fill with water at three in the morning…the filth that is caused by the air raids and left there because there is no institution to clear up the debris. And the enormous amount of casualties… Who carries the burden of armed struggle?" He added, "It is so awful, at the level of experience, that I would not want to wish it on my enemy."

My father began to lecture in the 1980s about the impasse. His message: That the Israeli military could not produce the surrender of the Palestinian people. But that the opposite was also true: no matter how much power the Palestinians might acquire, they would never produce the surrender of the Israelis. "They cannot impose their will and we cannot impose ours. Therefore, we have to figure out a way to reach a solution that both people can live with."

Never one for introspection, my father had little patience for people who "looked at their bellybuttons." He always looked outward, whatever the personal costs to himself or to those close to him. He was driven by his faith that people--as individuals--could shape the world, make things happen, and change history. He created organizations from nothing. He inspired people to work for the cause. He was bent on realizing dreams in this world, even if so many kept being dashed. The friends who surrounded him as he lay dying in Ramallah were part of the dreams he had been trying to realize in his last years as a Palestinian back home, educating Palestinians. His legacy was to be this work on creating the most important kind of national infrastructure—an educated people.

Yet everyone who knew him intimately knew that my father was always haunted by another kind of dream. “The truth is,” he had told some liberal Zionist colleagues at Northwestern who always wanted to discuss “peace” and the situation “over there” with him, “I don’t dream. All people dream. But not me. I have only one dream. That recurs. A nightmare.” Commenting to his interviewers in Beirut in 1982 that he still had this dream regularly, he continued with his story about the conversation with these colleagues in Evanston. He had said to them: “The dream never changes. And I have no other. Always, I am living by the sea--the house I grew up in was in Jaffa, right by the sea. A thief comes, a burglar. He starts pushing open the door and I try to shut it. A struggle that doesn’t end. He pushes and I try to shut the door…And I scream but no one hears me. I’m shouting to the people in the house that someone’s breaking in, but no one hears.” Even without understanding much about psychiatry, he said to them, it wasn’t hard to interpret this dream that he’s had, maybe once a month, since 1948. This, he was saying to them, is the Palestinian experience.

In his nightmare, he explains, “the struggle is never resolved; the door always remains half-open.” He did what he could in his lifetime. Others will have to take his place at the door.

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