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LEXINGTON BOOKS
Lanham • Boulder • New York • London

Published by Lexington Books
An imprint of The Rowman & Littlefield Publishing Group, Inc.
4501 Forbes Boulevard, Suite 200, Lanham, Maryland 20706
www.rowman.com

6 Tinworth Street, London SE11 5AL

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Information Available

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data Available

ISBN: 978-1-4985-7202-6 (cloth)
ISBN: 978-1-4985-7203-3 (electronic)

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI/NISO Z39.48-1992.

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Acknowledgments

Writing *Collectivity in Struggle* awakened a struggle of its own. It was not easy to write a single authored study about collective works, a discrete and finite book about projects that refuse completion, and a scholarly work about politicized artistic interventions. The writing of this book spanned over a long period of time, and sometimes seemed to resemble the creative trajectory it charted: uprising, then interruption and collapse, followed by either melancholic critical reflection or explosive phantasmic excitement. But thanks to the support of friends, colleagues, teachers, students, and family, this work has come to seem meaningful, at times even necessary.

The seeds for this book were planted during my graduate studies at the Department of Comparative Literature at UC Berkeley. Chana Kronfeld read multiple drafts of each chapter in dissertation form, commenting on almost every word; her support throughout my years at Berkeley was limitless. Anne-Lise François instructed me in various and numerous experiences; our impassioned conversations permeate this project. Michael Lucey imparted upon me his expertise in the body of literature we both enthusiastically study, and came to my aid at the eleventh hour. Stefania Pandolfo contributed to my thinking in unforeseen ways; her conceptual framework helped me through the challenges of this project and others. I should also like to express my deep gratitude to D. A. Miller with whom I shared the pleasure of discussing narratology and sexuality; to Daniel Boyarin, who supported this project; and to Judith Butler, in whose footsteps we all follow.

Back in Tel Aviv, I was fortunate enough to find a community that could house this study. My encounter with Raef Zreik changed the ways in which I think about many of the issues examined in this project; his intellectual and political creativity continue to inspire me. The countless conversations I had with Aïm Deüelle Lüski over the years have both confused and sharpened

my arguments; his generosity—including his contribution to the book's cover—has been incalculable. Michèle Bokobza Kahan opened her house and heart to me, almost forcing me, against my will, to bring this work into completion. Some close friends have offered me much needed stimulation and support: Avital Barak, Eran Dorfman, Yotam Feldman, Tami Israeli, Hod Halevy, Merav Manoach, Amir Nave, and Oded Wolkstein; friends from my Berkeley years—Saleem al-Bahloly, Joshua Branciforte, Hagar Kotef, Ramsey McGlazer, Yosefa Raz, Zohar Weiman-Kelman, and Damon Young—remained, years after leaving my alma mater, a source of advice and stimulation. Ishai Mishory helped clarify my claims in written English, only to brilliantly complicate them later during our long conversations. Tal Yehezkely read in the manuscript things I could not see myself. Nir Shauloff worked carefully and imaginatively on the index. My family has created the space in which all of my work germinates and has encouraged me in times of need.

The Berkeley Fellowship and the Dean's Normative Time Fellowship allowed me four years of intensive studies and writing at UC Berkeley. Grants from the Helen Diller Foundation, the Jewish Studies program and the Department of Comparative Literature funded my research trips. The Minerva Humanities Center was my academic home for several years—as a postdoctoral fellow, as a participant, and then as the director of a research group, as well as the organizer of several conferences. The center's vibrant intellectual atmosphere was crucial to the development of this study and the examination of its implications. I thank my colleagues at the Department of Literature at Tel Aviv University (specifically Michael Gluzman and Iris Milner), at the Department of History and Theory at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design (specifically Ory Bartal, Ohad Zehavi, and Ohad Landesman), and at the Department for Interdisciplinary Studies at Sapir College (specifically Sigal Nagar-Ron and Tamar Razi). The students in my Genet classes and theory seminars made this project ongoing and living, and to a certain extent, a collective one.

This is a book of fathers: strange, childless, eccentric fathers, who joined a revolt of children cut from their familial bonds. It is dedicated to my father—who has been *ici et ailleurs*, in ways I am still trying to trace.

Introduction: Toward a 1968 Paradigm

History besieges us. The Owl of Minerva may spread its wings only when dusk falls, and things may acquire their meaning only at the end of the day, but we who are in the midst of time, among all things, cannot wait for that bird. We see no end on the horizon; and live each moment as an end. It is a time of crisis—but is there a time without crisis? Some of the basic coordinates of analysis are themselves changing.

Over the last decade, the Middle East has been in turmoil. Uprisings, mass demonstrations, revolts: sometimes the taking of power, the uprooting of dictatorial regimes; others—destruction and devastation. Imperial wars are still being waged, bloody civil wars are being fought, and the state formation—fragile and riven with contradictions in the Middle East from its inception—is being disrupted at different places. Palestine has gone through dramatic change. The Palestinian state—a constant horizon of Palestinian politics and the ultimate solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades—seems to have lost almost any chance of ever materializing. The Israeli occupation of the West Bank, once seen as temporary and reversible, is as stable and lasting as it has ever been, its control over the Palestinians is durable. Jewish settlements continue to be built in the Palestinian territories, spreading throughout and making any partition of the land for the future establishment of a sovereign Palestinian state less and less feasible. On the other hand, the Palestinian body politic grows ever weaker: its internal fragmentation into various geographical areas and different governmental sects, and the decline of any international recognition have led to the dissipation of its struggling power.[1] Remnants of resistance appear, like the mass popular protests alongside the Gaza separation fence in 2018. But many of these actions seem like acts of despair, echoes of a struggle already lost.

In this state of affairs, the coordinates that make political discourse around Palestine intelligible have also changed. The politics of reconciliation, of coexistence, of the quest for peace—as congealed in the 1980s, flowering in the 1990s, and still vibrant in the early 2000s—has been voided of meaning. The "peace process," the Oslo Accords, interim agreements, international recognition, the end of the conflict—all once part of a lively region vocabulary—are all but dead letters, markers of a bygone era. Most strikingly, the bid for a sovereign Palestinian state—an effort, a plan, and a horizon that seemed, two decades ago, highly realistic, at arm's reach—has since evaporated. Some still cling to it as if nothing has changed; others, though they acknowledge the change, still try to revitalize it. But the peace process, and a Palestinian state as its terminus, no longer directs the present political moment.

This study came into being during the disintegration of this discursive map. It is not, however, a lament over some hopeful times now ended; unrealized plans and missed opportunities, leading inexorably down a slippery slope to barbarism. Instead, this coordinate transformation allows for political modalities that were formerly sidetracked to resurface. With the collapse of the bid for a Palestinian state, we can return to a moment prior to its crystallization as the keystone of Palestinian political discourse in the mid-1970s. It was "the age of revolution:" at the end of the 1960s, a self-determined Palestinian armed struggle with no ultimate goal of a sovereign state took shape as part of an international Third-World revolt for liberation; a time when the Palestinian cause received global attention and some of its most memorable icons were imprinted. While this short-lived, incoherent, and dangerous moment of struggle has been subsumed, in most historiographical accounts, under a "struggle for statehood," I suggest examining it as an altogether different political modality: in its forms of action, its collective gathering, its temporal underpinnings, and its creative driving force. Now, with the disintegration of the "two-state solution"—or of the state solution *tout court*, of a state-bound and solution-bound paradigm—this moment can be teased out of a teleological path that would posit it as a nucleus stage (necessary, regrettable, but in any event negated) on the road to a sovereign state, so it can be explored on its own terms—according to its own potentialities and failures.

The debacle of the peace process and the inviability of the two-state solution have led to a paradigmatic shift in both historiographical and political discourse in the last decade and a half. The "1967 paradigm," which promoted historic compromise and the establishment of a Palestinian state on parts of historical Palestine, stressing sovereignty and self-rule, has been replaced by a "1948 paradigm." This paradigm sets *al-Nakba*—the Palestinian catastrophe during the 1948 war, land dispossession and population expulsion, as well as the establishment of the state of Israel—as the major

signifier in Palestinian politics, and the focal point of Palestinian history; and with the *Nakba*—exile, diaspora, the figure of the refugee and a state of loss. This book suggests a second paradigmatic shift: from a "1948 paradigm" to a "1968 paradigm." If 1967 is the year of the great Arab defeat and the further occupation of Palestinian lands by Israel, 1968, the year after, becomes the year of revolt, when different Palestinian organizations—Fatah, PFLP, DFLP—incite an independent armed struggle for the liberation of Palestinian lands. Against the backdrop of the 1948 paradigm, the 1968 paradigm stresses struggle over loss, political subjective formation over its deterioration and the figure of the fighter over that of the refugee. But it refuses to harken back to the "1967 paradigm." No historic compromise and comprehensive solution in the image of an internationally-sanctioned state here; on the contrary, the struggle is fought against global superpowers and imperial forces, as closely allied with other left-wing groups and Third-World revolts and aims at the constitution of collective sovereignty before and beyond any formal recognition.

This book's basic motion is that of a backward turn, an invocation of the 1968 moment as the age of revolutionary struggle to open up its political meaning.[2] It begins with a proclamation that the space of the political is neither that of diplomacy—of negotiations and treaties, of leaders and decision-making (viz., the "1967 paradigm"); nor that of crude "facts on the ground," sociological or demographical, of well-documented great historical events, and of moral indignation (i.e., the "1948 paradigm"). The 1968 moment opens up the political as a creative arena—one of imagination, constitution, and signification—to include artistic projects that took part in the revolutionary effort, shaped and articulated it. This study focuses on two prominent political-artistic projects that belonged to the 1968 moment: Jean-Luc Godard's cinematic engagement with the Palestinian revolt and Jean Genet's textual enterprise alongside it. Yet instead of framing them as two projects conducted by French artists about a Middle Eastern struggle—distinguishing between the European and the Oriental, the artistic and the political, the individual and the collective—it places both as internal to the 1968 moment, as conceptualizing the "1968 paradigm" that challenges these categorical distinctions. In these relentless years of turmoil, the Owl of Minerva seemed to have accompanied the deeds, signifying them in the course of their deployment. Even if these acts and significations were momentary and ultimately replaced—or suppressed—by a sturdier and more intelligible political project, the disintegration of the latter conjures the former.

The Writing of Struggle

This is a study of the revolutionary moment of the Palestinian struggle as inscribed within artistic creative projects in the mode of writing.[3] But such a

writing is not just the writing of the historical moment within what Michel de Certeau has identified as the structure of modern Western historiography—as based on the rift between history writing and historical material, between discourse and social body, an act of writing that takes a seemingly silent body and gives it words, dredging it into the known present by making it legible and decipherable. De Certeau stresses that this rift between past and present is made in the present—as a feature of historical discourse itself, "the postulate of interpretation." As such, the movement to the "past"—be it temporal or geographical ("our" own past or humanity's as unfolding in someone else's present)—is conditioned on a breakage (*coupure*) from a present and the preliminary separation of the past from living discourse as dumb matter, object, an Other to the narrating self.[4] De Certeau attends in his work the hiatuses, remainders, and resistances to this division, for example in Freudian dreamwork, or in the speech of early modern Christian mystics, where writing, in whatever form it takes, is neither separate from its object, nor dubbing it from afar or signifying it.[5] The projects discussed in this book—acts of "writing" infused with historical consciousness—frustrate, somewhat along to the same lines, the division between discourse (artistic, textual activity) and the social body (political, worldly activity). They do not give words to wordless actions or write a moment that does not know itself. They rather portray the act of revolt as a discursive site in which writing itself takes place as part of its motion. And concomitantly, they understand their own act of writing as entangled with the struggle.

We therefore begin not only with the writing of history but with writing in history. This was a fundamental characteristic of the Palestinian struggle in the long 1970s: it carried its own textuality with it. Ghassan Kanafani—intellectual, writer and spokesman of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)—coined the term *adab al-muqawama* ("resistance literature") in the 1960s to mark textual activity that accompanies the armed struggle, not simply represents it; in its modes of narration—heightened affectivity and proximity to the doers and deeds—it envisions the struggle it calls for.[6] His 1969 novella, "Return to Haifa," which culminates with the assertion that its two separated brother protagonists—now an Israeli soldier and a Palestinian freedom fighter—will only meet on the battlefield, casts revolt as a space externalized from the text, that is, first constituted in it and then sent forth, to be realized within the social body.[7] This mode of writing-within-the-struggle can be traced back to Kateb Yacine's 1956 *Nedjma*, a novel written during the Algerian anticolonial revolt against France. In it, acts of revolt appear both as past events—here, specifically of the 1945 Sétif massacre—now narrated several different times and from different focalizations, never presented as sealed events but, in fact, continually haunting the novel; and, simultaneously, as future events—those of decolonial emancipa-

tion—which the act of writing invokes in the form of a vision, tracing it, as a fantasy and an apparition, from tribal times and up to liberation.[8]

The political struggle thus calls for a different attitude toward writing: the writing of struggle does not adhere to the rupture between the subject of writing and its written object. Godard and Genet are not only the writers of a Palestinian struggle narrative, which is independent from their own personas—a French filmmaker and a French writer who bear witness to the revolt of a native people, document and interpret it, give it words and images and advocate for it. The two are also written into the struggle: their stay in the region, their proximity to the Palestinian forces, the political education in which they take part, the stories and scenes they help produce and assemble—are all integral to political action. The political struggle then is not an object of recognition; it is a realm of experience for both the fighters and the artists. At the same time, Godard and Genet's works—whether audiovisual or textual—expose the writerly aspects of the struggle itself: the ways in which the Palestinian fighters struggle to become the storytellers of their own actions. The fighters film and edit, pose for the camera and use it; they are actors in a political theater and their acts are often self-stylized gestures. They strive to be the authors of their own story, to write their own words in the book of history. Godard and Genet accompany the fighters and respond, through their work, to their demand to act as writers. The structure of writing is therefore transformed in the revolutionary moment: the break between action and textuality, between body and words, and between matter and consciousness, which had seemed to be a structural foundation, loses its hold. Writing becomes here a praxis realized by different actors in the political world, and the struggle is intertwined with the attempt to write itself in a different way: to fashion forms of attachment that transcend those of bourgeois society—non-conjugal, extra-familial, un-reproductive bonds; to constitute a collective being not formerly presupposed, but created through its acts of gathering; to establish a different modality for the care of the self, distinct from a civil modality—that of a fighter whose life is intense, saturated, possibly short-lived, who is always on the verge of death; whose liberty is found in his or her immersion in the fight for individual and collective emancipation.

But Godard and Genet also attest to the collapse of the revolutionary moment of the Palestinian struggle and alongside it the disintegration of its internal writing. Their artistic projects are realized in a different form than expected and aspired to: Godard in a 1976 film which depicts the failure to actualize the revolutionary audiovisual enterprise (*Ici et ailleurs*); and Genet in a 1986 book of "memories" that narrates an already death-infused revolt (*Un captif amoureux*). The two projects negotiate this collapse in different ways: one as a traumatic rupture that requires an endless work of mourning; the other through an incorporation of the rupture into an eternally unbound

revolutionary imaginary. Both reflect on the revolutionary moment as an event of the past, yet in neither project is there a return to the prerevolutionary break structuring the "writing of history." The writing here is not divorced from the written, nor is discourse separated from experience or the living from the dead. Similarly, the French artists are not structurally separated from the Palestinian fighters—as if the artists serenely create works of art while the fighters unreflectively act in the realm of politics. The revolution failed, but the old regime has not been restored. Instead, Godard and Genet's projects raise questions as to the ways in which, within a postrevolutionary moment, revolutionary writing can be carried on—in the form of a lament or in the name of survival, as a critical negation of the present or as a reverie detached from it.

This is apparent in the status of Godard and Genet's works. As works of writing conceived within the revolutionary moment, these projects did not aspire to take the form of a film or a book. If they did, they would abide by the national-bourgeois notion of literature or cinema, according to which creative work is realized in an artwork—a finished text, discrete and self-sufficient, that serves as the privilege site of writing and an object of aesthetic pleasure.[9] But within the struggle, writing is intertwined with political action; it is executed by the fighters themselves, as well as by the artists, as a revolutionary praxis. It is part of the work of political mobilization; it allows the self-positing of the rebelling subject, and is a vehicle for collective reflexive knowledge, gathering an operative archive of words and images activated throughout the revolt. Its realization is then not confined to the artwork; writing is positioned within political creative activity; as an avant-garde procedure, it exceeds the aesthetic realm and is negated into social life.[10] After this comes the failure of the revolutionary moment and the diminishing of the space for writing created within it: at this point, writing is to be realized within the artwork after all. Indeed, this writing does take the form of a film and a book—secluded works with well-defined boundaries, torn from the political arena in which they were conceived, and turned into closed, formed objects, presented for contemplative and interpretative reading. Godard's film and Genet's book may be interpreted then as the gravestones under which the writing of struggle rests in peace.

However, the present study attempts to address these works differently—as projects, not as products.[11] It does not regard the film or the book as the final instantiation of a writing project and its ultimate textual product, but rather tries to read the project back from within the text and trace the process of its becoming. This is a de-fetishizing process, as it seeks to open the object to the political and artistic creative activity that was invested in it. Instead of looking at the verbal or audiovisual artifact as the comprehensive, exhaustive, fully realized version of a writing project, it recognizes that the realized version is based on failure. As a book ready to be read across time in a

private arena or as a film pensively watched in the cinema, this mode of realization belongs to the postrevolutionary condition. But the failure is itself registered in this realized, postrevolutionary version of the project. This study seeks not to mistake the postrevolutionary condition with the prerevolutionary one. Out of the finalized aesthetic object it uptakes the process that led to its constitution, a process that undermines the finality of this object and its dwelling in the aesthetic realm. Within the actualized text this study reads the project's unrealized potentialities, lingering in the text as remnants, traces, or negated forms. What existed as a revolutionary potentiality could have been realized only under different conditions—and not as a formalized text, taken out of its social activation, sealed onto itself, and transmitted onward. Yet unrealized, and unrealizable in artwork, this text's potentialities are to be followed.[12] It is for this reason that this study devotes its attention to the undercurrent of the writing of struggle within actualized writing after and about the struggle.

Late Palestinian Actualizations

From the idea that Godard's film and Genet's book are not the ultimate and final instantiation of the creative projects they embarked upon together with the Palestinian forces in the 1970s, follows that *Ici et ailleurs* and *Un captif amoureux* should not be regarded as two discrete works created by eminent French artists about the Palestinian people. This would have meant addressing the two works as European testimonies on the deeds of an indigenous people—full of fantasies and projections, adorned by an Orientalist desire. One could definitely address them as such, on the condition of ignoring the revolutionary project aimed at destabilizing this bifurcated dyadic structure separating the French from the Palestinian. But in fact, these projects remained integral to the Middle East even years after their inception. One could argue that these projects did not die with the end of the revolutionary struggle nor with the withdrawal or death of their assumed *auteurs*— but were carried on, as some of their foundational formulations of the struggle were later continued and explored further. They were often perceived as intimate materials for Palestinian cultural activity—not a foreign commentary on some forgotten period, but insider information ready to be activated. Following the backward motion of this study, before exploring the details of the projects themselves in the following chapters, I turn here to some of their later actualizations in the Palestinian realm. Reading both events as further realizations of the projects rather than mere responses to Godard and Genet's works, allows us to preliminarily retrieve some of these projects' basic coordinates, and at the same time examine the difference between the two.

Ici et ailleurs has turned into more than a film title: it has become an idiomatic phrase which encapsulates a paradigmatic signification, indicating

the two poles at work in the postcolonial situation—the metropole and the former colonies, a duality which is neither symmetrical nor simply oppositional, as could have been suggested in the much simpler formulation of "here and there." This discrepancy between the "here" and the "elsewhere" attests to a movement from a locatable place to a vague land, indexing both the desire and failure to attain the latter. Nor is this discrepancy dialectical, since it lacks the moment of mutual recognition, mediation, and sublation. Furthermore, the "and" that conjures and separates the two posits the drama of a gap that can be reworked but can never be overcome. The phrase ultimately dubs a Western position, critically acknowledging the uneven distribution of power in the postcolony while being caught in its own reflexivity; these are all lessons from the 1976 film itself, in which a critical position for the postrevolutionary condition is being developed. It is no accident, then, that the film's title has been used in various art exhibitions, many of them devoted to art from the Arab world. It conveyed the problematics of an elsewhere being presented in and for the here, notably in a globalized world where this contrapuntal relation between the two poles often already exists within the metropolitan art world and its postcolonial "international" artists. The most significant of these was *Here and Elsewhere*, an exhibition dedicated to contemporary Arab art curated by Massimiliano Gioni at the New Museum in New York in 2016. Explicitly inspired by the film, it aimed, as stated in the exhibition text, to "bring new works and new voices to our audiences." It then followed the directionality created in the film, looking at the diverse variations of an elsewhere, conditioned and accentuated by a here. But what is presented in the film as a critical consideration of a position of the here, a tense deliberation of the gap between the here and elsewhere, and a lament to the revolutionary moment that tried to undo them both, risks in this exhibition, definitely in its textual framing, a retreat into an uncritical celebration of multiplicity, openness, and dialogue.[13] The presentation of contemporary Arab art to Western eyes is regarded here as a given, New York is easily considered the exhibition's ultimate locus for conceptualization, and the dyadic structure of here and elsewhere seems to hide the postnational economy of a globalized art world.

Genet's project invites different actualizations, since from its very start it does not assume a postrevolutionary critical position, later to be converted into an uncritical liberal stance. Genet's involvement in the Palestinian struggle was of a different order than that of Godard's: longer, broader, and more passionate; impacting a number of periods in Genet's life and expanding up until his death. Genet's central writings circulated in Palestinian circles in real time—"The Palestinians" was first published in Arabic in *Sh'un Filastin* in 1972; "Four Hours in Shatila" was printed in *Revue d'études palestiniennes*, at which point it gained its international acclaim. The Arabic translation of *Un captif amoureux* was already published in 1998, prior to the

English translation appeared. Rejecting the dyadic structure and an antithetical positionality, Genet's texts became integral to the Palestinian cause. After the author's death, several prominent Palestinian intellectuals referred back to his work, actualizing it in their own writing, giving it voice while rendering it from one creative genre to another—following Genet's project in order to understand the modification of the Palestinian struggle.

It was Leila Shahid who most literally actualized Genet's work. A representative of the Palestinian cause in various international contexts, Shahid had a close relationship with Genet from 1974 until his death, and to a large extent served as a midwife for his texts on the Palestinian struggle. Their long conversations in Rabat, where they both spent time in the 1970s, kept the Palestinian cause vivid in Genet's mind. In 1982, it was with Shahid that he traveled to sieged Beirut; and their experience of the Sabra and Shatila massacres became the gateway to Genet's later writings. In the last days of his life he gave her the manuscript of his great book about the Palestinians. She thus became the facilitator of his later work, its first addressee, its sponsor, and disseminator. Positioned in both Palestinian and French cultures, negotiating politics and art, Shahid managed to carry on the non-bifurcated quality of Genet's project.

In one moment of such actualization, Shahid gave Genet's essay on Shatila to two French theater directors for its performance on stage as a dramatized text. In a long interview she gave to one of them, upon the staging of the text and it republication, she narrates the process that led to its writing.[14] But what seems at first as memories from Genet's life is revealed as a mirror hall of ventriloquism. In the introduction to the interview, Jérôme Hankins writes, "Leila knew how to make 'Jean' seem alive as if he was there to give us verbal clarifications [*des éclairaisment de vive voix*]."[15] Shahid then resurrects Genet, activates his voice and transmits it to the directors; she is the Palestinian who mediates the French writer to the French. She actualizes Genet's intentions; but at the same time also actualizes Genet's own writing procedure, since it is the Palestinian voice and image—specifically that of the Palestinian fighter—which Genet wishes to perpetuate in his writings. Shahid thus gives voice to the Palestinian struggle—with and through Genet.

The actualization of Genet's text follows this circular movement, Genet's Shatila essay being performed as an actualized speech. Yet this generic transformation activates the actualizing force which already exists in the original text. "Our relationship," says Shahid, "was always these endless discussions . . . there could have not been constraints since these were conversations that went to the bottom of things. Later, I realized that it was a bit like a spoken book before it was written."[16] Genet's book was written in speech—as a text already performed; here by Genet and Shahid, and there by the Palestinian fighters, as writers. Revolutionary reality is saturated with writing, for Genet this writing is made up of signs actualized in the social field. A

theatrical piece based on Genet's essay is therefore not a transformation of the dead letter into vivid speech; it is the realization of such speech within the text. As we shall see in chapter 3, Genet portrays in his writing the fighters' actions in theatrical terms, as a show, full of gestures, set on a stage. His writing is itself part of that revolutionary theater. Shahid understands this, and it is this quality of Genet's writing that she conveys.

Genet also plays a central role in Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* [*Bab al-Shams*]; the acclaimed novel on the Palestinian Nakba published precisely 50 years after 1948. He appears there not as a historical figure within the novel's narrative, but as a marker of a certain mode of writing. Placed in the Shatila camp near Beirut during the aftermath of the Lebanese civil war and the Israeli invasion, and created out of fragmented memories of lives fractured by deportation and exile, Khoury's novel summons an encounter between Palestinian survivors and three French theater persons who came to Shatila, "getting ready to put on a play by a French writer called Jean Genet."[17] It is, in fact, the above-mentioned monodrama based on Genet's Shatila essay, staged as an activated text, a living voice of an actress speaking Genet's own narration in the essay. Yet this attempt at actualization is suspicious from the start. The Europeans are described as foreigners and portrayed as French tourists; they arrive "to acquaint themselves with Shatila," to see things for themselves.[18] They wish to follow Genet's footsteps: to stroll the streets of Shatila, looking for the mass grave with piles of bodies from the massacre or to collect testimonies from those who witnessed it, but to no avail. In his writing, Khoury creates a devastating portrait of these French artists whose self-acknowledged position as voyeurs inevitably recovers the dyadic structure of French artists arriving to a Palestinian land in order to make their own "art" out of it: Genet, they say, "was a supporter of you and that's why we're asking for your help."[19] This is a pattern of solidarity completely foreign to Genet.

But against this backdrop, Khoury conveys the possibility of a different affinity to Genet: his entire novel is indebted to Genet's project and is written in proximity to it. The fading yet vibrant center of the novel is indeed the Nakba. But *Bab al-Shams* turns to the armed Palestinian resistance as its explicit structuring moment. Khoury frames his novel as a debate between the 1948 and the 1968 paradigms: Umm Hassan, the old Shatila midwife, urges the Palestinians not to eat from the orange tree, to keep Palestine intact, to respect its memories and hold the keys to its lost homes. But Yunis, an old freedom fighter, protests: one should definitely eat from the tree, devour the land, "because the homeland isn't oranges, the homeland is us."[20] Fighting for the land instead of memorializing it becomes the mark of this novel. Its two protagonists are *fedayeen* from "the age of revolution:" the older of the two, Yunis, active from the 1950s and later training the young generation of fighters from both the PFLP and Fatah; and Khalil, who came of age in the

late 1960s, during the period of the armed revolt. The intergenerational dialogue between the two lies at the heart of the novel, a strange dialogue between silent Yunis who is in a coma, lying in a bed in the Shatila hospital, and outspoken Khalil who tells Yunis's story, cites his words, echoes his ideas, and debates them, through an endless address in the second person which dramatizes the narrative of a freedom fighter being given back his own position as an author. Yunis is a hero who mocks heroism, a monument of a revolution that speaks through and beyond him, the father of the armed struggle and its paradigmatic figure. He lies on his deathbed but does not die—refusing death, trying to arrest it, or rather already residing in the realm of the dead, infinitely and so uninterrupted. With Yunis, the revolutionary moment, long gone, is unwilling to pass, to fade into oblivion or to simply end. As in Genet's work, the fighter's body, dead or alive, is always dead and alive; never silent, even as a corpse—"suddenly it is very present and almost friendly"—it speaks.[21]

Both Genet and Khoury actualize this speech in their writings. But they do so without falling back to either side of the opposing poles: they neither represent this speech, according to the dyadic structure; nor do they retreat to a spontaneous, immediate, autonomous speech. The fighters' speech is always mediated: but not by those who only support it and want to make a monument of it. It is rather mediated through its calling back and activation, its invocation in writing through following the mode of writing already encapsulated in it. This is Khalil following Yunis's narrative and retelling it. This is also Khoury himself, a Lebanese writer who joined the Fatah, following the stories of the Palestinian armed resistance, while also following the geography and temporality of Genet's writings—Jerash, Ajloun, and Amman of the early 1970s—their tone and motion, ravished and captivated with and by the struggle.[22] Khoury expands the novel all the way to Ghassan Kanafani and resistance literature—Kanafani was supposed to write Yunis's story, but was killed before claiming the struggle as a creative activity saturated with writing, merging the historical and the fictional, and speaking for a different reality.[23] *Bab al-Shams* traces the contours of the Palestinian fighter's biography revealed in retrospect, from its deathbed. First, the longing for the forsaken land, the break with family and former generations, the turning away from tradition and civilized society, the lonely nomadism, the transformation of the soul, and the incubation of the will to act. After which follows the coming into being of the *feday*: the multiple names and hidden identities, love for a woman and the fight for the motherland, the alternate, constitutive lineage—the death of the biological son and his substitutes, the symbolic sons, as well as a concise and intense life, filled with death, and so with no fear of death. Khoury returns to that moment of the *fedayeen*, when there is not yet an established and agreed upon Palestinian political plan, when the diplomatic routes for the liberation of Palestine are still not drafted, when

Realpolitik is not the *order du jour*. Like Genet and with him, he extends this moment way beyond its historical viability, and actualizes it as a potentiality that hovers above the current grim state of Palestinian politics. Through fragmented stories, Khoury narrates the fragmented lives of these "children of the revolution"—mythicized in the novel, and prolonged through it, unfinished.

With Edward Said things are different, since it is not quite the actualization of Genet's project that Said is after—either as its unofficial spokesperson (Shahid) or as a writer activating it (Khoury). Said—the leading Palestinian intellectual of the postrevolutionary era—animates Genet as a character, and considers the legacy of recruitment to a struggle and the possible positions of the intellectual within it. In an elegy and a eulogy to Genet written right after his death, Said examines this question not in an abstract manner but as it was played out in history, by narrating his encounters with Genet in the early 1970s, during the actual time of struggle.[24] Said first saw Genet in 1970 at Columbia University, during a Black Panthers rally. In the spring of that year, Genet joined the Black Panthers and traveled with them throughout the United States—attending demonstrations, gatherings and sit-ins in different cities and campuses. Said, a professor of comparative literature at the university, went to the rally specifically to see Genet—whose literary works he knew and taught—and to listen to his speech. It was not the Palestinian cause, to which Genet hadn't yet been enlisted, nor the African American cause, in which Said did not show any special interest at the time, but rather Genet's own character as the French writer to which Said was attracted. His admiration was to the intellectual as a distinguished author, an idol of European culture, a writer whose words must be heard.

The second time Said saw Genet, and their first real encounter, was of a completely different nature. It took place in Beirut in 1972. Genet had already joined the Palestinian resistance movement, spending months with the *fedayeen* in Jordan and Beirut; Said was on sabbatical, teaching at the American University of Beirut. It was a meeting between the author as guerrilla fighter and an academic on vacation. The facilitator of this meeting was Hanna Mikhail, Said's old friend with whom he collaborated on studies at Harvard University, and who later "quit a good teaching position at the University of Washington and enlisted in the revolution, as we call it," becoming a central figure in Fatah and the head of the PLO information department.[25] In his essay, Said presents in detail the story of the nocturnal meeting between the three men, and does not shy away from writing of Mikhail as his own double or alter-ego—a Palestinian intellectual who left academia and intellectual life, answering a call for revolutionary action. Unlike Said, Mikhail did not admire Genet on the basis of European culture and did not meet him as an intellectual; they became close due to the Palestinian revolt they both joined. "There was a deep bond between them . . . that both men in

effect had united passion and an almost self-abnegating tolerance," Said writes,[26] looking at their bond from a distance; he, the family man, with a wife and a baby, examines the two men taking part in this radically different sociality of revolt. Hanna Mikhail, or in his *nom de guerre* Abu Omar, would become a central character in Genet's *Un captif amoureux*, one of the memorable figures of the struggle—and by the time of the writing of his book, already dead under mysterious circumstances.[27] Remembering these two men in the essay, Said describes what seems to fascinate him and at the same time remains alien to him: guerrilla action carried out "until victory" or death.

But this triangular structure—which, according to Réné Girard, is also that of mimetic desire—does not leave Said at a distance from the two men. Through Hanna Mikhail, Said changes his position in relation to Genet and with Genet. He no longer sees and listens to him from afar—as a French author who should be worshiped as a monument of culture. Genet is revealed here as a writer-fighter, a French-Palestinian, transgressive not only in writing but in relation to the notion of writing. When Said continues his essay by referring to Genet's later works—his last play, on the Algerian revolt, and his last book, on the Palestinian struggle—he weaves the text into its worldly conditioning, oscillating between the artwork, its author's biography and the political moment in which their writing took place. Genet's works no longer act as documents of civilization; they cease to be the product of his creative mind. They are testimonies originating in years of struggle, which have allowed for a different positioning of the writer—who becomes a reflexive mediator and is himself embedded within the sphere of action. It is this possibility that Said is after. Writing in 1986, when both Genet and Mikhail are no longer alive, Said's lament over the two turns into a renewed appraisal of the revolutionary moment: long gone but still full of potential. Actualizing this moment serves Said in his critique of the Palestinian official policy in the 1990s and 2000s, during the Oslo years, and the disintegration of the bid for a Palestinian state. Said's writing also returns to a situation—already strange and foreign in those days—in which an old French writer becomes a symbol of the Palestinian revolt and one of the people who initiated Said to it. Instead of playing his designated role in the tradition of Orientalist literature, which Said famously conceptualized and traced, this European author reveals a realm where the Palestinian cause alters the way in which the Orient and the positions within it are regarded—this, as part of the reconstruction of the relationship between the artistic project and the political enterprise. And even if this possibility does not exist at present, the actualization of Genet's project keeps it available—as a potential rupture of the present moment.[28]

The Context of Writing

The actualization of Godard and Genet's projects remains dissonant to the present political and intellectual moment. During the last stages of working on this book's manuscript, I contacted Rosica Colin Ltd., the agency which holds the rights to the English language editions of Genet's books, and requested permission to use citations from Genet's *Prisoner of Love*. Two days after sending them the passages from the book quoted in my manuscript, along with a full draft of the chapters in which these quotes appear, per their request, I received their negative response. A short and laconic email announced, "We regret that permission may not be granted for you to include excerpts from Jean Genet's PRISONER OF LOVE within your planned work . . . as they not deemed [sic] to have been used within the context of Jean Genet's writing."[29] All attempts to contact the agency and challenge this decision failed. A second email read, "[t]he decision was taken at the highest levels for the understandable reasons given, and cannot be reversed."[30] It is difficult not to read this response as a variation on the Kafkaesque: a decision was made and therefore cannot be reversed, the reasons leading to it are understandable though not to the extent that they can be explained, and it was made at the highest levels, though it is not clear who the people at the highest level are, what their expertise is, or in what capacity they exist at all. Such bureaucratic language manifests brute power with little need for elaborate discursive activity—detailed explication, valid reasoning and supporting evidence. The book is guilty of something which is as evident as it is obscure and cannot be told.

For this reason, in a book dedicated to Genet's writing on the Palestinian struggle, there are no direct citations from Genet's central text on the matter. But this story is not presented here just as a caveat or a rant. Rosica Colin Ltd.'s devastating decision may reveal something regarding the trajectory of this study and its discrepancy with current political discourse. This decision could be criticized from a liberal standpoint, arguing that it undermines the very basis of humanistic academia, since free intellectual inquiry demands unrestricted access to texts, as well as the possibility to discuss them and argue with and against them by quoting from them directly. Denying this access harms any study based on textual analysis and serves as censorship of sorts. But what could have led to this seemingly arbitrary decision? What did a meticulous examination carried out over two days reveal about this study—what was so horrendous that it required the denial of the project's basic intellectual needs? Nothing, I believe, other than the most obvious. *Collectivity in Struggle* is a book written by an Israeli Jew about the Palestinian armed struggle of the 1970s; and although it turns to a past moment, it bears the heavy burden of the present. In an age of endless occupation, the split between the subject of enunciation and the subject matter of the *énoncé*, or

between the position (from which it was written) and the position-taking (it enacted), becomes more and more unfeasible. The rejection of my request to quote from Genet's book probably had to do with this implausible coupling. It remains unclear which of these aspects the refusal was based on: was it due to the fact that the book was written by an author based in Tel Aviv and associated with Israeli academic institutions or due to its focus on the armed Palestinian struggle; that is, was it rejected from a pro-Palestinian separatist position or from a pro-Zionist nationalist one? It is hard to tell. But this current polarization makes the very position of this book—the only thing the functionaries at Rosica Colin Ltd. could probably gather in two days of examination—almost impossible.

What is restricted here is the act of mediation as a movement between two poles, the very act on which this study insists. Indeed, today's popular leftist discourse is, to a great extent, suspicious of any form of political mediation. It sees it as the taking over of the other's voice, silencing her or him, and usurping his or her position.[31] Godard and Genet may be perceived as doing exactly that: they momentarily join a struggle which is not their own, dub it, comment on it and fashion its story as their very own. They lament its premature failure, its going awry, try to direct it anew, excited over its potentialities or disappointed due to lost opportunities—they manifest what is nothing but their outsider's gaze. And this study, so this reasoning goes, extends this position further: it claims to know something about the Palestinian struggle without accessing it directly, but through colonial bypasses alone. It clings to two foreign representations of the Palestinian experience, being itself foreign to it.

This is definitely one possible way of looking at Godard and Genet's projects dedicated to the Palestinian people—however limited and unimaginative, presupposing and inattentive to these projects' aspirations, explorations, and different modes of being. But this study works against such a purist understanding of politico-cultural activity, rejecting the fantasy of sheer spontaneity as an immediate inscription of one's own experience, closing the gap between event and expression. It rather shows how the supposedly immediate Palestinian experience of the struggle is itself mediated; how inauthentic modes of mediation—the reflective constitution of self-image and theatrical gesture; shooting, editing, and writing—structure their mode of struggle. Mediation allows for movement between different positions, different vocations, different languages, out of the preliminary distinction between Palestinians and French, fighters and artists, "during the act" and "after the fact." It asks, following Raef Zreik, about the conditions—logical, historical and sociological—under which the settler can become a native, within a process of decolonization.[32] Such was the revolutionary attempt: to avoid the original rupture, as in de Certeau's writing of history, between story and event, language and matter, in order to internalize this duality into the realm

of action as that of writing within history. This is the work of dialectal mediation, negotiating difference within a shared space of writing. These dialectics, "decolonized dialectics," are positioned along a series of axes: Europe and the Middle East; Western civilization and its threshold; and finally, the temptation for harmonious dialectical closure within liberal politics and its undoing within liberation struggle.[33] These are tense, combative, unresolved, and unfinished dialectics, which also entail the ruptures in the dialectical structure itself.[34] The act of mediation, which forms the historical event as an event of writing, also creates the textualized collective struggle into which it is inscribed.

This mediated inscription of the struggle is the main thesis of this study—a possibility that Rosica Colin Ltd. could not even entertain. The citations—if we return to their email—are not deemed "to have been used in the context of Genet's writing." But what is the context of such writing? In this case "the highest levels" are making assumptions without exploring this idea. They presuppose a context separated from Genet's text, a context that exists prior to the text, which has a non-textual character but is rather factual, historical, and non-interpretative, and therefore can and should be known before turning to the text, while the text can only be adequately or inadequately placed within its own preconceived context. But within the mediated inscription of the struggle, the context of writing is itself textual: writing is entangled with the struggle and occurs within it. The Palestinian fighters conduct their actions as modes of writing, and their revolt turns meaningful through forms of signification. Godard and Genet attest to the writerly modality of the struggle itself while also taking part in it. Therefore, no separation between the political context and the artistic text can be maintained here; the two are interrelated in creative projects which are both political and artistic. The social context does not condition them; rather they strive to transform it. These projects have therefore no context of writing: "a written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context";[35] their writing is what disrupts the initial political context, suggests an alternative and writes it in reality as a different reality, filled with images and signs, roles and gestures. These projects struggle to write their own context as a context of struggle and it is this mode of writing that this book seeks to unfold.

Outline of the Book

The first chapter explores the concept of collectivity within the temporal and geographical boundaries of this study. It analyzes collectivity as a question troubling literature and the arts, informed by contemporary discussions of "the new comparative literature," relational aesthetics and the ideas of public versus audience. In this chapter, I look into the formation of collectivity in Godard's and Genet's artistic-political projects as a collectivity of struggle,

informed by the anticolonial character of Palestinian revolt. Following the European historical avant-garde as its belated articulation, these projects end up forming a neo-avant-garde, delineating new relations between Europe and the Middle East. I read this moment of the 1970s, over and against the eruption of community thinking in 1980s French theory, and discuss how the latter inherited—but also limited—the radical effort of the 1970s. Godard and Genet's projects form a politico-artistic trajectory that is oftentimes neglected in favor of "theory"; but these projects entail a theory and a praxis of collectivity that may prove relevant to certain current experiences of collectivity of revolt.

The second chapter follows the coming into being and the dissipation of Godard's engagement with Palestinian struggle. Together with his post-1968 cinematic collective, the Dziga Vertov Group, Godard visited the Palestinian resistance forces in their training camps in Jordan and Lebanon several times during 1969 and 1970, joining them in forming a creative-political project of revolutionary collective enunciation. But after September 1970, the so-called Black September, and the actual and symbolic death of the Palestinian fighters—a moment of interruption within the struggle—the project was aborted. Only in 1976—and from a different position—would Godard return to it, now collaborating with filmmaker Anne-Marie Miéville on the film *Ici et ailleurs* (*Here and Elsewhere*), an attempt to come to terms with the collapse of the revolutionary trajectory of the Palestinian struggle. Godard had begun his voyage with the Palestinians in the heyday of their armed struggle and his original artistic project was intertwined with their revolt; he experienced this collapse first-hand. His 1976 film is an attempt to theorize that moment of interruption from its other end, formulating a critical refusal to accept the Palestinian struggle's change of course (its alleged evolution into a struggle for the formation of a sovereign state), and lingering instead on moments of rupture and death to rethink the afterlife of a political as well as artistic revolutionary trajectory. The film's images of dead *fedayeen* (Palestinian fighters) challenge the flow of historical time as well as the progression of realized politics, taking the form of a speculative meditation on the interrupted, unfulfilled, historical possibilities within the Palestinian struggle.

Genet's recruitment into the Palestinian struggle is at the center of the third chapter. From the early 1940s on, this aspiring French writer—and at that time also a bookseller and smuggler—was occupied with examining the status of the book as both material and signifying object. During the 1970s, he experimented with various forms of writing which he practiced in relation to the political struggles he joined. The question of writing in struggle allowed him to see the writerly qualities of the struggle itself. In his texts from the 1970s and the 1980s, he focused on the gestural, theatrical, and image-bound qualities of Palestinian revolutionary struggle; in his writing, the *fedayeen*'s political actions are revealed to be scripted, non-original and

haunted by a sense of belatedness and ever-present death. Genet upends received relations between struggle and writing, in which it is revolutionary action that enjoys the status of political-historical fact while writing is tasked with representing, portraying, telling the story of, or bearing witness to these worldly actions—always after the fact. But because Genet understands writing as part of the struggle's politico-historical factuality—because he treats the book as material object, as murderous act, as inscribed reality—it is the fight itself that is dialectically marked by the non-factuality of the written. Seen as made up of reveries, games without material objects, role-playing, and possible transfiguration, Palestinian revolutionary struggle evades the firm precepts of political reality, to be resituated in the scripted realm of fantasy, dream and specters.

The fourth chapter sets the two projects one against the other, asking what remained of them decades after the end of the Palestinian revolutionary moment. Working against historical factuality, it suggests that their significance lies in their very modes of signification—in the Semitic forms underlying their French words. I first revisit Jacques Derrida's *Glas* (1974), partially devoted to Genet's works, to examine how it reflects Genet's engagement with the Palestinians during the years of its writing. I find this less in what Derrida writes in *Glas* and more in how he writes: in the book's non-dialectical two-column structure, in its insistence on the idea of "remains," in its intertextual connection to non-Christian writing traditions, but above all in the fact that it harkens to the form of some of Genet's own, known or hidden, texts. I then return to Genet's *Prisoner of Love* to tease out moments that disclose, within its French writing, some Semitic threads: Genet's contemplation of the non-European readership of his book and its paradoxical act of address, the text's Arabic horizons and Hebrew undercurrents, and finally, his own position as a witness, illuminated through the translated figure of the *shahid*. Godard, on the other hand, lived on and continued working for decades after his Palestinian collaboration, further addressing the question of Palestine as a way of reflecting on the cinematic medium and its European history. I show how his late films *Notre Musique* and *Histoire(s) du cinéma* critique the divide between documentary and fiction through the figure of the Semitic—the Palestinian refugee or the Jew during the time of extermination; a figure positioned on the threshold of cinema.

In concluding the book, I discuss how Godard and Genet's projects codify two different historical and political modalities: the cut and the blow. The melancholic cut as a mode of critique, distant from its object and attuned to its finality, always following the course of historical time; and the blow, an explosion tying together event and aftereffects while imagining them as endless, nonhistorical, and ecstatic. I ascribe the cut to Godard, and the explosion to Genet. Yet the two do not only oppose one another: together they reinscribe the struggle into the political discourse surrounding Palestine.

NOTES

1. See, for example: Rashid Khalidi, *Brokers of Deceit: How the U.S. Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East* (New York: Beacon Press, 2013); and Baruch Kimmerling, *Politicide: Ariel Sharon's War against the Palestinians* (London: Verso, 2006).
2. "The historian is a prophet looking backward," wrote Friedrich von Schlegel in one of his philosophical fragments, and initiated a tradition of thinkers who see the turning back, and not the looking forward, as the imaginative and oppositional intellectual gesture—from Walter Benjamin's angel of history to Giorgio Agamben's inactivated potentialities. This study is informed by this tradition.
3. I use here "writing" to signify both verbal and audiovisual activity without differentiation.
4. Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History*, trans. Tom Conley (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 4.
5. "Freudian Writings," Ibid. And Michel de Certeau, *The Mystic Fable* (two volumes), trans. Michael B. Smith (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1995).
6. See Muhammad Siddiq, *Man Is a Cause: Political Consciousness and the Fiction of Ghassan Kanafan*i (University of Washington Press, 1984).
7. Ghassan Kanafani, *Palestine's Children: Returning to Haifa and Other Stories*, trans. Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley (New York: Lynn Reiner, 2000).
8. Kateb Yacine, *Nedjma*, trans. Richard Howard (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1999).
9. On the modern category of literature, shifting from general literacy to aesthetic appreciation conditioned on taste and sensibility and anchored on the singular work as an object of meaningful pleasure; see Raymond Williams, "Literature," in *Marxism and Literature* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1977), esp. 47–49.
10. This echoes Peter Bürger's famous formulation in his *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984) to be discussed in chapter 1.
11. See the call made by the editors of n+1 magazine against globalist world literature and for an internationalist literature of the international left: "The difference, crudely, is between a product and a *project*. An internationalist literary project, whether mainly aesthetic (as for modernism) or mainly political (as for the left) or both aesthetic and political, isn't likely to be very clearly defined, but the presence or absence of such a project will be felt in what we read, write, translate, and publish." "World Lite: What is Global Literature," in *n+1* 17 (Fall 2013). https://nplusonemag.com/issue-17/the-intellectual-situation/world-lite/. Accessed 11 September 2019.
12. I am indebted here to Agamben's discussion of potentiality as the potentiality not to be realized and as the bringing into action of the impotentiality (to realize). Giorgio Agamben, "On Potentiality," in *Potentialities: Collected Essays in Philosophy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), esp. 183–84.
13. "Just as the show's title calls attention to multiple places and perspectives, *Here and Elsewhere* highlights specific cities and art scenes while emphasizing the importance of dialogues that extend internationally." https://stomouseio.wordpress.com/tag/ici-et-ailleurs/. Accessed 3 September 2019.
14. Entertien avec Leila Shahid, mené par Jérôme Hankins: in Jean Genet, *Quatre heures à Chatila* (Tanger: Librairie des Colonnes Éditions, 1993), 51–109.
15. Ibid., 51.
16. Ibid., 54.
17. Elias Khoury, *Gate of the Sun*, trans. Humphrey Davies (New York: Picador, 2006), 246.
18. Ibid., 246–47.
19. Ibid., 246.
20. Ibid., 25.
21. Jean Genet, "Four Hours in Shatila," 210.

22. *Un captif amoureux* is strategically mentioned right in the middle of Khoury's novel, and the latter bears some structural similarities to it, such as the division into two parts, the multiple narrative lines and the recollection of memories (*Souvenirs*, in Genet's book).

23. Yunis is portrayed after the real-life Said Salah al Asdi. See Adel Manna, *Nakba and Survival: The Story of Palestinians Who Remained in Haifa and the Galilee, 1948–1956* (Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, 2017).

24. Edward Said, "On Jean Genet," in *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006). This essay was first published in 1986 in *revue d'études palestiniennes*, and was slightly edited and updated for this book version.

25. Ibid., 75.

26. Ibid., 77.

27. In July 1976, during the Lebanese civil war, he and nine other fighters disappeared at sea—no bodies were found, even after years of investigation.

28. For Said, Genet remains a pillar of an uncompromising pro-Palestinian position, against the majority of French intelligentsia. In 2000, he tells the story of his invitation to Paris, in 1979, by Jean Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir to participate in an Israeli-Arab seminar on peace conducted by the journal *Les Temps Modernes*. This seminar was held, interestingly enough, in Michel Foucault's apartment, but he did not take any official role within it. It was led by Sartre, a living legend of the engaged philosopher, who was by then old, blind, and perhaps deaf, completely dependent on others. "Sartre's presence, or what there was of it, was strongly passive, unimpressive, affectless." To Said's great disappointment, Sartre, influenced and maneuvered by Pierre Victor (Benny Lévy) took a pro-Israeli position. The last words of the essay bring this tragic narrative, of a fallen French intellectual destroyed by his own wrongdoings, to its peak: Said confronts Sartre's position with that of Jean Genet, "[Sartre's] friend and idol," who supported the Palestinians. The titles of Genet's Shatila essay and last book appear as an antithesis to Sartre's political failure. Edward Said, "Diary," London Review of Books 22:11 (June 2000), 42–43. Accessed 3 September 2019.

29. Email correspondence with the author, 20 September 2018.

30. Email correspondence with the author, 11 October 2018.

31. We have come a long way from Spivak's intricate discussion of the two notions of representation in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Today all mediation is representation, and all representation is guilty.

32. Raef Zreik, "When Does a Settler Become a Native (with Apologies to Mamdani)," *Constellations* 23:3 (2016): 351–64. Yet whereas Zreik sets this possibility in the future, in a future process of decolonization, this study locates a past moment when a decolonial practice was momentarily formed and experienced.

33. George Ciccariello-Maher, *Decolonizing Dialectics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017), 1–6.

34. Frantz Fanon famously claimed that in the colonies the Hegelian dialectics of recognition does not take place, since the colonizer cannot seek recognition from the colonized, only exploitation, and no reciprocity can be achieved. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. R. Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2008).

35. "A written sign carries with it a force that breaks with its context, that is, with the collectivity of presences organizing the moment of inscription. This breaking force is not an accidental predicate but the very structure of the written text." Jacques Derrida, "Signature, Event, Context," in *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988), 9.

Chapter One

Collectivity in Theory, Collectivity in Action

A tension has been reverberating in contemporary civic life: we are said to be living in a neoliberal regime, in which the public sphere is shrinking, social bonds are being dismantled, the demos is constantly undone;[1] an economic age, governed by administrative and monitoring politics, highly individualized, deprived of an immanent concept of collectivity. Yet various forms of collectivity have recently appeared in the public sphere, captivating our political imagination. Over the past years we have witnessed, if not attended, mass demonstrations, large assemblies and rallies in the central squares and the main streets of many cities. People have come together to defend their rights or to demand a transformative change in their living conditions. On the opposite pole, as it were, there has been much talk of threat from various terror organizations, which at any moment could launch a violent attack on civilian targets. Both forms of collectivity are highly mediated by mass media, and however distant they actually are, they may seem very near; though separated from them, we may find ourselves bound to them.[2]

These two seemingly opposed processes—the decline of the public sphere and the emergence of resistance groups of different kinds—are highly connected. The rising collectivities are often formed as a reaction to, and a revolt against, the deterioration of social solidarity in the neoliberal age—be it the fall of the welfare state and the rise of managerial Plutocracy, or the imperial secularized order of the Christian West. They do not stand outside contemporary politics, as an exception to their enormous individuating power, but are entangled within them. "We are the 99 percent" became the political call of the day: a collectivist declaration—made by a collectivity ("we"), reflexively forming itself as a unified unit, a totality; but a counted totality and a missing one: missing that one percent, signified yet unstated, in relation to which the

collectivity is antagonistically constituted. "The specter of a new collectivism" haunts contemporary politics, in an age that has anticipated its ultimate and final burial.[3]

Yet collectivity seems a troublesome concept from the very start: although it is a structuring concept in political thought, it is by no means a primary or simple one. Unlike its parallels—such as citizen, state, or border—which may become objects of realistic analysis that ties them to a social entity "out there" as its adequate representation—collectivity bears a nonmimetic and anti-realistic quality. It is never easily and irrefutably perceived in reality since it does not exist as a simple discrete object, only as a complex—additive or totalizing—one. To address collectivity is to interpret it as such: to explain how a social phenomenon comes to be regarded as collectivity.

This happens not only on the level of detached analysis, but as part of the practice of collectivity, since it is primarily a self-constituted entity, one that always situates itself in a given political reality through its conceptuality. Collectivity thus carries its own theory with it. In Hegelian terms, collectivity emerges through the process of recognition, always also that of self-recognition. Collectivity, like self-consciousness, is posited only when it is conceptually recognized by another, but another that can be internalized by the self.[4] Furthermore, the nomenclature of collectivity is multivalent from the start: there can be collectivities or collectives; groups, gatherings, or assemblies—either as synonymous or as alternative constructs. Different notions of collectivity are already rooted in specific politics and history: the (Marxist) "proletariat" are very different from the (post-Marxist) "multitudes," or the (liberal) "society," or the (neoliberal) "no society, only individuals"; not to mention the polysemy of "the people" or the unstable indexicality of the "we" (and the overdetermined one of the "us against them").[5] Collectivity never simply stands as a historical phenomenon; it signifies a theoretical inquiry and a political project. It requires a larger framework than the strict positivist historical analysis that would trace the changes in the emergence of different collective formations; or the strict sociological or political-science-y study that would look to a politically realized and actualized collectivities as social facts. Collectivity does not exclusively belong to the field of political thought—as a political term or even a term for the political as such, so far as the political is understood as the coming together of people, or their mutual unmediated action, or their self-governance. As political praxis, and a situated theoretical political engagement, collectivity is thought and performed not only in theory, but in acts of imagination and writing. This book examines two textual-artistic projects that constitute and challenge the conceptualization of collectivity. It thus turns away from collectivity as a political science subject per se, as a question regarding concrete actions occurring in the world, "facts on the ground," and delves into literature and cinema—or on a

broader level, into linguistic and audiovisual textuality[6] —as a locus for the discussion of collectivity. Such textuality does not only reflect or demonstrate the formation of collectivity, always secondary to its constitution in "real" political life, but is rather intrinsic to the movement of constitution itself. It is in the intersection of political action and creative reflection that collectivity comes into being.

The Locus of Collectivity

The question of collectivity beckons an inquiry into the various forms of mediation, presentation and representation, image-making and textualization inscribed in the constitution, both historical and speculative, of collective social entities. Indeed, collectivity has become a central topic in contemporary literary and art studies. In her influential manifesto for a "New Comparative Literature," Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak relates to collectivity as the focal point for the formation of a multilingual, adversarial, and engaged literary research for contemporary "planetary age." In contrast to the way "the question [of collectivity] is often too easily answered" within current political discourse, Spivak suggests that literary texts, alongside literary studies, have the opportunity, if not the obligation, to "stage" the question of collectivity differently.[7]

Spivak dispels two opposing notions of collectivity. The first is the one underpinning what she calls "Old Comparative Literature": an abstract, unmarked, universalist collectivity for which, and about which, every great literary text is presumably written. Formalizing some of the most basic and comprehensive human experiences, the literary text is, according to this opinion, at least potentially addressed to the most general collectivity of readers—to humanity as a whole. This universality of literature and its audience (part of the post-nationalist, humanistic credo of comparative literature at the moment of its founding in the mid-twentieth century) has been thoroughly critiqued as ultimately Eurocentric, ignoring as it does linguistic and cultural differences. Indeed, it has had a conservative and restrictive effect on the literary canon linked to an utterly depoliticized version of literary history as running unavoidably from Homer's to Joyce's Ulysses. It is a perception of literature and literariness as superseding national, ethnic, economic, and religious divides. The second notion of collectivity is therefore a particularist one introduced by the once new and radical discipline of area studies. Informed by identity politics and minority discourse, this notion of a particularist collectivity is arranged around political divides, addressing from the very start the specific experiences of particular social groups. Against the universalist and humanist inquiry of literary studies, it propagates politically-informed, sociological research, in which the notion of collectivity is never

treated as conceptually abstract; the collectivities of area studies go hand in hand with the realized political collectivities "on the ground."

Spivak rejects these two opposing notions of collectivity. In their predetermined scope of the extension of the term, whether universalist or particularist, she argues, "[b]oth sides trivialize reading and writing as an allegory of knowing and doing. Both serve as powerful performative examples of an unexamined politics of collectivity."[8] Spivak's politics of collectivity, in contrast, seeks to open up a space between these two polarized yet equally rigid and preconceived notions. In such a space, collectivity is no longer assumed but rather formed and produced through the inner workings of the text itself, attending to "the question of the ceaselessly shifting collectivities in our disciplinary practice."[9] For Spivak, collectivity therefore becomes the undecidable element within the text: a text does not assume the collectivity to which it is addressed—humanity as a whole or one locatable social group—but rather engages in the "efforts to produce collectivities."[10] This undecidability, however, should not be confused with abstract universality: it is always produced vis-à-vis the social and political conditions from which the text emerges. The text does not simply adhere to a socio-historical factuality as the necessary context in which it must be positioned; but at the same time, these conditions are not declared as irrelevant facts that the literary text can simply transcend. Thus, the undecidable character of textual collectivity cannot be simply presupposed but needs to be formed; and it is formed through a complex negotiation with the socio-historical factuality that conditions the text. The text works, in Spivak's terms, as a singular supplementary to the factual,[11] in relation to—yet never in correspondence with—sociological, historical, and political factuality.

Collectivity is seen here as a site of undecidability—between the universal and the particular, the factual and the speculative, the socio-political conditions and the fictional and imaginary creativity. But this undecidability also resides within the textual procedure itself—whether linguistic or image-based. The readers—the text's public, as Michael Warner explains—should be analytically distinguished from the audience of a performance: Whereas the audience convenes together in a time and space shared with the preformed event (a theatrical show, for example), a public of readers or viewers does not come together.[12] This public exists by virtue of being addressed and stays asynchronous with the artwork. The deferral inherent to the textual address—the gap between its formation and its reception, between the writing and reading of a poem, for example—constitutes the vast and long potentially of mediation and forms a dispersed, unconnected, distanced public. Some would argue that this sanctions the individualistic bias of textual creativity—where the author is separated from readers, and readers are separated from one another. A public, writes Warner, "is a relation among strangers."[13]

It is this undecidability of the public that bears the potentiality to surpass the factual historical-sociological conditioning of the text; temporally and spatially removed, un-gathered and non-unified, the public creates a different horizon of collective being. Furthermore, since the public, unlike the audience, is not "out there," in the theater hall for instance—easily localized, and so historically deciphered and sociologically analyzed—the place of collectivity within the textual work becomes open-ended, and the textual registers in which collectivity can appear are numerous. Since there is no fixed collectivity at the end of the text, and since the public does not carry a stable image of collective gathering, collectivity becomes a challenge that can be exercised and experimented with in the different registers of the text: in its content and form, at its core or in its margins. This has been one of the most significant efforts of the avant-garde—to collectivize the artwork from all of its angles, in all possible forms—a commitment that radically implemented the undecidable location of collectivity within a text.

Contemporary discussions in visual culture invoke the legacy of the collectivizing avant-garde to inform the contemporary art world in which "so many artists over the past decade and a half [have] been drawn to collaborative or collective modes of production."[14] The various categories under which these numerous artistic projects are subsumed—collaborative, participatory, or relational art—attest to the fact that the collectivity in question here is never just that of public or audience. It is rather the cipher of that which bears a challenge to reconfigure the entire structure of creative activity. Curator and theorist Nicolas Burriaud's 1998 book *Esthétique relationelle*—based on the 1995 exhibition *Traffic* he curated in Bordeaux—has initiated a long discussion on the modes of artistic activity that displays and performs intersubjective exchange, forms of sociality, and environments of human interaction.[15] Against the severe reification of social relations in late capitalism—either in the form of hermetic, economic subjects of consumption or in the complementary form of belonging to ideological collectivities of the family, the nation, or the market—the projects presented by Bourriaud experimented with new ways of coming together. They created fictive and imaginary spaces of presentation, activity, and reflection that did not comply with the solidity and discreteness of the exhibited object (the artwork), the primary status of its point of origin (the artist), and the derivative, silenced, and individuated character of its receiver (the audience). These artworks followed the tradition of the avant-garde in challenging the procedures of the aesthetic realm, the ascribed roles within it, and its separation from social action; while at the same time highlighting its lack of revolutionary zeal and utopian intentionality, creating only limited outlooks of local changes. Bourriaud's intervention launched a series of debates questioning the political validity of this new collective art—whether in the form of critical oppositional approach, questioning the persistence of antagonistic social relations, or in

the form of an activist approach, which insists on the ties between artistic projects and social activism.[16] These debates revolve around the degree of fiction and possible distance from actualized reality which the collectivity constituted and practiced in these works can create—and how in so doing these works redefine the image of political collectivity itself saturated with fiction and mediation.[17]

It therefore appears that the visual arts have the potential to expose the different levels of artwork to the call of collectivity. Whereas the linguistic arts have remained, by and large, and despite various heroic attempts to transform them, structurally individualized, showcasing single authorship and readership characterized by solitude, with an insistence on a unique voice or signature—collaborative projects in visual art have ventured into terrains in which collectivity embodies the very form of their coming into being, production, action, and performance, as well as signification and meaning. Such projects present "a movement toward participatory, process-based experience and away from a 'textual' mode of production in which the artist fashions an object as event that is subsequently presented to the viewer."[18] In this context, literature seems to be left far behind. Yet such an image of the textual is itself a reification of the text and its procedures, and remains blind to what can be collective in textuality. To think of a text as a sealed object, produced individually, and transmitted for a solidified private reception is to eliminate an entire theoretical tradition that insisted on textuality—on the concept and its implications—as a site of plural, desubjectivized, and indeterminate signification. From Bakhtin's polyphony to Eco's polysemy, from Barthes's tissue of quotations to Derrida's spacing, the text is never merely a discrete object presented to a unified reader. Different textual registers can become arenas of collectivity maintained as a question within the text. These registers are not only the social group to be represented in the artwork, or the receivers of the artwork—the readers, but can be regrouped as an indeterminate public, or even a plurality of artists, or a collaboration between artists and viewers, all becoming participants in an artistic event. Considered as a whole, these are not individuals coming together, but creative attempts to introduce the textual modes of enunciation, procedures of address, and forms of figuration and recitation to nonindividuated formations. Collectivity thus turns into a textual formation—not only mediated through linguistic and visual textuality, but constituted in the textualized modalities of the world.

The Collectivizing Avant-Garde

Textualized collectivity can be theorized through its various artistic-political sites. The present book follows, formulates and to a certain extent also forms one trajectory in the thinking and praxis of collectivity in the twentieth centu-

ry: a collective formation conceived in the 1970s as a collectivity of struggle. It was conceptualized in metropole France through an engagement with political sites outside its borders—sites of anticolonial struggle, and specifically that of the Palestinian revolt. This engagement was realized in different creative arenas—in theoretical writing, narrative prose, and cinema. It developed a theory of struggle not in purely conceptual form, but drawn from and exercised in textual projects. This book concentrates on two artistic-political projects that theorize a collectivity in struggle. The first is Jean-Luc Godard's travels to the Middle East and engagement with the Palestinian liberation forces—first as part of the Dziga Vertov collective and later with Anne-Marie Miéville. These travels were saturated with cinematic activity, culminating in an aborted audiovisual project and a realized film essay addressing the failure to create a revolutionary film about the struggle. The second is Jean Genet and his involvement with the Palestinian struggle—from the early 1970s up until the last days of his life in 1986—manifest in various textual expressions. The transition from struggle to writing, from political action to artistic thinking, from Europe to Palestine—but even more so, their coming together at a specific matrix—is the subject matter of this book.

This collectivity of struggle is located in a specific era: the 1970s; it has a geographic location—Europe and the Middle East; and is led by a political revolutionary project. Its era does not indicate a certain period of time, necessarily arbitrary and devoid of any content—but a significant and signifying moment. "The 1970s" allude to a certain artistic-political creative trajectory that is both rooted in that historical period and forms its potentialities. These are the long 1970s of the uprise and dispersal of the May 1968 events in France; of the mass demonstrations against the war in Vietnam in the United States; of the New Left, and of its radical para-parliamentary protest groups. It is also the period of the late decolonization movements, of different, yet interrelated, struggles in the Third World. It is a moment of great turmoil. Its "origin" is in rupture—the failure of May 1968, the eventual decline of the Soviet communist horizon and the global dissemination of consumer capitalism. On the verge of a new political-economic regime, in the wake of neoliberalism, just before the final consolidation of the Pax Americana, the early 1970s occasioned a moment of neo-avant-garde, when artistic practice was drawn into a political revolt, forming a concept of collectivity entangled with struggle. It was perhaps the last moment in which a leftist political-artistic project was made possible in the twentieth century; a complex moment that carried upon itself the history of similar projects throughout the century, the possibilities they uncovered, as well as their limitations and failures, while also incorporating the critique generated against them—transforming its own history into a new creative modality.

These projects outline an alternative cartography to the metropolitan one. Launched by French intellectuals and resumed in Paris, their arena was re-

moved from the continent. They consist of acts of engagement with anticolonial struggles, specifically with the Palestinian armed struggle in its formative years. Yet Godard and Genet are not two French artists who travel abroad to represent a collectivity of struggle, depicting its actions for an imagined European viewer or reader; nor do they "go native" and become, at least in their imagination, an undifferentiated part of the struggle. Their mode of engagement dramatizes the challenge of collectivity encrypted in the struggle itself. They seem to enter the struggle from the outside, as Europeans going to the colonies and ex-colonies of Europe, individuals who accompany a collective endeavor or artists following a political effort. But these divisions do not hold up: Godard and Genet refuse to remain European individualist artists; their engagement with collectivist struggles invites a change in their prescribed position. Yet the struggle itself is not collectivist in any simple sense, since in this belated formation of the anticolonial revolt, the collectivity of struggle is also a collectivity in struggle, in a struggle for collectivity; collectivity in this context is a question, a challenge, a debate, and not already formulated or imagined. These are struggles for the coming into being of a collectivity—not a universal one (the proletariat as the universal class); but also not an ethnic or national one, whose conditions of membership and aspiration for a plan are preestablished. Collectivity thus becomes the question that Godard and Genet's artistic projects extract from the struggle and perform: the question occupying the Palestinian people and the question they address to themselves in regards to the Palestinian struggle.

The appeal of these seemingly French artistic projects to the Palestinian struggle was not surprising; the Palestinian struggle in the late 1960s and the early 1970s encapsulated an emancipatory energy that went beyond the national plan to which it was later assimilated. Not yet a struggle for a sovereign state and recognition from official international institutions, it led an anticolonial revolt within a framework of Third-World uprisings of dispossessed peoples, opposing the imperial world order and acting for its radical transformation. These years of paramilitary guerrilla activities witnessed new modes of struggle, forms of collective gathering and political calls whose power and validity caught the imagination of various Western activists, artists, and intellectuals who joined these revolts in different capacities. The Palestinian struggle appealed for projects such as Godard's and Genet's, allowing them a new mode of textual creativity. At the heart of this study lies this mutual articulation—of a political campaign through an artistic project and vice versa—and the attempt to discuss them together, from both ends and with attention to their various discourses, but at the same time treating this interplay as one intricate effort, at once visionary and aborted.

These projects are set in the political and artistic genealogy of the avant-garde: their Ur-scene was the Soviet revolution and the collectivist project it introduced. This is where the association of an artistic avant-garde with a

political emancipatory project was crystallized.[19] The revolution sets forth the demand for collectivity—collective action, action for a collective—and this demand exploded in the domains of artistic creativity. The various sects of the Soviet avant-garde, Dada and Surrealism as well as various movements throughout the modernist enterprise—all negotiated various possibilities for introducing collectivity into artistic practice. Collectivity was a task as well as an experiment—since the way in which an artwork can become "collective" was not a given, but a question with different, albeit corresponding, answers. Different registers were suggested for artistic manifestation, expression, and experience of collectivity. Even before the Soviet revolution, "collectivity" acted as a harsh critique of subjective expression that led Suprematists like Kazimir Malevich to initiate non-objective art, using the object—an impression on the canvas with its white or black squares—to undo the personal psychological bias of painting. In the following years, Malevich would re-signify his work in communist terms, calling for nonindividualistic art that can truly belong to the masses. But what was only an attempt to link modernist sensitivity and collectivist agenda became a creative storm in the postrevolutionary Soviet Union, where different movements undertook Lenin's call to transform the bourgeois conditions of art seriously, attacking all ends of individualistic creative structure. On the "procedural" end, they inaugurated various artistic collectives that not only formulated their artistic principles in the manifesto fever of that era, but also worked together to collectively create artistic objects and projects. On the "receiving" end, they wanted to break away from the individuated apprehension of artworks, and thought of new ways to express their collective perception. But their main effort was to dismiss the distinction between artists and audience altogether, so that avant-garde art would immerse itself in the collectivist revolutionary process. In this arena, the *KomFut* (Communist-Futurist) group spoke of raising "a Communist consciousness" against the aesthetic values of the bourgeoisie, that would allow "to summon the masses to creative activity";[20] the Constructivists initiated "the task of finding the communist expression of material structures."[21] And Vladimir Tatlin, the famous architect of the Monument to the Third International, asserted that all forces of artistic innovation derive from the collective, for which the individual serves only as a vehicle, "collecting the energy of the collective" and implementing it in matter, so that "invention is always the working out of impulses and desires of the collective, not the individual."[22] Some of these projects were set up in order to disrupt the separation between art and manufacturing, crossing the limits of the aesthetic realm and turning the artist into a producer of material goods—Tatlin's Tower, for example, being at once symbolic and functional, or tool and fashion design created by artists for a postrevolutionary industry. But even when they seem to reside deep within the aesthetic realm, indeed inaugurating the most basic techniques of a newly-born medium as in Sergei

Eisenstein and Dziga Vertov's cinematic works, these new techniques were yet another place for the appearance of the masses: their theories of montage insist that the juxtaposition of two frames, far from being a formal tool for the progression of cinematic plot, expresses an antagonist social structure whose collision in the montage encapsulates the unified collective vision of the proletariat. The October group, named both after the revolution and Eisenstein's film, defined its task of collectivity in a statement that quickly moves from the artistic to the social, signifying both at once: "To design materially the mass, collective forms of a new life."[23]

This surge of collectivity in the various modalities of artistic practice was indeed an integral part of a revolutionary moment that challenged the very distinction between the political and the artistic; together they form the arena of creative socio-aesthetic experimentation for the constitution of a communist society. The most formalist operations were inscribed with social signification in Russia and beyond, so that, in the 1910s and 1920s—"modernism-equals-collectivism."[24] But the claim for collectivity went far beyond the modernist avant-garde. In fact, the voices and movements which opposed to it and eventually led to its demise did so in the name of collectivity. It was Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's cultural commissar, who infamously demanded the engineering of the souls through socialist-realist literature that depicts the life of the working class, and so instructed that collectivity should appear in the subject-matter of the artwork rather than in its formal techniques. But two decades prior to this, it was already Georgi Plekhanov who criticized the earliest modernist movements that refused to portray social collective reality and instead chose the decadent, escapist, aestheticized, and ultra-subjective considerations of light and form. This insistence on realist prose as the adequate locus for the expression of collectivity was traced back to Marx and Engels's admiration of Balzac as the true writer of social life;[25] and projected onward to Lukács tormented arguments with Brecht and Adorno.[26]

An artistic horizon of collectivity was shared by avant-gardists and realists, functionaries, dissidents, and commissars. It was utopian and scientific; based on historical progress and leaning to a post-historical future. It was also a totalizing and universal project, as collectivity encompasses tensions and resolves contradictions; its movement was dialectical: that of endless internalization. It could not be partial, since the concrete becomes abstract in its course, and the partial becomes a whole. Its mobilizing force within artistic circles was therefore very powerful: from the line and shape to montage and spectators up to the people and the masses—all took part in the collectivizing project. And with them, also scientific advancements, technological innovations, social research, and economic development. This was as a collectivity with no remainder; nothing could be left out of it.

Yet the collectivist revolutionary endeavor has soon collapsed, both politically and artistically, significantly together: the utopian universal collecti-

vism of the revolution lapsed into a murderous, authoritarian regime and the artistic avant-garde was forsaken by the revolutionary forces themselves and deteriorated. The failure of the collectivist avant-garde—a historical failure—was a dramatic rupture in twentieth century artistic activity: postwar aesthetics can be seen as an attempt to come to terms, in both theory and practice, with the consequences of this failure.[27] Yet Godard's and Genet's projects of the 1970s return to this moment of revolutionary avant-garde and retrieve it—with the potentialities still inscribed in it and not realized in its originary moment. They position themselves as heirs of the Soviet (and other European) avant-garde, but not as its anachronistic epigones or nostalgic imitators. Their projects critically engage the political horizon and formal procedures of the avant-garde, re-invoking its collectivist stance while rejecting the universalist tendency structuring it; they expand the modes of creative activity going beyond the boundaries of the aesthetic realm, while relying on different political revolts than those at the beginning of the century. These projects entail both the knowledge of the avant-garde's failure and its modified—geo-politically dislocated and formally transformed—continuation. Their "concept of collectivity" develops through a dialectical negation of the avant-garde collectivity—simultaneously rejected, retained, and enhanced. Such negation is informed by the critique of the very possibility of universalist and abstract social collectivism and its formation in the artwork. It calls for the persistent force of the particularist, minoritarian, socially demarcated position that debunks the universalist principle. The dialectical opposition between the revolutionary collectivist zeal and the particularized social position sets the double "origin" of Godard and Genet's: internationalist but non-universalist, powerful but not triumphalist, un-institutional but not individualized, minor but revolutionary.

This dialectical tension constitutes Godard and Genet's projects as "neo-outward-avant-garde." As in the early avant-garde, they transgress the aesthetic realm and institutional art and delve into a political emancipatory collectivist enterprise, creating an artistic-political conundrum. But as collectivist projects they are ruptured from the start: the collectivity they envision is neither universalist in theory nor European in practice, and its gathering remains an unresolved problem. As such, these projects reimagine a political-artistic avant-gardist enterprise in an age that seems to have given up this very possibility. I thus follow the critics of *October* magazine in arguing for the validity of a post–World War II neo-avant-gardist artistic endeavor. Their position was formed in light of Peter Bürger's dismissal of the neo-avant-garde of the 1950s and 1960s as a repetition of the technical devices of the historical avant-garde while withdrawing from its demand for the integration of art into life, emptying it from any concrete political plan. Bürger saw in the neo-avant-garde the institutionalization of the avant-garde, and therefore a bourgeois, ideological, futile project. In the post–World War II years, the

avant-garde, in his opinion, was fetishized and aestheticized, in a full-blown capitalist society that could no longer even imagine an outside.[28] As opposed to Bürger, critics like Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster demonstrate how such "repetition" is indeed the very mode of action of the neo-avant-garde, yet not as a passive, anachronistic, depoliticizing mimicry of the historical avant-garde, but rather as a creative act, practiced through the various modalities of return.[29] But what the *October* critics fail to question—and in this way follow whole-heartedly in Bürger's footsteps—are the regional delimitations of what they consider to be the neo-avant-garde: both opposers and affirmers examine only its Euro-American manifestations. In contrast, the projects discussed in this book are not solely European. However French they seem, they are formed through a movement occurring outside of Europe. Set within the bifurcated geography of Europe and the Middle East, informed by a colonial history of occupation, modernization, and disenfranchisement, these are not anachronistic evocations of modernist spirits, which is no longer part of a transformative movement and confined to a reconfigured aesthetic realm. On the contrary, in their movement outside of Europe, their positioning in a not-yet fully modernized space, their alignment with anticolonial political struggles and their surge into non-discrete artistic forms—the audio visual essay, non-novelistic writing—these projects employ some of the potentialities of the avant-garde to be exercised in a different political and artistic land. They do not give up the notion of collectivity for an aestheticized totality deprived of any material conditions of living, but rather historically engage the collectivist project as a disrupted horizon which remains a vital problem for artistic practice. This rupture in collectivity is continuously written in these shared artistic-political projects—by artists and fighters alike. The exploration of these projects, therefore, always seems to be heading in two opposite directions: Godard and Genet's "artistic" projects aim to act in the political field, participating in the activity of the liberation forces; as neo-avant-garde projects they both succeed and fail to do so, in ways that re-signify the artistic act itself. At the same time, these artistic activities understand political acts as entangled with modes of writing. The political space, the very arena of political acts of revolts, is then not only historical and factual, but also phantasmatic, speculative, suggestive, and potential. In order to understand the political struggle one needs to examine the artistic projects that not only bore witness to it, but also constituted it—through signs and images.

The 1980s Theories of Community

Within the French intellectual tradition from which they emerged, a possible genealogy for the two projects carried out in the 1970s can range from the early 1960s to the 1980s. At least one theoretical move anticipated these

projects, and a few others bore them. Jean-Paul Sartre's 1960 *Critique of Dialectical Reason* philosophically foresaw some of the theoretical principles later to be developed in Godard and Genet's theoretico-practical artistic projects.[30] Indeed this immense book, whose first volume was the only one published during Sartre's lifetime, engages the question of praxis in history. It addresses the ways in which praxis can surpass, through the work of negation, the "practico-inert"—past praxis congealed into worldly conditions of existence—to induce historical change rife with meaning. With this question of praxis, Sartre rearticulates his prior existentialist investment in a Marxist conception of history, though an unorthodox, non-teleological, indeterminate one, and instead of theorizing the individual subject, his or her own project and the quest for freedom, he poses the question of historical development and collectivity.[31] Right at the center of the book Sartre addresses two modes of collective gathering: seriality and the fused group. Seriality, as in his analysis of the bus queue, is plurality in isolation, people standing side by side but separated, with no recognition, no mutual project, no possible unity—whose connection relies on a relation to an exteriority (the bus, the city) and "[t]he unit-being of the group lies outside itself."[32] Each person standing in line is an Other to everyone else, and so experiences one's own identity as Other than oneself—one in a series as a series of Others. Otherness is then not internalized in this serial structure, not incorporated into the self—whether individual or collective—and such a collective remains nondialectical and impotent as a form of gathering. When seriality is not experienced directly but is rather technologically and socially mediated—as in radio broadcasts or free-market commerce—it bears the attributes of the modernized, capitalist alienated world.

From this seriality evolves a different collective formation—the fused group (*groupe-en-fusion*), a cohesive gathering with a mutual project that internalizes the Other and is mediated through it. Sartre maintains that groups emerge on the basis of a common danger, in the face of which they are forced to create a common praxis in order to resist it. He examines the coming into being of the fused group through a meticulous phenomenology, based on historical documents and narratives of the storming of the Bastille in July 1789. There, in Paris, facing the monarchic forces, people went out to the streets, armed themselves, and demonstrated; and when they fled from the army and the police, they gathered as a group—each one of the demonstrators becoming its potential leader, a possible third party, internal to the group, an element that could mediate it and fuse or "totalize" it. Unlike the serial collectivity, which people join into yet are still isolated within, each member of the fused group relates to the other through the group—and together these members form the group through a shared, mediating praxis. In the fused group every individual is both immanent and transcendent in relation to the gathering—acts and is being acted upon; he or she is part of

the group and also carved in its own image. As the group increases its capacity to act, every member increases his or her freedom, as in July 1789, in the anti-royal demonstration, where "the city was a fused group."[33]

For Sartre, then, the fused group—or what I refer to in this study as collectivity—is materialized as a collectivity of struggle, in opposition to a reactionary power; it is established through popular resistance and violent insurrection. Its commencement is not based on some formal declaration or an outside recognition, but on the formation of a mutual project in praxis—an individual praxis mediated through a collective one. As his primary example for the transition from serial collectivity to a fused group, Sartre examines the inaugural event of modern French history as a popular uprising: his following discussion on group formation and disintegration culminates at the end of the first volume with the questions of colonialism and class struggle. Written in the late 1950s, during the Algerian War of Independence, and at the height of Sartre's engagement in non-orthodox Marxist politics and interest in the rising anti-imperial movements,[34] *Critique of Dialectical Reason* theorizes collectivities as they are constituted through resistance and struggle—and thus can be seen as a precursor, however implicit and unacknowledged, of Godard and Genet's projects.

At the other end of the 1970s arises an entirely different story. The 1980s saw an eruption of theories of collectivity within French circles; most notably formulated by Jean-Luc Nancy, Maurice Blanchot, and (on the other side of the border) Giorgio Agamben—each addressed "community" as a basic concept.[35] This theoretical moment of the 1980s holds complex relations to the 1970s: it puts the projects of the 1970s under erasure—forgetting or ignoring them, it does not account for them and hardly, if at all, mentions them. Yet the act of erasure keeps its marks. The theories of collectivity may be seen as heirs to these projects, absorbing them and realizing their potentials on a higher level. One might argue that the philosophical projects of the 1980s dialectically sublate the artistic-political projects of the 1970s: they conceptually realize them as they negate their specific situated occurrences; they formalize what formerly existed also in content. Yet this study is an attempt to pause this dialectical movement and attest to what was not metabolized into the progressive course of political-intellectual history. It strives for a different mode of remembrance—in the form of a halt, a break and a strike against the intellectual-political continuity.[36] To do so, I invert the direction of this progressive movement, and in the following section suggest a reading of the projects of the 1970s from the perspective of the 1980s theories. Following the traces of the radical artistic-political projects in these philosophical treatises, I stress how these later conceptualizations bear a conservative, sterilizing effect: their movement toward abstraction fails to account for the materialized specificity of the earlier projects, and the radical engagement with collectivity in both content and form of the earlier projects

turns into congealed, reified accounts. Yet conceiving these belated treatises of community allows to speculatively extract the 1970s projects as their repressed origin, and to retrieve the politico-artistic potentiality inscribed within them. This move demonstrates why such a return to these projects, to the writing of collectivity in struggle, offers an alternative to the more pervasive thinking of community.

The 1980s trajectory of community is a philosophical one, written in expository conceptual language, providing an abstract unpacking of a political notion. The trajectory of the 1970s I present in this book, on the other hand, was a theoretical inquiry, but one embedded in artistic-textual practice and never only conceptual and philosophical. What took the form of projects in the 1970s was solidified in the 1980s into treatises. In these treatises, there is a retreat to a European position—an abstract, unmarked consideration of "community" that ultimately bears the marks of the European self. In the 1970s, in contrast, the movement between Europe and what lies outside its borders was the locus of the projects, underscoring their revolutionary impulse, however ruptured and complex—an impulse that is almost entirely lost in the trajectory of the 1980s.

The 1980s writings on community can be perceived as an attempt to conceive a leftist political endeavor relating to the fall of Soviet communism—the paradigmatic collectivist project of the twentieth century, which politically deteriorated during those years—and with what seemed then as the ultimate victory of its political alternative: late capitalism with its individualistic, decollectivized, monadic subject. But the ideological bias of this victorious project—the way in which the liberal subject, supposedly the original basic unit, is in fact the product of state-sanctioned ideology[37]—and its economically exploitative and politically repressive character, led to a new theoretical immersion in the question of community. This immersion both returns to the "communist moment" of the early twentieth century, and re-evaluates it. Thus, both Jean-Luc Nancy and Maurice Blanchot take the early writings of Georges Bataille as their point of reference—these attempts of the 1930s to think collectivity but nevertheless reject the institutional communist enterprise which by then had already turned autocratic and non-revolutionary; and Agamben addresses in his book the conditions of the society of the spectacle and ends his treatise with the challenge to communist China and the Tiananmen Square resistance. At the same time, the thought of community in the 1980s dramatically and topically, if not always explicitly, engages the effervescent emergence of identity politics during this decade, and challenges its conception of community: the attempts to propose an alternative to the definite and restricted conditions of membership enacted in these post-universalist collective gatherings, whose surrender to neoliberal capitalist politics would surely become its tragic unfolding in the years to come.[38]

Between the decline of authoritarian communism and the rise of a privatized neoliberal regime, Nancy, Blanchot, and Agamben strive to posit a new concept of collectivity for leftist thinking; since, for Nancy, "'left' means, at the very least, that the political as such, is receptive to what is at stake in community."[39] The 1980s thinking of community is then not only an attempt to re-articulate community for a leftist infrastructure, but first and foremost an ontological reflection, and therefore also abstract, ahistorical, even universalist. For Nancy, community is neither an eventual form of gathering nor a horizon of human socialization but rather a point of origin—"an originary or ontological sociality."[40] Blanchot follows Bataille in asserting that "there exists a principle of insufficiency at the root of each being" and so each entity summons a community.[41] And Agamben opens his discussion of community with Scholastic philosophy as well as the Sharia and Talmudic sages. For these three, the thinking of community constitutes an alternative primal philosophy—for Nancy it is a reorganization of Western philosophical tradition as a non- and even anti-subjective one; for Blanchot, a folding back of philosophy as writing; for Agamben, a tracing of its peripheral or external traditions. Their books are philosophical tractates that formulate the metaphysical anchors for community. They do not advance a historical or sociological thinking. Community for them is not a social structure, once prevailing and now lost—a spontaneous, organic, unmediated, small community at the beginning of time, versus the administrated, mediated, alienated modern society, as in the basic *doxa* of sociological thought (cf. Tonnies' *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft* distinction); nor do they belong to the early twentieth-century collectivism, debunked as it were with the disintegration of the Soviet option. Whether such a primordial community has ever existed historically, or is only conceptually posited against any historical society, it has been constituted as an object for endless work of mourning—over the communal life that has been lost, and as such remains alive within sociological thought. Here, the community is not relocated to the past, but exists now, and traverses through all time (even if it is a "coming community"—since this coming, with its messianic underpinnings, disrupts the chronological temporal continuum). To understand the present condition of the community within this approach, there is a need to formulate its ontological ground.

This ontological ground, suggested above, is de-subjective: the beginning, for Nancy, is in the being-together, being-with; not in the sociological sense of community, according to which human being need one another to survive and exist, this is the very sense that the neoliberal movement sets out to unravel, as paradigmatically exemplified in Thatcher's infamous statement "There is no society, only individuals." In the face of such a privatized counter-ontology, Nancy's work aims to unveil the ontological basis of sharing: being is the being-with, being in plural, being-in-sharing, since every element of this mode of being is in itself plural and shared. For this reason

the beginning is neither in the individual nor the subject—as distinct, discrete, definite and finite, terminable beings; beings that are indeed constituted, as in Hegel's dialectics, through the relations between them, which are immanently social, yet practiced on and conditioned by distinctiveness from one another. The beginning is in singularity, or in what Nancy would define a decade later, as the singular-plural: a determinate and finite being, but such that in itself exists as an encounter (between), a relation (with), and an address (to). Thus, the beginning is in a mediated being in itself—both analytically and historically.[42] Agamben starts his discussion with a concept competing with the individual—the *quelconque*: neither a person nor a substance, but a singularity that rejects both poles of human existence—the universal and the particular, both the general, inclusive belonging to an abstract "humanity" on the one hand, and a particular belonging to one predicated identity group on the other. Even though it seems that Blanchot's thinking is expressed in a more anthropomorphous key, he also insists on a singularity that traverses subjectivity as limited (in contours, boundaries) and an ever-deepening being.

All three theorists dismiss individuality as the basis of community and subjectivity as its horizon: instead of each unified person relating to another and thus creating a community of many, for Nancy plurality and relationality exist from the start in each singular being, so that the community of singulars echoes the communality in each of its singular elements. This works against one of the basic structures of modern political philosophy, either in the various social contract theories or Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* that formulate the coming into existence of a human community even if such a process is mythical and prehistorical. Here the being-with is the natural state, the state of singularity, so that existence is shared from its very start.

The de-subjective ontology of community posits, at its core, relation and address. Each singularity is always a singularity in relation with and in address to. Therefore, such a community is not immanent: it is not a closed unit nor does it host any sealed off units. As relation and address, it turns outward: it is ex-static—beside or beyond a secured place; and an ex-position, exposed to the Outside. Here resides the difference between such a community and communism: collectivity here is not the ultimate end of the civilizing process, in which the various elements are congealed to one body; community is not a communion. It is not continuous, all-inclusive, closed upon itself, the endpoint of a dialectical movement of internalization, compression, and refinement. Its movement is centrifugal—not a fusion of consecutive elements, but a sharing (*partage*) that accommodates within itself an outside. Blanchot sharpens this possibility of a non-immanent community:[43] if immanence appears as the pattern of individuality, then an immanent community, in the communist sense, even though it seems to oppose the monadic self-sufficiency of liberal individuality, duplicates it on a higher level. Such a

community is formed upon a pattern of individuality. It exists as a totalizing project of human universalization, like the communist revolutionary collectivization. Such a project presupposes a shared essence to all its members—humanity; an essence realized and exercised in the community whose validity is general and nothing endures beyond it. This community thus presupposes an immanent essence materialized in the course of the community's consolidation. This immanent essence can take the form of "man," in general, as a species-being who expresses his humanity fully only in the universal communist community; or as a specific identity—national, ethnic, gendered, religious—as the known and preconditioned predication of membership in a community.

Yet when the universal essence or divided identity of the members of the community is replaced by relation and address functioning in each of the singular components, already plural, that is communal, of the community, immanence opens up to an outside: to an unmetabolized element against which each singularity is held, as a relation with and address to it. Blanchot calls this Otherness, but not one that would oppose the Self and fuse with it later on, but one that already exists within the Self as its outside (and so the self becomes a singular-plural). This community is structured upon the insufficiency of each of its members, and such is the significance of its plurality: not accumulation, but subtraction, a thing that is absent and constitutes its turn to the outside, that bending outward—from positions to expositions, from *stasis* to *ex-stasis*; or what Agamben terms the "outside" as the threshold of a singularity with a space residing in proximity yet beyond it—not a place with fixed content, but a limit enabling the bend and turn toward it. Singularity addresses: and so it keeps the threshold without turning it inward, without devouring it, but as a passage, as face.[44] Community stands as an address to an outside and this outside is its threshold—the limit of its existence. In an anthropomorphizing move—which Blanchot, and to a certain extent also Nancy, make—the threshold bears the possibility of annihilation, that is of death. Thus, in its turn outward, community addresses death, the abolishment of its various members and its own destruction. Yet such death, at the heart—and so actually on the limit—of community is not death as the final equalizer which all human beings share as mortals walking toward their demise, an individual death and as such identical for each and every one. Such death would be immanent to community. Yet in addressing the threshold, death lies at the limit of community, and is the death of the Other, always outside of the Self, residing in its proximity but remaining unknown, shared without being common. Nancy and Blanchot aim to formulate this concept of death: neither the one exercised for the community and creating the communion (the Christian church); nor a heroic, national death that is absorbed into the community and consolidates it. In both, the death of the Other is contained in the Self and becomes the structuring element of the

community as a recruiting, unifying project. While the death of an other creates the outside as a space that does not contain any content, a space invoked through that act of address in which no one resides; an outside that creates the inside as a mode of intention to an outside, as a form of existence of such an outside.

It therefore seems that this 1980s thinking of community changes the mode of political intelligibility: *partage*, address, and the turn to the outside—its basic building blocks—do not apply to a political plan one should act upon. This community does not entail any preconceived project to be unpacked and realized; it does not create something and in so doing creates itself, since community already exists, in each and every one of its elements. On the contrary, it is a community of *désoeuvrement*—a concept that runs through all three theorists' works: From Blanchot's 1955 *The Coming Book*, through Nancy's description of community in the 1980s, to Agamben who has returned to it in recent years in the final volumes of his *Homo Sacer* series—an inoperative, non-acting community of an absence of work; a community of the potential not to act. This community has neither project nor product: it does not produce or reproduce anything, does not work on or motivate the process of changing—consolidating, realizing—one thing into something else, since it does not bear movement, but rupture and deferral. This concept of community thus turns away from the Marxian tradition of the *homo faber*, man as the creator of his social world, and calls into being a non-consequential concept of politics.

Such a concept is implicated, as far as all three authors are concerned, in inscription: the inoperative community exists by means of language. Each author illuminates a different side of the linguistic existence of this community. According to Blanchot, the very concept of the inoperative lies at the heart of the act of writing, whose origin is not the writing subject and whose goal is not the creation of a book. It is neither creating nor creative, but rather an act of submission and surrendering with no fulcrum or grounding. It is an act of address with no addressor; an address of the text itself to an unknown reader, who lies beyond the threshold, and thus indicates the limit of the written, the exteriority which singularity simultaneously addresses and sustains. Communal singularity thus constitutes itself through the structure of address ascribed to the literary text. Nancy, by contrast, emphasizes the manner in which the community is shared through communication; but it is not the contents of the community, the representations of its different members, that are shared, but rather the very act of its division, that is, its separation from unified and unifying structures, be they individual or collective. This communication takes place in literature in the sense of disrupting the narrative structure of the myth, and through a "division of the voices" ("*partage des voix*") within the text, as opposed to subjective vocalization, to the division of the narrative acts into various points of view that bear different

voices. Nancy thus illuminates the sociality that is written into each vocal utterance. It is not sociality as inscribed in the dialogue that takes place between different instances that presupposes their differentiation and communication's ability to mediate between them; but rather a sociality inscribed in the interwoven voices, that manifest the breaking of this division. These voices do not move toward one another, but rather collectively externalize each other. Finally, Agamben construes singularity as the form of being-in-language, the positioning of that which transcends the signifying structure and the act of linguistic representation within the linguistic space itself. Singularity is exteriority, the extra-linguistic, insofar as it regulates linguistic space. Accordingly, the community of singularity is a linguistic community where language communicates no definite positive content, but rather communicates the very form of communication. This language breaks with extra-linguistic beings and objects. It is detached from them, and neither refers to them nor represents them; rather, it sustains the linguistic medium as an object to be further transmitted.

Attempts at politically articulating this 1980s thought have often collapsed into mere republican or liberal positions. Nancy's inoperative community has been understood in contrast with a unified and closed community, like Benedict Anderson's national-horizontal community; as a community that ceaselessly works to practice more democratic, open, and fluid relationships with others, and "a refusal of the fixing that takes place in the name of the collectivity of the community."[45] Radical ontological thought has been tamed here into a multicultural political agenda that celebrates flexibility, openness, and a plethora of choices as venerable political values; and Nancy's thought has thus been construed as a call for a more open, inclusive, and diverse liberal democracy, that is also less violent (as it disavows the constitutional violence from which the closed political community originates—as if violence is the root of all evil, and as if the multicultural community itself is not constituted through violence, both constitutive and preservative). This reception is taken ad absurdum, when interpretations of Nancy and Blanchot's positions involve a rejection of their own concepts. For instance, a paper based on Nancy's concept of community "seeks to argue for the desirability and necessity of a political community for the healthy working of democracy,"[46] in utter disregard of the fact Nancy's community is inoperative (*désoeuvrée*), and is certainly neither healthy in the clinical nor in the medical sense; it is rather a community grounded in fracture and death.

But these are not simply mistakes. In fact, Nancy's own argument collapses, at times explicitly, into an improved republicanism, perhaps a more democratic one, but nonetheless a republicanism that bears the torch of democracy, which during the 1980s, and even more so during the 1990s, was clearly signified by the Pax Americana; and when he argues that the communal model of the Greek polis is necessary for philosophy, Nancy conjures up

a fantasy of distribution and sharing that only serves to delineate those who are excluded from it (namely, 90 percent of the city-state's inhabitants). Blanchot's argument, by contrast, resists concrete political appropriation in a more principled manner, and it often seems that his community—a non-community, a community of the incommunable—is negative to the point of excluding any sense of collectivity that transgresses the boundaries of textual spaces of literature and writing.[47] Agamben is the only one of the three authors to use the concept of the community for constructing a leftist political theory, one that is explicitly neither democratic (but rather precedes the distinction between the democratic and the totalitarian) nor republican (if "republican" is taken to indicate the Roman republic, with its structure of the state of exception).

It is tempting to say that these 1980s theories of community mark a conservative strand in post-1968 French thought. This strand blends an occasional critical German idealist theory with an explicit or latent aestheticism that would come to fruition at the end of the decade with the theological (Christian) turn. In order to find the radical conception of collectivity one must turn to a theory that did not explicitly declare its formulation. Deleuze and Guattari might then be read as the quintessential thinkers of collectivity, for they have demanded to open up thought formations and monolithic interpretative structures to the unorganized fluxes that accumulate in them. Their schizoanalysis is one where the imaginary infrastructure of the nuclear family gives way to a plethora of irreducible social functions; it follows "many wolves," many "collective signs," many different kinds of "multiplicities."[48] Deleuze and Guattari put forward a theory of bands and packs—to be distinguished from the mass (which is aggregative, identification-based, and grounded in the structure of individuality)—a theory of centrifugal, momentary assemblages of movements at the edges, from the inside out.[49] Their writing, in fact, relates to the projects of Godard and Genet, which it accompanied and to which it was responding; and it belongs to the same 1970s theoretical-practical effort.

But my aim here is to show how it is rather the 1980s thought that might be connected to the 1970s theoretical effort. The 1970s projects of Godard and Genet, together with the Palestinian struggle, are to be understood in juxtaposition with this community thought, because they are its latent origin, both inherited and disavowed. "The Coming Community" is, in fact, the community that has existed and has been forgotten, and "the inoperative community" is a reincarnation of sorts of the revolutionary collectivity. These projects enable to historically and politically articulate community thought that seems to have regressed into mere conceptual theorization; and this conceptualization enables to derive the traces of the artistic-political moment with which this book deals. The 1970s projects are collective projects that are concerned first and foremost—much like the 1980s communal

thought—with reasserting the revolutionary collectivist horizon of the early twentieth century in face of the all-consuming neoliberal capitalism; and they too try to extract from these conditions a form of a primordial, nonderivative collective being.

Practiced Theory of Struggle

Godard and Genet's projects may be construed as theories of collectivity, albeit collectivity that is grounded in a concrete reality of struggle. This collectivity rejects the individual structure that presupposes organic and complete units that form the community itself as a forged, self-sufficient and immanent unit. But in this case the collectivity's lack of immanence is related to its concrete conditions of existence: the struggle is aimed at constituting this collectivity, which is being formed as these projects progress. Collectivity therefore does not precede the struggle—neither temporally nor conceptually. This is not universal collectivity, because its struggle is particular, even though it relates to other struggles around the world; it is international but not universal. But it is also not a particular collectivity, one whose conditions of inclusion are known in advance, and are predicated on a previously established identity. In the late 1960s and early 1970s the Palestinian struggle is not yet a struggle for national liberation for the constitution of a sovereign state; and insofar as it is a "Palestinian struggle" the very category "Palestinian" is constituted by means of this struggle, and is not to be understood at that point as a mere fixed national category. The Palestinian struggle was a pioneering force in the Arab world in those years, at the forefront of the Third-World struggle against American imperialism. Indeed, its tenacity is to be assigned to the fact that it did not rely on a preconceived identity of the political community it aspired to constitute nor of the members of this community.

A nonuniversal, non-particular singularity is thus the foundation of this struggle. This singularity no doubt appears as exposure and externalization, as self-presentation and externalizing. But these do not demarcate the ontological terrain of singular collectivity; rather, they exist in the framework of the specific political conditions of the anticolonial struggle. This struggle was first and foremost a struggle to go on the global political stage, to make claims on this stage, and to become a force to be reckoned with. It was therefore a collectivity whose "situation" was ex-static, ex-positioned toward-an-outside; a collectivity struggling for the right to be seen in an outer space of appearance. And although it was singular and popular, this collectivity was intertwined with a struggle that was at times violent and brutal. It was not human plurality, organizing the political space *à la* Hannah Arendt,[50] but neither was it merely the plurality embedded in every singularity; it was rather a being that through turning to the outside constitutes itself as a politi-

cal event. Revolutionary collectivity is therefore neither a discrete, closed, unified structure, nor is it immanent in its totality or manifestations. Quite to the contrary: the manner in which it is constituted, the mode of its operation and calling—all three are articulated through its ex-static mode of being that turns toward an exteriority which is grounded in the kernel of its being. This, in simple terms, is the structure of the political struggle: an effort at self-constitution through group action. The purpose of this struggle is not to strengthen collectivity and to turn it into an organized, immanent group, with fixed identity characteristics that regulate the conditions of being inside and outside the group; for the ontological status of this collectivity itself is an outside-being.

In its most concrete sense, the being-toward-an-outside of this collectivity is an existence that turns toward death and is wholly permeated with death-threat. Each Palestinian fighter demonstrates a willingness to die in the space of struggle; each of them demonstrates her mortality as well as her being the bearer of death-exteriority and of the threshold within her as part of her mode of constitution as a political subject of struggle. This death is not the death before which all humans are equal, the death we all share with as the boundary that seals everyone's life, the sealing of individuality that reproduces itself in each and every one of us.[51] The death of the fighter is the threshold of life that has been reintroduced into the inner most kernel of life; in order to constitute themselves as a living collectivity of struggle, these fighters have to sustain death within themselves. They exist and act in a political space that turns into a space of death. And they turn this space from a space of lack and absence (for they are absent from this space as a political force) to a saturated space of death (for they are present in it as mortal beings). "The struggle for a country can fill a very rich life, but a short one," concludes Genet in his essay on the 1982 Shatila massacre; the fighters' power is derived from the fact that they act in cognizance of the necessity of their death;[52] and Godard shows how the form of their uprising speaks the language of annihilation: "Almost all actors are dead," he declares in *Ici et ailleurs*; "The actors in the film were filmed in danger of death."[53] Moreover, the death of which the fighters are the subjects is not individual—it is not merely their own death; for each one of them bears the death of the whole revolutionary project. As opposed to national heroic death, where individual death is transformed, reduced, and gains meaning through the collective, so that the individual's death enables the life of the nation, the fighters's death has nowhere to converge: the collective is unstable, and it is constituted through the uprising and the struggle, and so it does not transform the individual's death but rather echoes it (for this is the structure of Nancy's singular-plural: echoing, as opposed to adaptation). The collective's life too is at risk, for it also carries its death in its actions, and it too externalizes itself through demonstrating the threshold, the death-threshold, that resides always-already within it. The Pal-

estinian struggle, therefore, faces its own annihilation: it is constituted at its own limit, asserts its life while externalizing its own death.

Both projects, Godard's and Genet's, take this ex-static position of revolutionary collectivity. They do so first in their temporality, for these projects come only after the revolutionary struggle. While they both joined the struggle in the late 1960s or early 1970s, the form of these projects—the book or the film—was composed after this phase of the struggle had been sealed, that is, after its failure. They are therefore external to the struggle, arriving after its end or death, and serve to signify, more than anything else, this moment of termination. But in so doing, they merely reveal the death that was embedded in this struggle all along—as a threat, a threshold, a space; in other words, they externalize that which has turned toward the outside while being within. In terms of temporal sequence, these projects appear after the heyday of armed struggles whose success and failure they give voice to; but they also show how this very "after" is inscribed in the moments of struggle themselves. The belated temporality of these projects echoes the belated temporality of the struggle that they inscribe. The struggle's present sustains its consciousness as past, and it is open—toward its future—in as much as it is sealed with the failure that looms in its present. Genet and Godard are thus following this outside in their writing and they expose it as the ex-static structure of the struggle from its very first moments. They can do so because these projects are primarily aimed at introducing a fracture into the formation of collectivity, yet one that takes a concrete form. Godard and Genet are coming from the outside: they are Europeans that come from the continent to the Middle-Eastern struggle arena. They don't go native. Quite the opposite: throughout their stay in the Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan and Lebanon their external stance is felt, along with the possibilities it encapsulates. Genet writes of his encounter with Yasser Arafat, in which the Palestinian leader had asked the French author "to write a book about the struggle"; Godard discloses in a provocative tone the sum of money he had received from the Arab League to make a film about the struggle. These artists, no doubt, were required to make the struggle public, to propagate its contents, demands, stories, and images all over the world; but this externality of Godard and Genet is not static. It is not a fixed stance, whose inside-outside relations are predetermined, but rather an extatic stance, that encapsulates something that is inherent to the struggle's own positioning. Genet and Godard are not merely individual, differentiated European artists who bear external witness to a national collectivity struggling for itself in the Middle East. It is through their externality that they can join forces with the Palestinian struggle: Godard, not only as a renowned film director, but also as part of the Dziga Vertov audiovisual collective; and Genet, through spending long months with the Palestinian forces, and weaving with them erotic relationships and phantasmatic kinship relations. In this sense, the Dziga Vertov Group and Genet are

the externality of collectivity that exists already within, since it is not regulated according to some ethnic or national criterion, or according to some preestablished identity of its members, but rather according to its political program. And yet this regulating political program of the struggle encapsulates the operations of inscribing, imagining, and writing, operations that Genet and Godard no doubt externalize, but only insofar as these operations are inscribed in the struggle's program all along.

This also serves to explain the importance of these projects as projects of writing: writing in signs or images, in fact always in both. As projects of writing, they seem to come "after the fact," since inscription always happens post-factum, after the inscribed thing or event; inscription replaces it, kills it, and serves as a monument for the thing, in the image of a sign that insists upon forgetting the materiality of the thing.[54] But these projects of writing joined forces with the struggle when they were created, and took part in the struggle; they existed within it as its outside. They have saturated it with writing, that is, with exteriority. But in so doing they merely revealed the externality that has already been within it: they revealed writing as an integral part of the struggle itself. Godard and Genet show how the Palestinian struggle is a written struggle: they write about the Palestinians as they themselves are writing their own struggle. Rather than construing the struggle via the formation of action as a self-sufficient spontaneity, which is unmediated and immanent, these projects make clear that inscription is an act that takes place alongside political action, in fact at the very kernel of political action itself. The "writing" that is necessary for the community, the one that has been rendered obscure by the 1980s theories at their best, and has been aestheticized by them at their worst, is made tangible in the strongest sense in these projects. The revolutionary forces inscribe themselves and have been inscribed by others, at the same time, in an act of self-positing and group-constitution that expresses no predetermined content (whether particular or universal), and no interiority that must be discovered; it rather expresses an externalization through and by means of the struggling body.

The fighters' bodies, as well as their positioning in political space, are the writing of this struggle. They refine themselves, their postures, their bodily actions, and by doing so they create a theater of struggle where gestures replace actions.[55] But these external gestures, without internal meaning, like signs detached from things, posit the struggle as an act of externalization of the struggling body politic that demands to exist collectively in the Middle Eastern space. In this sense, at the heart of the written struggle is a calling to join the struggle, to join forces and form a readable collectivity; and Godard and Genet's projects respond to this calling and carry it further on: they posit the medium of calling—the writing of struggle—and at the same time they echo this medium as it already exists in the actions of the Palestinians. It is therefore clear that these projects re-signify "writing:" writing is no longer

sealed within the boundaries of a certain product or artifact, as in a book or a film that exist in a distinct and separate aesthetic space; writing, to politically paraphrase Blanchot's claim, transcends the book as its platform and the author as its origin.[56] It is inscribed in the bodies of Palestinians, in their actions, in the political project they take part in, and in the role of writing itself within this project. In this manner, writing enables a movement of *désoeuvrement*; it traverses the boundaries of the literary or artistic oeuvre, merges into a sphere of political action, but without thereby negating and canceling itself.[57]

But writing also enters the *oeuvre politique*, the political work (or, what Godard will refer to in *Ici et ailleurs* as *travail politique*): it takes part in a revolutionary emancipatory project. In the process, the signification of the "project" changes: linguistic and bodily gestures replace immediate (i.e., non-mediated) political action; the call for action, its precondition that is external to it, is already part of the action itself; and the consolidation of collectivity, yet its inoperativeness through the fracture that is intrinsic to the collective all along (the fracture of split identity, of layered temporality, of language itself, through reflexive self-reference), is at the kernel of these projects. And so, even if what lies before us at the end is the artwork—Godard and Miéville's *Ici et ailleurs*, Genet's *Prisoner of Love*—our reading must conduct a *désoeuvrement*, it has to extract its exteriority; to derive the artistic project after which it has been made and which it inscribes, and the political projects by means of which it came into being. And this is particularly so because this political-artistic project has eventually failed—it has been interrupted and has come to an end; and these works of art—Godard and Miéville's film, Genet's book—are constituted through this failure and are primarily concerned with telling its story. The *désoeuvrement* in these projects is therefore twofold: from the stable and sealed artwork toward the ongoing open movement that has led to it, and from this movement, as a political-artistic work, toward its dissipation and annihilation. This is the *partage des voix* which Godard and Genet's works encapsulate. These voices are not divided according to given focalizations (be they identity-based, i.e., European vs. Middle-Eastern; functional, i.e., artist vs. fighter; or ontological, i.e., the individual vs. the group), but rather co-articulate each instantiation as already sustaining within itself the fracture of division. At the heart of these seemingly finite forms is a stratification of verbal utterances that unlike Bakhtin's polyphonies are not the inner outline of the work of art, of the European novel, but rather its outward reaching, the movement of its artistic and political realization.[58] And at the same time, the verbal stratification exists through the different temporalities sustained by the artwork—the temporality of the project (late 1960s and early 1970s), of its failure (the first half of the 1970s), and its textual formation (Godard and Miéville—1976; Genet—1983–1986). In each and every one of these moments writings have

taken place—one against and on top of the other. It is these writings that constitute Godard and Genet's creative projects.

NOTES

1. Two good examples that outline the connections between the economic regime and its social and political, or, in fact, anti-social and depoliticizing, implications are David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neo-Liberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Wendy Brown, *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution* (New York: Zone Books, 2015).

2. See Chiara Bottici, *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and Imaginary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), where she explores the different ways in which contemporary politics is mediated through images, exercised in the imaginary register, and in fact embedded in what she calls "imaginal politics," whose genealogy goes back to Cornelius Castoriadis's re-articulation of Lacan's Imaginary on the one hand and the Muslim Sufi's concept of the imaginal figures on the other. Her book is a Debordian study, opposed to the Weberian view of politics as the distribution of coercive power. Nevertheless, it does not categorically dismiss the spectacle as a nonpolitical realm of the "non-life"; but, fifty years after the publication of *The Society of the Spectacle*, and with the totalizing power of mass-media as well as the emergence of social media as arenas of political images, Bottici claims that the cracks in the spectacle are to be found through an engagement with imaginal politics, in its *détournement*—its disruptive turning—in the service of emancipatory politics.

3. See Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, eds., *Collectivism after Modernism: The Art of Social Imagination after 1945* (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 1. Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette discuss this new collectivism through two of its paradigmatic figures: the Muslim Mujahideen or the Christian Evangelicals on the one hand, resurrecting an organic, absolute and ideal form of community, resisting liberal capitalist society and striving for salvation; and on the other hand, the computer-immersed subject of contemporary "e-conomy," forming the virtual communities of the new technology, oftentimes anonymous and estranged, but all-encompassing. The wit of their analysis derives from the genealogy of the two contemporary horizons of collectivity they implicitly draw. Whereas the subject of technological-virtual collectivity is definitely the heir of the alienated subject of the capitalism of production, the absolutist, redemptive image of collectivity can be seen as a distorted amplification of the universalist Communist collectivist project. In this way, contemporary "new" forms of collectivity post-figurate the modernist debate over collectivity—its revolutionary-centralist version versus its liberal-individuated one—and one could benefit today from staging anew the stakes of collectivity in modernist and neo-modernist political artistic projects, as their book aims to do.

4. For a discussion on the transition to collectivity in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit,* see Fredric Jameson, *The Hegel Variations: On the Phenomenology of Spirit* (London: Verso, 2010), esp. pp. 75–90.

5. Giorgio Agamben discusses the polysemy of "people," indicating the entirety of citizens within a unified body politics and lower class citizens, in his "What Is a People?" in *Means without Ends: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), pp. 29–31. Étienne Balibar comments on the "we" of the new (and now not so new) European order in *We, the People of Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

6. Whereas literature and cinema signify not only an artistic activity but also the institutional formation in which such an activity is exercised textuality—be it linguistic or visual—signifies here the creative activity that is not sanctioned by artistic institutions or by the aesthetic realm, but rather questions them.

7. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Collectivities," in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 26.

8. Ibid., p. 28.

9. Ibid., p. 70.

10. Ibid., p. 36.

11. It is as a singular supplementary to the factual, Spivak argues, the text claims generalizability without being fundamentally general. See her talk at the 2011 ACLA conference: "The singular is the always universalizable, never the universal." "Comparative Literature / World Literature: A Discussion with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and David Damrosch," *Comparative Literature* 48(4), 2001: 466.

12. The public is therefore a text-based phenomenon, a discursive space (organized by discourse itself), and as such it has the potentiality to go beyond social conditioning (and realistic sociological analysis). Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), esp. pp. 65–76.

13. Ibid., p. 74.

14. Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011) p. 1.

15. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationelle* (Paris: Les presses du réel, 1998).

16. The critical approach was first formulated in Claire Bishop's "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," October 110 (Fall 2004): 51–79, and then further in her *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012). For the activist approach, see Grant Kester, *The One and the Many*.

17. See Beth Hinderliter, Vered Mimon, Jahel Mansoor, Seth McCormick, eds. *Communities of Senses: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics (*North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2009). Following Jacques Rancière in his attempt "to create a stage upon which the people can appear" (Rancière, *Dis-Engagement,* p. 99), the editors seek to reopen the question of collectivity in contemporary artistic practices, through the historical horizon of the avant-garde, but after the fall of communism, so that collectivity is understood against the backdrop of the primordial, cohesive community, as a fictive or potential gathering—and as such, one that is entangled in acts of imagination and speculation executed in artistic practice. The artwork becomes the place for exercises in fictive collectivities, but more importantly, through it the nonrealistic quality of contemporary political collectivities—and its textualized and imaginary character, in "real" life as well—is revealed.

18. Kester, pp. 7–8.

19. The alliance between the artistic avant-garde and leftist radical politics—whether it has been intrinsic or consequential, fundamental or cynical—is one of the questions accompanying the "theory of the avant-garde" from its inception. Although not all of the avant-garde movements in the beginning of the twentieth century tied formal creative revolution with an emancipatory, leftist one—Italian Futurism being the paradigmatic example—many movements enlisted themselves not only in political revolution but also, at different points, to the communist party. But this alliance goes further back in time. In his classic study, Renato Poggioli shows how in its earlier usages in mid-nineteenth century, "avant-garde" had not been a predicate of artistic movements (as it came to be in the twentieth century), but rather a political term, indicating "the most advanced social tendencies" and the progression of humanity; Fourierists used it favorably, Baudelaire pejoratively. Renato Poggioli, *The Theory of the Avant Garde* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, [1962] 1997), pp. 8–12. It was already then that the political emancipatory project was engraved in the term. Poggioli further argues that in the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century this alliance became only declarative, and that the political regime that suits the development of avant-garde art is liberal democracy. I wish to distance myself from such a realist analysis, according to which what happened signifies what had to happen, an analysis that does not leave room for unrealized potentiality. I understand the avant-garde as an examination of the complex relations between artistic and political revolution.

20. John E. Bowlt, ed., *Russian Art of the Avant Garde* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1988), p. 156.

21. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, eds. *Art in Theory 1900–2000* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p 341.

22. Larrisa Alekseevna Zhadova, ed., *Tatlin* (Rizzoli International: London, 1988), p. 237.

23. Bowlt, *Russian Art of the Avant Garde*, pp. 275–76.

24. Blake Stimson and Gregory Sholette, eds. *Collectivism after Modernism*, p. 16. But not, as they further state, "modernism as trickle down communism," as if modernism was separated from, and secondary to, communism.

25. See Friedrich Engels's famous 1888 letter to Margaret Harkness.

26. See Adorno, Benjamin, Bloch, Brecht, Lukács, *Aesthetics and Politics*, afterword by Fredric Jameson (London: Verso, 2007).

27. Stimson and Sholette see the collectivist projects of post–World War II art as a re-evaluation of the avant-garde collectivizing effort. See *Collectivism after Modernism*, esp. pp. 7–11.

28. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1984), esp. 62. This now canonical book, which became the cornerstone for any discussion of the avant-garde from a critical, leftist, sociological angle, coined the term "neo-avant-garde," in contradistinction to the historical avant-garde of the 1910s and 1920s, and it may be argued that Bürger's analysis of the challenges to bourgeois aesthetics and its social conditioning imposed by historical avant-garde originates in and aims toward his critique of contemporary artistic attempts to revive the avant-garde. Another influential theorist, who—like Bürger—writes in the Adornian tradition and is also highly critical of the post–World War II artistic projects is Fredric Jameson. Jameson opposes the modernist zeal at the beginning of the century to the post-war failed attempts to revive the modernist spirit. "True" modernism, he claims, was rooted in the economic conditions of modernization, as a process not yet completed and sealed, and was therefore formed through an acute awareness of history, promoting a historical understanding of the present and a utopian notion of a future; it therefore carried the contradictions of industrial capitalism—the accelerated exploitation of alienated labor force and the rise of emancipatory social movements—into the aesthetic realm, creating artistic movements that negotiated the temporality of the factory or the rising urban subjectivity in new artistic means and forms. These artistic endeavors, attuned to the dialectic of modernization in the time it was taking place, did not only record the conditions of historical existence during that era, but also analyzed it and its potential reversal; they often took part in a political project and aimed for a transformation of the world itself. Yet by the 1960s modernism had exhausted itself and become a fetish: post-World War II late modernism turned to modernism's diminished echo, trading future utopia for present totality, linguistic experimentalism for empty auto-referentiality, the negation and transformation of the social for aestheticist autonomization, resulting in a depoliticized bourgeois, pseudo avant-garde. Frederic Jameson, *A Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present* (London and New York: Verso, 2002).

29. They further claim that these repetitions affect not only what Bürger sees as the secondary, derivative post–World War II avant-garde, but also the "original" avant-garde. Indeed, it was this very structure of the original and authentic versus the secondary and deceptive that the historical ("original") avant-garde—with its critique of the originality of the artwork—aimed at dismantling. Buchloh then shows how Yves Klein's move to the monochrome can be seen as a complex repetition—also in the form of inversion—of Malevich's early turn to monochromatic painting. Benjamin H. Buchloh, "The Primary Colors for the Second Time: A Paradigm Repetition of the Neo-Avant-Garde," *October* 37 (1986): 41–52. Hal Foster examines the saturated return in the 1950s and 1960s to two of the dominant techniques of the historical avant-garde—the Dadaist ready-mades and the Constructivist contingent structures—and understands it according to the form of return encapsulated in the Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*: one that constitutes the "original" event in deferral, through its "secondary" manifestations. The "neo-avant-garde," according to Foster, indeed manages to seriously enact, develop, and work through the institutional critique of the historical avant-garde. Hal Foster, "What's New about Neo-Avant-Garde," *October* 70 (1994): 5–32. What remains under-discussed in these accounts, however, is the political revolutionary zeal entrusted in the "historical avant-garde," its being part of a leftist political project. It was not only art as an institution (or convention) that was the object of avant-garde critique, but art as a bourgeois institution, an apparatus of capitalist society, that should be dialectically negated for its absorption in "life," that is a collectively run and shared political life. Yet no discussion of revolutionary political social forces in American society of the 1950s and 1960s accompanies these attempts at a reappraisal of the neo-avant-garde, which stay on the level of a critique of artistic institutions only.

30. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, volume one, trans. Alan Sheridan-Smith (London: Verso, 2004).

31. See Fredric Jameson, Forward, ibid.

32. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Critique,* p. 260.

33. Ibid., p. 358.

34. It was in those years that Sartre signed "The Manifesto of the 121" in favor of the Algerians in their war for liberation, and wrote the combative preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, and met with Fidel Castro and Che Guevara. See Paige Arthur, *Unfinished Projects: Decolonization and the Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre* (London: Verso, 2010).

35. Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1983] 1991). Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community* (New York: Station Hill Press, [1983] 1988). Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, [1990] 1993).

36. Walter Benjamin famously developed this mode of remembrance in his multifaceted work—mobilizing Proust's involuntary memory and the Surrealists's deferred bombs to articulate a Marxist concept of revolution not based on a process of progress but on an interruptive strike against the course of history.

37. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy* (Monthly Review Press, 1971).

38. Although some would point out the Anglo-American bias in the dominance of identity politics within political discourse, including the many debates on its emancipatory or regressive effects from a leftist worldview, European political theories in the 1980s and 90s did not fail to discuss both the potentialities and the faults of identity politics which was seen as a continuation of the European New Left. See the now canonical analysis of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985). It is then highly conceivable that Blanchot and Nancy have this in mind; as for Agamben, he explicitly addresses this in his book.

39. Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. xxxvi.

40. Ibid., p. 28.

41. Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, pp. 5–6.

42. Jean-Luc Nancy, *Being-Singular-Plural* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). This stands in contradistinction to Hegel's dialectics, in which the singular being (self-consciousness) is indeed mediated from the beginning—historically, but not analytically: "Self-consciousness is, to begin with, single being-for-itself." Hegel, *Phenomenology of the Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 113.

43. Indeed, Blanchot's book written right after the first publication of Nancy's essay, is a textual realization of such a relation to an outside that constitutes singularity: Blanchot's book shares with Nancy's text the plural space in the form of its relation to it and distinction from it. Published the same year as Nancy's book, Blanchot's book is both concurrent with it as it defers to it. It hosts Nancy's text as an outside that is at the very core of its interiority. Blanchot underwrites Nancy, not in the form of reference or quotation, but as an echo of the original voice of Blanchot's text: *partage des voix*.

44. These are the seeds for Agamben's theory of sovereignty, to be developed in the next decade. The sovereign is, at the same time, outside and inside the law: he is the one who conditions that in which he participates. The sovereign is the threshold of the juridical order, and is included in it only by way of exclusion: the state of exception, on which the sovereign declares, is the manifestation of that which is outside the law, yet absorbed into it, even structuring it. Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 15–20.

45. Vijay Devadas and Jane Mummery, "Community Without community," *Borderlands* 6:1 (2007). This article is a paradigmatic example of the liberal trap some poststructuralist treatises have been frequently facing: once removed from their intellectual context—oftentimes a tense coming to terms with the Hegelian or Marxist tradition—they may seem, within Anglo-American discourse, to advance a version of a Popperian Open Society .

46. John Schwarzmentel, "Community as Communication," *Political Studies* 55:2 (2007). He goes on to suggest that a "liquid democracy"—less closed and unitary—is what Nancy actually aspires to.

47. This, indeed, is Fredric Jameson's critique of the "ideology of aesthetic autonomy" inscribed in the purely textual neo-modernism of Blanchot. Fredric Jameson, *A Singular Modernity*, pp. 183–96.

48. "The psychoanalyst becomes a director for a private theater, rather than an engineer or mechanic who sets up units of production, and grapples with collective agents of production and antiproduction." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, p. 55. "In becoming-wolf, the important thing is the position of the mass, and above all the position of the subject in relation to the pack or wolf-multiplicity. . . . The problem of the unconscious has most certainly nothing to do with generation, but rather peopling, population." *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1988), pp. 29–30.

49. Irvin Goh writes extensively on the movement of "anti-community" in the nomadology section of *A Thousand Plateaus*, as a violent rupture with present modes of community—based on cohesiveness, procedures of identification, and leader-folk relationship—for the sake of a future community of multiplicities, of bordering and becoming-other. Irving Goh, "The Question of Community in Deleuze and Guattari (I): Anti-Community," *Symploke* 14 (2006). This analysis could be broadened to their entire oeuvre, in which the molecular-molar dyad replaces the individual-community one.

50. See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 7–8, 175–81. Indeed, in the late 1960s Arendt writes a polemic treatise in which she explicitly opposes her theory of the political—in which power is neatly distinguished from violence—from the theories popularized by the New Left, both in Euro-America and in the anticolonial struggles. She specifically addresses Frantz Fanon's discussion of violence as a form of resistance to the violence embedded in the structure of colonial rule, a discussion that had an immense influence on many Third-World movements, including the Palestinians in the 1960s and 70s. These are indications of the antipathy between Arendt's political theory and the one elaborated and performed in the early years of the Palestinian struggle. See Hanna Arendt, *On Violence* (New York: Harcourt, 1970), es. pp. 67–69. And Frantz Fanon, "Violence," *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1963).

51. It is therefore neither death as the unapproachable limit of human life and thought (as at the end of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*), nor is it its opposite, the Heideggerian being-toward-death. Death here is what differentiates between this singular existence of the struggle and other forms of human existence and nonexistence.

52. Jean Genet, "Four Hours in Shatila," *The Declared Enemy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 228.

53. Jean-Luc Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, *Ici et ailleurs* (France, 1976).

54. From Augustine to Rousseau and up to Lacan—and this is only one possible genealogy—verbal signification is taken as the burial of actual things, the substitution of the thing by its signification is understood as an act of deadening—of deactivation, and even killing.

55. Agamben discusses at length, at different stages of his career, the potentiality of gestural politics, one that aspires to mediality or pure means, rather than to autonomous ends (as in actions) or as means for the production of objects (as in making). See, for example, "Notes on Gesture," *Means without Ends* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000). This gestural politics will be discussed at length in the next chapters.

56. Maurice Blanchot, "La disparition de la littérature," *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1959).

57. In this way it is different from the Hegelian understanding of "the end of art," in which (sensual) art is negated into (conceptual) philosophy; but also—and this will be further developed in the next chapter—different from the historical avant-garde's negation of art into life, as in Peter Bürger's formulation.

58. M. M. Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The Dialogical Imagination* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981). Bakhtin's dialogue, polyphony, and heteroglossia are all novelistic techniques, which lie within its boundaries of the artwork and even constitute them. These are manifestations of social utterance as it is formed in the confines of the novel.

Chapter Two

Collective Enunciation and its Afterlife: Jean-Luc Godard's Audiovisual Enterprise with the Palestinians

The historical narrative of this book has a starting point—the year 1968. That year was a watershed both in French cultural and artistic history and in the Palestinian history of struggle. Yet these two histories are usually told separately, by two different disciplines, and shelved in two distinctly different places in the library. "May 1968," as a code, often lumps together the social uprisings in Paris together with those of other Western European cities—an anti-authoritarian revolt raged, in developed capitalist countries, for rapid liberalization.[1] On a different geographical end, "1968" signifies a moment within a Middle Eastern national struggle for statehood.[2] The first is understood to have been culturally motivated, and to have dramatically influenced artistic production; the second, politically bound, with results "on the ground." The one, mainly studied in film, literature and cultural studies departments; the other, in Near Eastern and political science departments. But "1968" was a moment of convergence—when these two supposedly different histories intertwined, in fact coalescing into one political-artistic movement. This chapter tells the story of this moment in its duality, oscillating between the revolt and the artistic enterprise to narrate how they have signified one another. It follows the rise and fall of this "1968 moment," treating it as a short-lived but crucial politico-artistic paradigm.

The year 1968 was a turning point in Palestinian modern history. It followed 1967—the year of *an-naksa* ("the setback"), during which the Israeli army spectacularly defeated combined armies of the Arab world (Egyptian,

Syrian, and Jordanian) in only six days. Arab prewar hopes of liberating the Palestinian territories, occupied by Israel in 1948, collapsed. On the contrary, when the dust settled on its military victory, Israel, in fact, occupied vast new territories, including the rest of what had remained from historic Palestine—the West Bank and Gaza. The might of the Arab states, and specifically Gammal Abdel Nasser-led Egypt, proved useless to the Palestinian cause. From that moment on, Palestinian guerrilla movements became a prominent force in the Middle East: different fighting groups formed or developed further, their actions multiplying and intensifying. With their presence in the region gaining steadily in vibrancy, they took it upon themselves to take on a self-proclaimed Palestinian struggle. The icon of this freedom struggle was the freedom fighter, the *feday*: Palestinian warriors, both men and women, their faces shrouded in *keffiyehs*, a symbol of popular uprising harking back to the Great Revolt of the 1930s, and their Kalashnikov rifles at the ready. Their willingness to give up their lives for the struggle, their magnified presence and decisive actions were, in themselves, a mode of liberation and self-determination: from the smoldering ruins of defeat, from the loss of further Palestinian lands, a new fighting zeal erupted in 1968. The battle on the Jordan Valley refugee camp of Karameh, where Palestinian fighters endured and even managed to hit many casualties on the IDF side, immediately signified a new era of fighting: *jil al-thawra*, "the age of revolution."[3]

Nor was this age strictly nationally or geographically confined: Palestinian struggle in the late 1960s was modeled on other decolonial movements such as the FLN in Algeria and the Mau Mau in Kenya; it was influenced by contemporary anticolonial thought (with almost all fighters carrying copies of Frantz Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*, as myth has it) and stood in direct contact with other left-wing guerrilla groups, such as the IRA and the Italian Red Brigades. Many leftist groups visited Palestinian paramilitary camps during these years—as an expression of solidarity, collaboration, political education, and training. Members from the Red Army Faction (the so-called "Baader-Meinhoff group") spent a few weeks in a Jordanian training camp, Ulrike Meinhoff famously leaving her two young daughters in a Palestinian orphanage so that they could be brought up as freedom fighters. Members of the Japanese Red Army, including its leader Fusako Shigenobu, settled in Beirut for the sake of the Palestinian cause.[4] Major "terrorist" actions of the period—hostage-taking, aircraft hijacking—were undertaken in collaboration with these groups. Palestinian armed struggle sparked the imagination of the new international left: weary with Cold War stagnation and disappointed with the increasingly authoritarian Soviet Union, the new generation of leftists embraced dissident Marxism, and found in Third Worldism the fresh revolutionary movement of its time.[5] Anticolonial struggles—in their anti-imperial sentiment, redrawing of the global map, and their non-doctrinal stance—were the high point of international leftist activity, and Palestinian

resistance quickly became the paradigm for a revolt of the downtrodden against the time's major political powers: American imperialism, Israeli militarism, and corrupt Arab regimes.

It is this "1968" that informs the Parisian 1968 moment. A wave of creative activities launches around that movement of revolt, and Jean-Luc Godard—at this point a famous French cinematographer—is drawn to the Palestinian 1968 moment, which was to shape the coordinates of his artistic endeavor throughout his life. His artistic project, in turn, would open up, signify, and theorize the political effort which it accompanied. This chapter therefore attempts to think Godard's cinematic enterprise and Palestinian political struggle not as two separate and static objects of analysis—the film as an object of cinematographic research (with Palestinian struggle serving only as contingent subject-matter) and struggle as an object of political research (the film serving as its archive). Rather, it is precisely the constituent interrelations between audiovisual project and political campaign that this chapter aims to conceptualize, by following their different permutations.

1968 and the End of Cinema

As for so many, May 1968 marked a certain ending for Jean-Luc Godard; this ending was quickly doubled when the claim to the end of a certain political and aesthetic regime was followed by the almost immediate ending of the revolt itself. This twofold ending marks an artistic endeavor which, from its very inception, was immersed in a thought of the end. From the start, Godard was motivated by a desire to end academic, literary French cinema of the 1940s and 1950s; to bring traditional values of cinematic production (comprehensive narrative, round characters, the cohesive beauty of the image) to a close; to bury the old procedures of film-making (fully-written script, smoothly constructive montage, correspondence between image and sound). Indeed, the modernist rebellion of the French *Nouvelle Vague*—in a medium whose short history still allowed for modernist moves as late as the 1960s[6] —demanded a decisive rupture with the past, a distinct turn from tradition and an opening of a new trajectory in the history of cinema. But the ending of an old world resulted, in Godard's work, in a deep sense of "the end" already informing the new modernist modalities themselves. Visual breaks, audiovisual asynchrony, dense cinematic allusions, overt dictation and quotation—all lay bare the techniques of the cinematic apparatus as a medium of cutting, of rupture, of multiple endings. As he nears 1968, Godard's formal experimentation becomes politically signified: the title of his 1966 film, *Made in USA*, for example, already explores a double critique: that which is "made in the USA"—political intrigue, colonialist moves, ultra-capitalist consumerism on the one hand, and Hollywood cinematic production with its ideologically anesthetizing effects on the other—is brought to-

gether by the political-economic superpower producing, in Godard terms at the beginning of *Historie(s) du cinéma*, "a dream factory."[7]

Yet, May 1968 marked a decisive break. Godard made "political" films throughout the 1960s, but the political demand of 1968 was much greater: it did not consist only of a radical laying bare of the cinematic form and a critical study of the cinematic apparatus but indeed ultimately strove to negate them *tout court*. Godard tried to answer this political call, but his cultural position at that time was already too complicated: a successful avant-garde director working within a long cinematic tradition, Godard epitomized that high-modernist emphatically formalist *haute culture*—much celebrated in France and inevitably connected to modernist cultural genealogies and national chauvinistic pride—that many of the 1968 revolutionary forces most strongly opposed. A graffiti from the streets of 1968 Paris—"L'art est mort. Godard n'y pourra rien" [Art is dead. Godard can do nothing about it][8] — exemplifies Godard's double-bind. Art, understood here as a cultural activity secluded in the aesthetic realm, is presented as a reactionary force, a bourgeois apparatus, part of a de-politicized vanishing world, and as such should be abolished, if it isn't already dead. Godard, one of its leading advocates, indeed of its very personifications, becomes utterly irrelevant for the revolutionary cause. Yet Godard himself wanted to surpass art, to negate culture: "We have to destroy culture," he wrote in June 1968, adding, in August, "we cannot speak of being . . . an artist or making a piece of art. This has to be completely destroyed."[9] Together with some Maoist groups with which he was affiliated, as well as with his new, young and radical collaborator, Jean-Pierre Gorin, Godard tried to set the terms for the abolition of culture and art—the art of cinema included—from within; in Richard Brody's apt words, notwithstanding their overly-factual and triumphalist tone, "Godard left his orbit and, without ceasing to make films, dropped out of cinema."[10] The question with which Godard dealt around 1968 was precisely what kind of audiovisual activity might remain once the end of cinema has been declared. This is the question of the avant-garde, as Peter Bürger has famously put it, of the end of art in the form of its penetration into social reality in the form of an interruption.[11] Godard, who was thinking at that time of the necessary "destruction" of art and culture, clearly tried to adhere to the Maoist-Situationist "interruptive" position; and this required a significant shift in the modality of his creative activity.

His radicalization in the late 1960s is anchored in a shift from a strong investment in an inquiry into the cinematic medium, its possible techniques and political potentialities, to a direct audiovisual operation. While the former stance still presupposes the artistic medium as the necessary realm for radical formal/political inquiry, the latter critiques the cinematic apparatus and is directed at its disappearance altogether. The Brechtian operations on which his pre-1968 film *La chinoise,* for example, is based—an anti-psycho-

logical didactic tendency, alienation effects, theatrical gestures, the presentation of short social scenes, an exploration of the actor/character split—still leave the cinematic apparatus, as a pedagogical means and a thinking form, intact.[12] The film's trenchant self-reflexivity; its inherent ambivalence toward the Maoists, whom it simultaneously adores and mocks; its pessimistic (and thus perhaps also prophetic) gaze at the prospects of what is to eventually become a failed revolt—all of these led some French Maoist revolutionaries at the time to furiously dismiss the film as counter-revolutionary. Indeed, the very politico-formalist virtuosity of Godard's pre-1968 films—his juxtaposition of the voice-over conceptual discourse and the simultaneous cinematic image in *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, the testimony from a violent demonstration as an exercise in theatrical gestures in *La chinoise*, the nine-minute almost-single-shot traffic jam in *Weekend*—is what suddenly became, after 1968, cinema's ultimate pitfall. As Godard declares in the last moments of *Weekend*, "The end of the film," of this specific film, ultimately results in "the end of cinema."[13]

After 1968, Godard attacked cinema itself—and stopped making "films," if by "film" we mean an artistic object with well-defined boundaries made by a recognizable *auteur* and produced for aesthetic consumption. The year 1968 sees a flood of audiovisual material referred to as *Ciné-tracts:* Most of the *Ciné-tracts* were unedited; those that were edited were mostly not realized as discrete creative pieces; those that were realized in this fashion were mostly not circulated; and those that were circulated were definitely not done so for aesthetic consumption. These "aborted films"—assuming we still take "film" as their necessary point of reference, the ultimate goal they failed to reach—took part in actual political events and were as transient as them; some of these films were handed over to activists as "working material," a means for political mobilization. Much of this audiovisual material was not, at least not always, only the spontaneous, presumably authentic, unmediated recordings of the cinematic *objectif:* it existed and was indeed presented in numerous versions, under different edits and with different non-diegetic audio attached to the same visual material. These *Ciné-tracts* did not enjoy the status of finished projects and did not yearn for closure; they were sometimes useful and sometimes produced just like that, and most of the time they were easily forgotten.[14] Godard was responsible for several of them; but this does not mean he was their "author." *La politique des auteurs*,[15] attributed so often to Godard, was suddenly reversed when the emphatically single-authored films became, post-1968, collective projects: "The real leftist," he wrote, is the one who tries not to be *auteur* anymore."[16] Godard, together with Gorin and several other (often changing) cinematographers, established a cinematic collective, dramatically named after avant-garde Soviet filmmaker Dziga Vertov.[17] the projects of the Dziga Vertov Group were created collectively, dealt with various collective uprisings and were addressed at—

or offered to—a collectivity: not the anonymous, ad hoc collectivity of the cinema theater audience, though, but the political collectivity from which these projects emerged and to which they returned—not only by reflecting it but indeed in the hope of further shaping it.

The artist's signature was replaced by a collaborative imprint. Rather than producing more "Godard films" in France, Godard now turned his back on the French film industry, on state-subsidized modes of production and on the privileged sites of cinematic circulation—in short, on French cinema as such. He chose instead to form the Dziga Vertov Group that launched an international enterprise of partisan audiovisual projects. These "films," frequently sponsored by different European television companies, were meant to document, encourage, accelerate, comment on, and participate in contemporary political struggles and provide them with different sensory, perceptive and intellectual fodder for various ends. Following the 1968 tradition of the *Ciné-tracts*, they were hardly ever properly produced and never quite circulated in real time. They remained unrealized to a large extent, an integral part of a revolutionary effort that was not fulfilled, both a sign and an index of a certain failure.

As part of this non-artistic, anti-cinematic endeavor, the Dziga Vertov Group visited the Middle East to shoot a "film" about the Palestinian struggle. Godard and Gorin traveled a total of six times to Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank between November 1969 and August 1970, spending days and nights in the Palestinian refugee camps with the Palestinian fighters, the *fedayeen*, and shooting footage of their preparation for armed revolt to gain back confiscated Palestinian lands. It was by far the Dziga Vertov Group's most elaborate project on non-European soil, a profound involvement in Third World, anticolonial political revolutions. Shooting—commissioned and sponsored by the Arab League—was conducted with close Palestinian guidance and largely endorsed by Fatah (and even more specifically by Yasser Arafat himself). The project was named *Jusqu'à la victoire* (*Until Victory*), following the Palestinian widespread saying from these years of struggle—*thawra atta al-nasr*, "revolution until victory."[18]

The Political Audiovisual Project

Jusqu'à la victoire—the first stage of the project's long, surprising unfolding—remains the peak of the Dziga Vertov Group's revolutionary audiovisual creativity. It required not only a decisive withdrawal from the cinematic apparatus, its conventions and form (including those of radical, revolutionary European film), but indeed a change in the audiovisual project's geopolitical locus. France, in particular, and Europe, in general, ceased to be the natural, ultimate arena of revolutionary action and reflection: influenced by the New Left's suspicion of what it saw as traditional Marxism's Eurocentrism in its

revolutionary outlook, the Dziga Vertov Group turned away from Europe to an anticolonial struggle—indeed a struggle waged against non-European forces.[19] Moving outside Europe, a crucial effort was made to fashion a language of struggle without falling back on Eurocentric liberal-humanist frames, continually reaching out for a foreign language—such as the Arabic language of the Palestinian revolt—and indexing a different political language of struggle. That effort ultimately meant a consideration of French colonial history in the Middle East—a history in which French cinema was intricately implicated from its very founding moments.[20] The problematic facing the Dziga Vertov Group was tightly linked to the colonial context that has been haunting the Palestinian struggle: how could such a project serve not as a belated force of the *mission civilisatrice*, but as its negative and negating image? What would be the coordinates of a creative project that is neither *about* the indigenous people nor *for* them and *with* them in any simple way—but which is concerned with new configurations of the audiovisual apparatus and the political revolt, and the collectivity defined by both?

To put it in Gilles Deleuze's terms from his *Cinema II: Time-Image*, how not to presuppose the already-existing collectivity of the film, "the people" that it portrays and to whom it is addressed—as in the films from the beginning of the twentieth century—but to "contribute to the invention of a people," since in post–World War II "the people" (Third World, anticolonial, minority collectivities) "are missing," and the film has a crucial role in the articulation of these collectivities, not the mobilization of an existing group, but an imagination of their coming into being? And so, how to reformulate the filmmaker's position and the film's mode of enunciation—not to record an anticolonial struggling collectivity from without; not to narrate the struggle through a story of a representative individual from within; not to assume the differentiation between the individual and the collective, the single-authored film and the multitude of political reality, the singular protagonist and multivalent historical occurrences, but rather to create an audiovisual form and apparatus that take an integral part in the effort—the task, the enterprise—of politically formulating Third-World collectivities?[21]

Although written more than a decade after the Dziga Vertov Group ceased to exist and never directly referring to the collective's projects, Deleuze's *Cinema II: Time-Image* is haunted by Godard's turn from Brechtian, pre-1968 political cinema (discussed at length in the first half of the book) to the post-1968 projects of the Dziga Vertov collective: it implicitly follows the transformation of Godard's recognizable voice, heard constantly in his pre-1968 films as the magisterial voice-over of the *caméra-stylo* itself, into the collective enunciation of a struggling collectivity-in-the-making in the group's works. Deleuze's formulations also harkens back to his work with Félix Guattari in their 1975 book on Kafka and minor literature.[22] There, collective enunciation is posited as the main revolutionary qualification of

minor literature as it constantly negates the structure of subjectivity reigning supreme in European major literature, a subjectivity on whose basis the individuation of—as well as the separation between—character, narrator, writer, and reader rests. Starting with enunciation itself, minor literature is structured not on a solidified subject of enunciation (in both senses: neither locatable origin nor definite content), but on collective *agencement*—in complete contradistinction to the subjective *agent*—which derives its political signification from the collapse of the distinction between individual and collective and the representational relation between them. Instead of the oedipal structure of individuation-through-separation, as both ontogenetic and phylogenetic developmental narrative, minor literature suggests the transformational flows of becoming and unbecoming, always within the horizon of a debris or a community, of the "dividual" or the singularity, rather than an individual, personal voice.

At the beginning of *Ici et ailleurs*, Godard reflects, in his own voice, on the making of *Jusqu'à la victoire*:

> It was in the middle of the beginning of 1970 that we went to the Middle East. Who is "we"? In February, in July 1970, there is I, there is everyone, there is she, there is he who goes to the Middle East, among the Palestinians to make a film.[23]

The usage of the French impersonal subject pronoun "*on*" ["Voilà c'était au milieu du début de 1970 qu'*on* va au Moyen Orient"] enables Godard to oscillate between various subject positions ("I," "she," "he") and a generalizing plural one, implying an abstract, unmarked participation (even of the spectators themselves: "everyone"), and a return to the "*on*" as a collective subject position. In posing the question "*Qui ça 'on'*?" Godard focuses on the inclusive yet undecidable collective position of the otherwise idiomatic "*on*"; but in posing this question in his own singular, recognizable voice, Godard opens up, from the very beginning of his 1976 film, the gap between the initial political-creative motivation of the project and the final form it has undertaken. As a result of "going among the Palestinians," an anonymous collective enunciation was supposed to take shape; but the individual utterance with which the film starts already signifies the chasm between the actual voice of the film and its supposed plural collective utterance (as it now exists only in the film's *énoncé*). "Voilà ce que on, ce que il, ce que je, ce que elle, ce que tous avez filmé ailleurs. Ailleurs—1970 [This is what we, what he, what I, what she, what everyone shot elsewhere. Elsewhere—in 1970.]" The year 1970 thus marks the possibility, and impossibility, of what is now only being reported in the director's voice.

Jusqu'à la victoire echoes the theory of minor literature. The desired mode of its audiovisual "writing" was emphatically minor: arts and politics,

the film and the struggle, the apparatus and anticolonial history, were not separated into two opposing/relating poles, with the former representing the latter and the latter structuring the former. They were rather both part of a collective struggle aimed at imagining and creating a collectivity of struggle: emerging collectivities in revolt, carving out new forms of revolutionary political enunciation. These formerly separate groups—the Palestinian fighters, the French filmmakers—now form one another in the hope of creating a further form of assemblage, an *agencement* produced by collective speech. In its absorption into the collective enunciation of the Palestinian struggle, *Jusqu'à la victoire* can be seen as something other than a European project: produced in a "major" language but following a minor thread within it, it was imagined from a state of deterritorialization of both the audiovisual apparatus and the political struggle. The "major" language, that is, French cinema's European high-modernist language, was displaced and negated, absorbed into an anticolonial struggle forming a minor trajectory that speaks a foreign version of the language, deprived of its proper cultural lineage while informed by improper, aberrant sources.

One might argue that minor literature, as formulated here, is still a privilege enjoyed by majoritarian literary traditions written in the major European languages. Advocating and validating good old "international modernism"—to which it is almost identical—the category of minor literature, with its grandiose revolutionary qualification, runs the risk of running over the very position of minority in literature written in "minor" languages and marginal traditions.[24] However, Paul Willemen suggested the notion of Third Cinema as "an ideological project . . . adhering to a certain political and aesthetic [radical] program, whether or not . . . produced by Third World peoples themselves," and Robert Stam and Ella Shohat have further suggested that Third-World cinema (cinema produced by and for Third World people) might be considered as part of what the Argentinian cinematographers Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino had called Third Cinema.[25] Rather than re-present the Palestinians' minor, marginal, and oppositional stance (that stance that Godard had been in such a rush to appropriate for his own artistic project), the Dziga Vertov Group attempted to align itself with the Palestinians, albeit in French, to jointly create a collective political-audiovisual project—a "speech-act [that] has several heads, and, little by little, plants the element of a people to come as the free indirect discourse of Africa about itself, about America or about Paris."[26]

This "free indirect discourse," although crowned as the virtuoso narratological technique of the nineteenth century European novel, has here the potential of becoming its very negation: rather than a technique for the construction or expression of the self, complicating the relationship between narrator and character, while thickening the fictional realm of psychological individuation, it is reformulated in a plural enunciation supposed to consti-

tute a people-to-come outside the fictional realm. The collective enunciation of "minor literature," then, can ultimately find a *ligne de fuite* from Deleuze and Guattari's major language, understood here as languages of artistic production in the aesthetic realm. Minor literature's deterritorialization entails an escape from the territory of art and its generic forms (the novel, the short story, and the film) to a non-generic space of anti-art: the diary and the letter, as in Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of Kafka's writing and the Dziga Vertov Group's enterprise: 1968 *Ciné-tracts*-cum-diaries and the 1972 film *Letter to Jane*. *Jusqu'à la victoire* may be understood as an attempt at creative enunciation coupled with political desire. If, by the end of the 1960s, a great deal of revolutionary political and social desire was invested in the Palestinian struggle—moving beyond social laws, state-centered configurations, and recognized political regimes—then *Jusqu'à la victoire* took part in this desire in a mode of audiovisual "writing" which had little to do with proper "literature" or "cinema." This political audiovisual enterprise is no longer "film" as a self-enclosed aesthetic object, a product for consumption, a cinematic event. It is rather itself the very process of struggle and revolt spanning, from inception to realization, such entangled activities as contemplation, audiovisual shooting and editing, radical socialization and revolutionary learning; all of these activities lead the way *Jusqu'à la victoire*, to victory. In an interview he gave in July 1970, Godard said the film, "proposes a double end: 1. helping those who are struggling, in one way or another in their own country, against Imperialism; 2. presenting a new kind of film. A kind of political pamphlet."[27]

For political anticolonial struggle, the meaning of considering these two goals as mutually constitutive, especially against the context of French imperialism and the aftermath of the Algerian War, is aligning with the Palestinian revolt—not just sympathizing with it—through a cinematic modality altogether different: making "an Arab film" in which "the members of the Palestinian resistance take part in its production";[28] an anti-imperialist, non-French collective enunciation, outside the reach of "cinema."

Interruption

The "end of cinema" through the workings of collective enunciation was itself to come to an end all too soon. *Jusqu'à la victoire* failed to find a form in which it could be realized. Richard Brody gives the following account of the events:

> The filming was interrupted by Black September, the Jordanian army's attack in September 1970 on Palestinians fighters. For the next two years, Godard and Gorin spent endless hours in the editing room working on the footage. . . . But the project, like so many that they undertook, was never completed—at least not in that form.[29]

This historical narrative—even as it touches upon main aspects of *Jusqu'à la victoire*'s failure—needs to be completely rewritten. What exactly was the interruption that precipitated the end of the project? If indeed it was, as Brody argues, the political events of Black September that interrupted the artistic project of filming then these two realms—the political and the artistic—are again separated into two poles. The former presumably put an end to the latter: aesthetic effort—creative, imaginary, alas secondary—was blocked by the crude, valid ontology of historical reality. But strictly speaking, Black September did not actually stop the filming of *Jusqu'à la victoire*: the last time the Dziga Vertov Group arrived in the Middle East was actually several months prior to September 1970. Following the catastrophic events—which the group did not experience first-hand—its members decided not to return to the region. The interruption thus happened on an altogether different level. Black September did not interrupt an artistic project already separated from historical reality but enacted a rupture within the political/audiovisual reality: it arrested the emergence of a collective revolutionary enunciation that would have brought together paramilitary and audiovisual forces. Black September put an end to the possibility of the coming-into-being of a collective utterance in a realm which is neither exclusively that of reality nor of the imagination but rather that of struggle. It was not an intrusion of reality into the imaginary, but an interruption that tore apart the collective formation of the cinematographic-armed, audiovisual-political resistance in the process of its becoming. Black September put an end not only to *Jusqu'à la victoire* but also to a whole political modality from which it evolved.

The events of Black September indeed signify a crucial turning point in the history of the Palestinian struggle. During September 1970, the Jordanian army attacked Palestinian guerrilla forces spread around the country—in refugee camps (such as Irbid and Baq'a), paramilitary bases (like Zarqa), and major cities (most significantly, their headquarters in Amman). The Hashemite Army of the Jordanian Army, using heavy armor, artillery, and air strikes, killed thousands of Palestinian fighters (upward of ten thousand, according to some accounts), in effect bringing the Palestinian liberation forces' sojourn on Jordanian soil to its end.[30] Ostensibly a response to a series of plane hijackings, the attacks were geared to end the extensive political and military Palestinian presence on Jordan's East Bank, which by 1970 posed a potential threat to the Hashemite minority rule of Jordan, a country with a significant Palestinian population. Bordering on the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and characterized by weak political rule, Jordan hosted most of the Palestinian leadership and guerrilla forces after the June 1967 war (Egypt refused to do so), and it was from its territory that the Palestinian armed resistance launched many of its campaigns, such as the 1968 battle of Karameh. The "civil war" in Jordan escalated due to the events of September 1970, which effectively eliminated the armed Palestinian pres-

ence there; by the end of 1971, most of the surviving Palestinian resistance forces had already moved to Lebanon.[31]

The Palestinian presence in Jordan through the 1960s was the defining moment of the struggle, a period known as "the Palestinian revolution" [*al-thawra al-falistinyia*], a term repeatedly reiterated during the first minutes of *Ici et ailleurs*; or as "the time of the freedom fighter" [*waqt al-feday*], the era that consolidated the armed struggle as the central mode of action in Palestinian politics.[32] Various groups, with different political attachments, led the struggle: Fatah, founded in 1959 by Yasser Arafat, was a Palestinian nationalist movement, that arrived at the central position in the armed resistance after its fighters were the ones who did not back out and stayed fighting in Karameh; the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), led by George Habash, nationalist-Marxist front, founded in 1967; and Nawif Hawatmah's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) which diverted from the PFLP in 1968 as its small, radical left-wing sister. There were big differences between these groups (and others, smaller ones)—in both politics and style—and many tensions arose, regarding the strategy of the armed revolt, as well as the credit for its leadership. But a mutual recognition united them, that the Palestinian cause, after the defeat of the Arab countries in the 1967 war, should be dealt independently by Palestinians and in organizations that are dedicated to actively fighting for it. This signified an important change in Palestinian politics; since Palestinians formed political organizations way before the late 1960s. It was already in 1951 that *Kharakat al-Kummunyeen al-Arab* (Arab Nationalist Movement) was founded by George Habash, Ahmad al-Khatib, and Wadea Hadad, among others—students of Constantine Zureik, a professor of political sceince at the American University in Beirut, and the one who coined the term al-Nakba (the catastrophe) to indicate the defeat, deportation, and exile of the Palestinians in 1948. But it was a pan-Arabist collectivist movement, with different branches in the Arab world, conducting operations in places like South Yemen and becoming, in the 1960s, close to Egypt's strong president, and the undeclared leader of the Arab world, the socialist pan-Arabist Gammal Abdel Nasser. This proximity to Nasser had a major impact on the movement's restraint from drastic actions against Israel in the mid-1960s since Egypt was not ready yet to pledge a war; and when Egypt was finally led to war, the grim outcomes resulted in disillusionment from the Nasserist horizon. Out of this movement the PFLP was born, trading pan-Arabism with revolutionary Third-World Marxism.[33]

Yet, whether nationalist-liberal or Marxist-Leninist in the declared politics of this or that organization was of secondary importance, since the armed struggle in those years, in all its variations, had both nationalist and revolutionary components. The mission of the various movements at that point was not to solidify a political plan for the liberation of Palestine but rather to

organize paramilitary militia forces. Those numbered, by the end of the 1960s in Jordan alone, upward of ten thousand full-uniform armed fighters. More than a struggle for national independence with the formation of a sovereign state as its ultimate goal, the Palestinian struggle of the 1960s was a radical revolutionary one. An integral part of a revolutionary wave sweeping the world in the 1960s (or at least, the global political imaginary), the Palestinian resistance quickly became the paradigmatic revolt. Fatah's underground journal, *Filastinuna*, habitually carried this the call for an armed liberation struggle modeled on other Third-World revolts and making use of the language of "revolution":

> Revolutions all over the world are inspiring us. The revolution in Algeria lights our way like a bright torch of hope. When the Algerians took up their revolution in 1954, they were only some hundred Arabs facing 20,000 French troops and well-armed settlers. [. . .] The revolution in Algeria proved to us that a people can organize itself and build its military strength in the very process of fighting.[34]

While their particular political claims, plans, and goals remained vague or undetermined (were they fighting for a Palestinian state between the river and the sea, recognizing only the rights of pre-1917 Jewish settlers? for one secular-democratic state for all inhabitants of Mandatory Palestine? for a Palestinian state alongside Israel in its pre-1967 borders?), the Palestinians' revolutionary eros was perhaps the most the remarkable characteristic of their uprising, an uprising sometimes understood in terms of a metaphysical, indeed ontological, revolt.[35]

It was this modality of the Palestinian revolt that was squelched in the early 1970s. In the words of Yezid Sayigh: "[T]he successful Jordanian government offensive against the guerillas effectively ended their 'revolutionary' phase and launched them into a period of intense ideological and organizational flux, during which the basis was laid for the later post-revolutionary phase of state-building in exile."[36] With their forced move to Lebanon, the Palestinians changed their strategy, slowly entering into the intelligible realm of international politics. "From the mid-1970s onward," writes Rashid Khalidi, "PLO rhetoric had been increasingly focused on the establishment of a Palestinian state."[37] Indeed, in 1972, the Democratic Front initiated a political plan calling for the liberation of the Palestinian lands that Israel had occupied during the 1967 war. By 1974, following more than a year of internal negotiation between the different Palestinian organizations, a Ten Points Plan was unanimously accepted as the PLO's official political program. For the first time, the Palestinians officially talked about the establishment of an independent national entity while also implicitly accepting the existence of the state of Israel. With this plan at his disposal, Yasser Arafat went to the UN in November 1974 and was received not as the commander

of a revolutionary militia but a future head of state. Samera Esmeir sees Arafat's famous UN speech as a symbolic watershed moment separating an armed struggle waged by different groups of refugee-fighters to reclaim their lands and a struggle led by a political organization claiming to represent the entire Palestinian people over its right to statehood—a people gradually disciplined into the shape of a "civilized nation" within the family of nations.[38] In line with the general postrevolutionary mood of the mid- and late 1970s, throughout their sojourn in Lebanon (where they formed proto-governmental institutions known as a "state-within-a-state" or even "Fatahland"), the Palestinians' political pursuit of national independence became the core of their cause. The fine balance between "the olive branch" and "the freedom fighter's gun," in Arafat's memorable formulation in his 1974 UN speech, was examined from that point on solely on the basis of its contribution to the national enterprise, that is, the establishment of an independent sovereign state.[39]

This significant shift in the Palestinian modality of resistance at the beginning of the 1970s eventually resulted in a crucial historiographic bias: many current historical accounts of the Palestinian resistance tend to downplay its revolutionary period—and especially its non-statist political investments—narrating instead the Palestinian struggle in its entirety as a "struggle for statehood." By the same token, many of Godard's critics, Brody and MacCabe included, understand his work from late 1970s on, starting with the 1976 hour-long *Ici et ailleurs*, as a return to cinematic production after a short detour through the desert of failed revolutions.[40] In both cases, revolutionary collective enunciation is papered over for the sake of a statist-political or aesthetic narrative—the independent nation-state as the Palestinian struggle's only possible goal, and the master's cinematographic product (his "film") as the ultimate moment toward which his audiovisual corpus is geared. Within the framework of such a progressive-teleological narrative of initiation (into statist, liberal, civilized politics; into cultural, aesthetic, modernist production), the collective revolutionary experience can be either subsumed under the arch of the narrative (as a state-oriented struggle to begin with, as part of the master's oeuvre in the final account), or bracketed instead as an unfortunate historical accident (the turn to violence without any political plan, the turn to non-film and anti-art), from which one is in need of rescuing.[41]

After the End

In light of this political and aesthetic historiographical bias, I suggest a different genealogy of both the Palestinian struggle and Godard's audiovisual enterprise. The turn from failed revolutionary struggle to politically-intelligible Palestinian statist claim—from the aborted *Jusqu'à la victoire* to the

realized *Ici at ailleurs*—should be analyzed neither as a corrective move within a progressivist narrative nor as an accidental detour within a teleological one. If *Ici et ailleurs* was indeed made after the unrealized, abruptly interrupted "original" project of *Jusqu'à la victoire*, this interrupted project was, as we have seen, in itself a project *of* interruption, that is, aimed at ending cinema, cinematic authorship, and cinematic form. *Ici et ailleurs*, therefore, serves as the Benjaminian afterlife of interruption itself; it manages to carry on a chain of failures, and is thus composed of recurring endings. Endings and failures are not easily eliminated from an otherwise progressivist historical account; they persistently recur, forming the very origin of a genealogical chain. What lingers after the failure of revolutionary collective enunciation may be the very transmission—in lieu of negation—of that enunciation as a failed one, a transmission calling for a genealogy of endings as interruptions, a genealogy of non-genealogical moments.

The film's very title and its few first seconds present the genealogical concept that informs *Ici et ailleurs*'s throughout. The title is construed around a gap between two notions—"*ici*" and "*ailleurs*"—brought together while also always being kept separate. The anti-dialectical conjunction "*et"* stresses the mode of movement enacted in this project not as a metabolizing form of mediation, but as the labor of multiple transformations, always punctuated through double occurrences. The film begins with a visual figure of a dramatically enlarged and constantly repeated signifier "*et*," like a mantra or a spell (a few years later, Godard was to write that "the real title of the film is *Et*, it is neither *Ici* nor *Ailleurs*").[42] But this duality is neither consecutive nor stable, and is dysfunctional on either the synchronic or the diachronic level. True, the *ici* and *ailleurs* might refer to the *here* of 1974 France versus the *elsewhere* of 1970 Palestine; the *here* of the editing process, in the aftermath of the struggle, versus the *elsewhere* of the revolutionary collective enunciation; the *here* of a working-class French family sitting in their living room and watching a television screen versus the *elsewhere* of the Palestinian fighters, shown on the television screen. But since all of these dual formations already appear as part of *Ici et ailleurs,* the workings of the film itself cannot be situated only on one side of the equation: the film is at once *ici* and *ici et ailleurs*. Perhaps more precisely, the film formulates its *ici*—its present time and place, its cinematic operation, its contemporary moment—in a relational modality that is neither unifying nor symmetrical; as Godard further writes, the "*et*" is the only "*ici*" of the film.

What is then this "*ici*" which becomes an "*et*," a deixis which becomes a conjunction? *Ici et ailleurs* is narrated in two voice-overs: Godard's and Anne-Marie Miéville's, the film's two directors. This newly-formed collaboration between the two—the first in a series of collaborations that continues to this day—positions the relation between these two narrating voices at the core of the "*ici*" of the film, while also embodying the afterlife of the collec-

tive enunciation of the film's "*ailleurs*," the unrealized *Jusqu'à la victoire*.[43] The end of the collective enunciation produced by the Dziga Vertov Group and the Palestinians does not result in a singular individual voice (that of the film as a discrete aesthetic work and its director as authorial origin), in an individual enunciation constituted in opposition either to the past collective revolt or to its present-time absence. Rather, *Ici et ailleurs* works out a mode of relationality formed by the collapse of collective enunciation—not as its abolishment but rather its transformation. The two voices heard in *Ici et ailleurs* are definitely individual ones, structured through various differences (most notably, the sexual), but these also enable the formation of what is not entirely an individuated enunciation (however failed its past experience and future prospects may be). The "*et"* of the film is thus also that of "Jean-Luc Godard *et* Anne-Marie Miéville" (one of the opening titles); together they both form the *ici* of the film precisely as the relationality of *ici* and *ailleurs*, of Miéville and Godard.

Let me now turn to the first moments of *Ici et ailleurs*. Within a few seconds, and through a very thick orchestration of various registers, the film's genealogical gesture is exposed. The film begins with Godard's voice-over presenting the background of the film, which is immediately followed by Miéville's own voice-over repeating Godard's words:

> (Godard): In 1970 this film was called *Victory*. In 1974 this film is called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And. . . .
>
> (Miéville:) In 1970 this film was called *Victory*. In 1974 it is called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And. . . .[44]

On the level of the *énoncé*, these statements are a mere duplication; but on the level of *enunciation* the duplication serves as a transition and a conjunction, adding a second, other, even contrapuntal voice—through the "*et"* and as a signifier of difference—to the film.[45] This other voice adds a second layer to the film: although identical in signification, it establishes a positional discrepancy that structures the entire film. Echoing a split between what appears to be structurally parallel ("In 1970 this film was called *Victory* / in 1974 it is called *Here and Elsewhere*"), it nevertheless encapsulates a whole drama of failure, endings, and passage into the afterlife by a mere transition from one hemistich of the statement to the other. The levels of *énoncé* and *énonciation* not only oppose each other—the first signifying repetition, the second signifying difference—but simultaneously fold over each other, in a cyclical movement of a *mise-en-abîme*: the abyss between the two voices realizes an abyss which already exists in each of the voices—the gap between 1970 and 1974, and within 1974 itself, between *ici* and *ailleurs*. At the same time, this cyclical movement always tends toward the second hemi-

stich—that of 1974, that of *Ici et ailleurs*, that of Anne-Marie Miéville's—as the counter-pole inhabiting the project's afterlife itself. Miéville's voice serves throughout the film as the more critical and pointed one, distancing itself from the original revolutionary project of the Dziga Vertov Group. It is no accident that her voice utters the concluding sentences of the film.[46] This movement toward the afterlife of the text is doubled at the register of the image during the first seconds of *Ici et ailleurs*, specifically in its relation to signification and sound. Throughout Godard's above-described statement, the visual material is emphatically of a signifying nature, hardly image-bound: a few signifiers appear on a completely black background (like that of a board or a writing pad):

Figure 2.1.

The two axes give sense to two different systems of meaning: The vertical charts the singular possessive pronouns ["my," "your," "his/her"], and the horizontal names the paradigmatic components of the cinematic apparatus combining "sound" and "image." While the vertical axis stays still, the horizontal one flickers, thus distinguishing between the axes while focusing on the horizontal one. What is made available through this construction is not only the juxtaposition of the two axes as yet another manifestation of the conjunction "*et*"—again, as before, duplicating the "*et*" which already implicitly exists within the domain of a single level, the horizontal one, through Godard's famous formulation "*son* et *image*"—but also the possible transformation of the "*son image*" from "sound image" to "his/her image." This transformation is formed as a Benjaminian translation exposing of the relationships between different languages[47] —the vertical axis being the original language, the horizontal that of translation, and significantly that of the

audiovisual apparatus. In other words, even before the first proper image is shown, the vertical axis enables the transformation of the allegedly formal investments of cinema (sound-image) into questions regarding the possible claim of authorial ownership on the audiovisual production (his/her image).

Whose image are these—*mon, ton, ou son image*?[48] Bearing in mind Godard's voice-over which accompanies the text, this chain of possessives might stand for "Godard's, Miéville's, or the Palestinian fighter's image." But what might a possession of an image even mean in this context—after the dispersal of the authorial revolutionary collectivity into only singular possessive pronouns, the post-factum remnants of a ruined collectivity in the form of undecidable possibilities for individuality? Furthermore, "Sonimage" was the name of Godard and Miéville's production company, founded in Grénoble in 1972: *Ici et ailleurs* was its first film.[49] It's also the film's opening title—on the threshold of the film as its conditions of production, that is, precisely the historical problematics both structuring the film and developed in it.

The film then turns to the first correspondence between sound and image, between what is heard and what is seen, between "his/her" image and the film's; and it is then also that the film silences Godard and his overdetermined signifiers, and turns to Miéville. With Miéville's voice-over, a flow of images appears for the first time on the screen: a female Palestinian fighter training, briskly drawing half-circles with her rifle, a French family sitting in its living room watching television, then back to the Palestinian fighters. These images tell the story of the "*et*" as that of a gap between two poles—moving from the active Palestinian struggle to the French family already in the passive position of spectators and back to the Palestinians being now constituted, through the traditional cinematic focalizing technique of shot/reverse-shot, as the televised spectacle itself.

In a brilliant visual move, the first image of the Palestinian struggle in *Ici et ailleurs* opens onto a "visual archive" of what could be termed (sadly, only in English) "shooting images." The images presented, of guerrilla shooting, is reminiscent of Godard's famous image of cinematic shooting at the beginning of his 1963 film, *Le mépris* (*Contempt*), depicting the cinematic apparatus as the carrier of a gaze ultimately addressed at the actual spectators.[50] Another version of this image appears, for example, on the cover of Richard Brody's biography of Godard. And yet in modeling the image of the Palestinian fighter on the image of the cinematic camera, the Palestinian fighters are no longer only the already-objectified, ready-to-be-consumed objects of the French family's televised gaze. They also carry the gaze as that of the struggle—combining the audiovisual shooting and the guerrilla shooting—a collective gaze which, however dead, appears as a trace of that struggle, at once objectified (in the return to the cinematic form) and non-objectified (in challenging this form). Thus, Miéville's pole, the pole of the flow of image, of

the alleged return to the moving pictures (as the common critical narrative goes), of the *ici*, embeds nonetheless the shooting collective as an image directed at the spectators—either the French family or the actual spectators of *Ici et ailleurs*—as the still potent afterlife of the struggle; it is precisely as an image of *ici, ici* as *et, Ici et ailleurs,* that this struggle is still performed.

The "*et*" in this film thus signifies a very different operation than the accumulation of images that was supposed to be at the heart of *Jusqu'à la victoire* (as they are presented at the beginning of *Ici et ailleurs*): The People's Will plus The Armed Struggle plus The Political Work plus The War Prolonged Until Victory."[51] The linear, teleological narrative of resistance—from an already-existing people, to struggle, politics, actual fighting, finally leading to victory—is expressed here in five consecutive images, one added to the other, one following the other, resulting in a movement towards (*jusque*) an end, with "victory" being the ultimate "end." *Jusqu'à la victoire* was part of this revolutionary effort, an enterprise placed within a movement aiming toward / until victory.[52] *Ici et ailleurs* is set as a reflection on the failure of this teleological accumulation, elaborated later in the film as "*erreurs d'addition*," the mistake of adding one revolutionary image to the other—from the 1917 Soviet revolution to the 1936 Spanish Popular Front, to 1968 Paris, striving to the last, final revolution; this "*chaîne des images*" is revealed as emphatically Eurocentric, as constituting the image of the future revolution exclusively from images of European revolutions. The "chain of images" is presented within the logic of capitalism as an endless accumulation of imaginary-revolutionary capital; its goal is to become "*millionaires en images des revolutions*."

Both the "*et*" of disjunction (this and that, this *versus* that, *either* this *or* that) and the "*et*" of accumulation (this *plus* that *plus* that) are replaced with a different "*et*"—that of transformation, of repetitive interruption, of a recurrent passage to the afterlife; this "*et*" is not that of combination, association, or negation, writes Deleuze about *Ici et ailleurs*, but "it is a method of BETWEEN, 'between two images,' which does away with the cinema of the One. It is a method of AND, 'this and then that,' which does away with all the cinema of Being = is."[53] *Ici et ailleurs* presents the space of *ici* cum *et*, the space that sets the contemporary moment as a double punctuation of two images, two voices, two periods: "In 1974 it was called *Here and Elsewhere*. And Elsewhere. And . . ." In Godard's voice, immediately later duplicated with Miéville's, the "*et*" indeed literally becomes equivalent to the film's title: the sentence which starts with "*Ici et ailleurs*" ends with the "*et*." But this "*et*" also stands for the ongoing movement of, and within, this counter-text of 1974, a post-revolutionary effort that has victory behind it, not ahead of it, and is therefore written not so much in the language of teleological growing, but rather in a repetitive language which folds over itself as it unfolds. The 1976 film entails this drama of relationality of "here and else-

where," *ici et ailleurs*, as they inform the film's contemporary time of the "*et.*"[54]

In this respect, *ailleurs* is precisely *not* the opposite of *ici*; the latter should have been "there" [*là, là-bas*], and not "elsewhere" [*ailleurs*].[55] Rather, if *ici* in the 1976 film is understood as the space of the *et,* "between two images," then *ailleurs* is the past to the extent that it is being reconfigured in that space of the *et*, in *Ici et ailleurs* itself; if the *ici cum et* of *Ici et ailleurs* is the afterlife of a certain revolutionary modality, *ailleurs* is that modality both already past and transformed into the space of *Ici et ailleurs*. This "elsewhere" stands as an indefinable alterity, not only relational and so mutually constitutive. Within the domain of the *et, ailleurs* is simultaneously the past of the interrupted Palestinian revolution—"Elsewhere. February, July 1970. Elsewhere, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria"—on which the 1976 film is based and which the interrupted past the film nevertheless transmits onward. In other words, if *ailleurs* also means the other realm, that is, death, then how is death—now brought into the *ici* of the film—to be renegotiated to exist both as an image and between the images? And if it is the death of the Palestinian fighters in the events of Black September, in what way is it inscribed into a post-revolutionary audiovisual and political project?

Death and the Image

Ici et ailleurs revolves around the passage to death: in a repeated sequence, images of Palestinian fighters training in the refugee camps are interrupted by an image of a dead Palestinian fighter. Godard's voice-over follows the sequence: "*Parce-que ceci . . . ceci . . . ceci . . . est devenu cela. Ou parceque cela . . . cela . . . cela . . . est devenu ceci*. [Because this . . . this . . . this . . . became that. Or because that . . . that . . . that . . . became this.]" This becoming-of-death in the form of a recurring interruption possesses and conditions the film: without September 1970 there would not have been a film such as *Ici et ailleurs*, while after September 1970 it becomes unclear in what form such a film is even possible. What "happened" as a result of Black September was the Palestinian fighters' death (and with them, the end of a certain modality of the Palestinian struggle and of an audiovisual enunciation); and what "became" of it was a deadly, if not deadening, image of that death. At this crucial moment in *Ici et ailleurs*, the image of the dead Palestinian fighter is painted in overwhelming blue shades, as if it were a photographic document extricated from some forsaken archive, his wounded face filling the screen, the entire image immobile for a few seconds with only the words "Amman September 1970" flickering over the dead body—in total opposition to the previous sequence of vital paramilitary and political activity, energized through quick editing. Inanimate corpse and immobile image are tied here together. Godard's declaration following this dead cinematic

moment, "Almost all of the actors are dead," uses the rich semantic content of *acteurs* to further signify this passage to death: the Palestinians were not merely actors in any cynical cinematic theater, docile participants in an aesthetic apparatus, but agents of action, the ones who act in the revolutionary struggle. Their death was thus necessarily an end of a certain movement, a halt in a movement of political/audiovisual activity; this moment appears in *Ici et ailleurs* as an image of death and a deadly image.

The Palestinian *fedayeen*'s death in *Ici et ailleurs* also serves as a reflection on the medium through which such death is shown. Indeed, from its inception the cinematic medium was supposed to undo the deadening effect of the stable, static photographic image. Whereas photographic operation cuts reality off—the moving, developing continuum of action becomes a series of decontextualized moments, instant eternities—cinema returned to the reality of movement, rescuing the image's indexicality from the desert of deadly immobility. "Cinema is objectivity in time," wrote André Bazin, "[t]he image of things is the image of their duration, change mummified."[56] Binding image to movement, moving pictures could finally provide a consecutive narrative in images based on the deeds of a protagonist-qua-actor who causes change in a storyline and whose image-in-change lies at the center of

Figure 2.2.

the medium. Cinema becomes, according to Deleuze, "a world where IMAGE = MOVEMENT . . . Every thing, that is to say every image, is indistinguishable from its actions and reactions."[57] Cinema, in other words, is both realistic "correction" to photography (infusing action into the artificially static image) and fetishistic/ontological "correction" to theater (action is projected onto the screen as if taking place at the very moment of screening). However, Deleuze suggests that cinematic production itself was going through a dramatic change to the opposite at the exact same time Bazin was formulating its "ontological realism." Post–World War II neo-modernist cinema stopped being the medium of narrative movement in image and sound, gradually becoming "an analytic of the image:"[58] a reflexive project, which rather than tying together all audiovisual tools into a narrative movement of action, separates, concentrates on, and analyzes "the purely optical and sound situations," "as if the action floats in the situation, rather than bringing it into a conclusion or strengthening it."[59] According to Deleuze, rather than breathe life into the image, cinema engages in a critical endeavor whose object is the image itself, and thus it presumably reinforces the objective status of the static image.

Letter to Jane, Godard and Gorin's short film from 1972, epitomizes this tendency, perhaps *ad absurdum*.[60] In their last collaborative work, after the Dziga Vertov Group had already fallen apart, the two directors turn to a single photograph of Jane Fonda in Vietnam, giving it an almost hour-long dialogic interpretation. Nothing but one still image blocked from time to time by a black screen is shown throughout the film, accompanied by the voices of the two directors engaged in critical discourse, scrutinizing Fonda's hypocrisy in her superstar antiwar political stance in Vietnam. When one bears in mind that only a few months prior, Godard and Gorin had directed Fonda (alongside Yves Montand) in Dziga Vertov's Group's last project, *Tout va bien, Letter to Jane* may indeed signify a decisive shift to cinema as "an analytic of the image." The moving picture is replaced with one still, and in lieu of consecutive narrative the film turns into a long cynical and pitiless critical reflection on the pitfalls of First World leftist political engagement with anticolonial struggles in the Third World. However, seen through the reactionary sexual politics underpinning this essay-film—two male directors, themselves First World leftist "superstars," who exercise their intellectualized discourse from the no-place of a voice-over gazing at, penetrating into, and ultimately destroying, a speechless image of a female actress—the critical, reflexive analytic of the image in *Letter to Jane* is drawn from the process of objectification itself, rooted in the voyeuristic and fetishistic tendencies of the cinematic medium; it treats both the image and the figure in it as mute objects of a destructive apparatus.[61]

Ici et ailleurs proposes a totally different "analytic of the image" than that of the already-dead photograph in *Letter to Jane,* while simultaneously also

veering away from Deleuze's suggested analytic, which is centered around a "crystal image" that combines past and present in one moment (replacing the developing movement of classic cinematic narrative, this is an image of "the vanishing limit between the immediate past which is already no longer and the immediate future which is not yet," an image of eternal contemporaneity as the ultimate critical locus).[62] Indeed, the "flow of images" presented at the very start of *Ici et ailleurs* declares nothing but the Palestinians' passage to death—these "actors" in an audiovisual-political revolutionary enterprise are soon to die and, appearing at the beginning of the film as already-dead. The contemporaneity of the collective enunciation in *Jusqu'à la victoire* becomes, in *Ici et ailleurs,* an already-past, failed—even dead to a certain extent—revolutionary modality, which far from binding past to present actually exposes the rift between the two. *Ici et ailleurs* presents this transformation from the contemporaneous to the already-lost—"*Parce-que ceci . . . ceci . . . ceci . . . est devenu cela*"—as a *devenir* of death (to use the Deleuzian idiom against the grain): the becoming-dead of the actors in an interrupted revolutionary modality. In *Ici et ailleurs*, both the explicit and implicit analytic of the image takes the form of this transmission of interruptions:

> Almost all actors are dead. / The actors in the film were filmed in danger of death. / Death is represented in the film by a flow of images. / A flow of images and sounds that hide silence. / A silence that becomes deathly because it is prevented from coming out alive. / Maybe in a thousand and one days Scheherazade will tell this differently.

These statements, uttered by Godard and written in blue over a black screen, are accompanied, in the intervals between one sentence and another, with images from the time of struggle: organizational gatherings, fighters walking in their guerrilla warfare gear and cleaning their rifles, villagers working in the fields. These critical statements—analyzing the image while themselves remaining image-free—interrupt the flow of images; they are anchored in a time when this flow of revolutionary images is actually no longer possible. But the interruption in fact already occurs within the images themselves: "a flow of images and sounds that hide silence"; silence already exists within the continuum of images to begin with, and is thus only being teased out by the analytic of the image written after the fact on the black screen. The interrupting "silence" of the empty screen becomes a silence-effect imposed on one series of images—a rowdy gathering of Palestinians in a village, suddenly muted via editing—which then becomes a silence already shaping the 1970 footage itself: the fighters lying in ambush, waiting to fight the enemy in complete silence, leaving an empty aural register open entirely to the twittering of birds and the hum of the wind. The relative silence of *Ici et*

ailleurs brings out the "hidden silence" already structuring the revolutionary time of *Jusqu'à la victoire*; the death of the fighters hovers over all of their "actions." The present-time interruption opens up a genealogy of past interruptions, of the past as an archive of interruptions: after all, it is the flow of images itself that "represents" death, the death of the struggling "actors"—the end of the revolutionary image.

However, *Ici et ailleurs* exposes not only the already-dead moment of the audiovisual political revolutionary path—its own death as well as the path of recurring death it marks; it also proposes the critical work that will transform the deadly into some other thing. If such a silence "becomes deadly because it is prevented from coming out alive," then externalizing that silence—opening up a genealogy of deadly silence within the revolutionary effort itself—may carve out a different way for Scheherazade ("Maybe in a thousand and one days Scheherazade will tell this differently"). Indeed, acting "in danger of death," the Palestinian fighters resemble the fabled Persian queen who postponed her own death each night by telling King Shahryar her stories; both the character and the ultimate storyteller of an oral collection of stories which has been subject to numerous transformations, Scheherazade, like the Palestinian fighters, is an actor/narrator in an effort of collective (unsubjective, not individuated) enunciation, crafting an uninterrupted flow of speech (sounds and images) which is also punctuated by the danger of death (the silent danger of death and silence as danger of death). For ages, Scheherazade's stories have served as some of the most prominent allegories for the anesthetizing/liberating allure of the artistic narrative in their ability to continuously defer, and finally overturn, a death-sentence. But *Ici et ailleurs* asks what could be the mode of narration after the thousand and one nights are over—when the danger of death no longer structures it—not because there is no death in sight but precisely because it is hidden no more, but rather externalized as a silence that "comes out alive." How would Scheherazade tell her story of enunciating interruptive silences—and tell it otherwise (*autrement*), perhaps (*peut-être*)? What would be the image of such a recurring interruption—what, if at all, would it look like?

Ici et ailleurs may be seen as that story told by a Palestinian Scheherazade on the thousand and second night: no longer that history she both enacted and narrated—a history of struggle conditioned by the danger of death deferred and avoided—it is now a post-history of a post-story where death is no more that singular, ultimate, un-crossable boundary, but indeed a recurring, interruptive occurrence. The film starts with the image of the Palestinian fighter's body, not as the end point of an inverted narratological movement (that is, as a foreshadowing) but rather as an analysis of a space already saturated with death and its images.

The Unchained Image

The image in *Ici et ailleurs* does not anticipate death as a loss-to-come, the melancholic condition of life yet to be lived, as in Ronald Barthes's famous formulations. The image that opens the film (the dead Palestinian fighter) does not exclude death or move toward it; nor is it surrounded or preconditioned by it, indicating without showing it. It is rather an image of a dead figure, of the figure of death, which from that moment on populates the film. *Ici et ailleurs* ceaselessly returns to the image of death; indeed, the image of the dead Palestinian fighter is reflected, at the end of the film, by an image simultaneously distant and intimate, recognized and unimaginable—that of "the living dead," "the staggering corpse," the Muselmann.[63] Decades before Giorgio Agamben made it one the most pointed metonymies for our time, for the state of exception becoming the rule in the post-1945 world, *Ici et ailleurs* had presented the Muselmann—the Jew, the Palestinian, the Muslim—at the core of the relation between death and the image. The image of the Muselmann appears in one of the last scenes of the film, flickering on the working class French family's television screen, in a shot/reverse-shot technique, seemingly as part of a French television show "about" the Holocaust.

These haunting images—of human bodies (still alive? already dead?) thrown into a mass grave—are being commented upon by Miéville, always in a counterpoint to the televised discourse (transcribed here in parentheses):

> (Crimes against humanity: This time the gates of heaven will be passed.)
> OK, Not too many pompous sentences. I noticed something, you know, while reading books about concentration camps. Whenever the prisoners couldn't stand on their feet, and were no longer good for anything, at the last stage of physical decay, then, a prisoner was called a Muselmann.
>
> (Twelve million men, women, and children were deported, nine million were dead. For six million of them, their only crime was being Jewish.)
>
> Here, then, is a Jew reduced to such a state that the SS called a Muslim [Muselmann].

What starts as a television show presenting the figure of the Muselmann to the French audience—in a scene conflating the civilizing mission of educating, state-run television with the *ennui* of its viewers—becomes, through Miéville's voice-over, a counter-discourse invoking the problematic of the image as it relates to the Jewish question, the question of Palestine, or, simply put, the Semites.[64] Miéville begins her commentary with the books from which she gathered the notion, or maybe the name, of the Muselmann; these are most likely the books of testimonies from the camps—Jean Améry's, Primo Levi's—that the European intelligentsia of the time read, the same books Agamben himself would comment upon later. By the end of the scene, however, this name—drawn from textual sources—is visually realized

when Miéville points to the images on the screen as the direct referents of the "Muselmann": "*Voilà donc . . . un musulman*." But this very act of naming the images is in fact twice estranged, first by channeling the act of naming made by the SS and then in its paradoxical underpinning—calling the Jews, on the verge of their death, Muslims ("*Voilà donc un juif dans un tel état que les SS appelle un musulman*").[65] So that in contradistinction to the "pompous" declaration of the television show (reported in a free indirect style), "*leur seul crime était d'être juif*," and bearing in mind another image of a "staggering corpse" presented not only at the beginning of film but also just a few seconds before this scene—the body of the Palestinian fighter, himself a "Muselmann"—*Ici et ailleurs* asks, very much like Agamben and later Gil Anidjar, who was—who could be—this Muslim/Muselmann?

However, the Muselmann had been an image all along: "[I]f I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me," writes Primo Levi; "This image was the origin of the term used at Auschwitz for people dying of malnutrition: Muslims," say Ryn and Klodzinski; in Agamben's words, "perhaps only now, almost fifty years later, is the Muslemann becoming visible."[66] The question of the Muselmann thus becomes that of the analytic of the image anchored in the Muselmann, or the Muselmann as an image, indeed the image of the Jewish-Palestinian Muselmann. What would that image look like? The Muselmann (who, according to Primo Levi, saw the Gorgon) becomes "unbearable to human eyes": he or she circulates invisibility itself, beyond any subject-object focalized distinction, as "one gaze."[67] The invisibility entangled with the Muselmann as such—"the persistent invisibility of that word (an invisibility that is all the more remarkable given its dissemination)"[68] —could, however, be ascribed not only to a linguistic register (the impossibility of bearing witness, or the inapparent but expansive signifier of the "Muselmann" itself); but indeed to a rupture in the imaginary realm itself. The *Muselmänner* as *Figuren*—dolls, corpses not brought to burial, figures stripped of any dignity—might very well be the figures opening up the audiovisual modality of *Ici et ailleurs.* These "unfigured" figures, thoroughly unimaginable, where the human disappears into the inhuman, the Jew as Muslim, are the soon-to-be—"dead actors" that *Ici et ailleurs* strives to bring onto the screen—those who could not die a proper death, death as the finite limit of life, and thus keep hanging on, as a cadaverous presence, in the other night to which this film finally strives: the appearance of the failure to appear as the repetitive movement of interruptive moments.

In figuring the unfigured Muselmann, *Ici et ailleurs* works precisely against the fantasy of "the flow of image" and the apparatus of television which produces and circulates it. As an apparatus for the accumulation of images, television operates within the confines of a capitalistic economy where the goal is to become, in Godard's own words in this film, "million-

aires in revolutionary images;"[69] as an apparatus for a worldwide distribution of images, always in close relations with the unequal distribution of political and economic power, television also circulates the Orientalist framework through which these images will be consumed. Footage of television broadcasts of the kidnapping of Israeli athletes during the 1972 Munich Olympic Games—juxtaposed with footage of a lynching committed in France, by "*juifs orientaux*" against Palestinians suspected of terrorism—explores this blurring of the necessarily imperialist narrative into which the flow of images is written (the Palestinian "terrorists" in 1972), as well as the Orientalist imagination, with its constant search for "the non-European" (the Oriental Jews). The familiar, familial, popular, allegedly democratic apparatus of television—and Godard's declared enemy from the 1970s onward[70] —manages to control this flow of images, alongside the Muselmann's image popping on the screen, under a coherent narrative in which the amassed images meanings are stabilized.

In *Ici et ailleurs*, the Muselmann, a Jew turned into a Muslim, is juxtaposed to the dead *feday*—two figures that interrupt the progressive movement of images, exemplifying the video, as the main production technique of *Ici et ailleurs* and launching "*Les années vidéo*" which would culminate in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*.[71] The video is dissociated from the processes of shooting, recording, production, and distribution of audiovisual materials and is taken rather as a mode of editing, hence of belated mediation, transformation, and critique, a constant revisitation of the audiovisual archive and therefore a modality of history-writing—the history of cinema included.[72] Video as an editing technique became for Godard the way to resist the immediate and uninterrupted accumulative character of television: instead of one-time showing without reserve, the use of video was invested in the work of reconfiguration. As a form of organization, editing, and analysis, video rejects the logic of "the chain" (*la chaîne*)—the cinematic chain of images, the Fordian production line, the capitalist factory as a "factory of death" (as Godard stresses in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*) and Hollywood as a "dream factory." It equally rejects the logic of being chained (*enchaîné*), one image chained to another, each one of us chained to his or her own image, so that every event and every person "have their own proper image." Video, as a technique of interruption, becomes in *Ici et ailleurs* the very mode of "the analytic of the image," unchaining the image, separating it from the flow, isolating it as a complex entity since "there is no more a simple image." The unchained image in *Ici et ailleurs* is that of the Muselmann and of the *feday*.

Godard's image of the dead *feday* is not the only synecdochical image of the revolutionary trajectory in the Palestinian struggle. During the same years of Godard's activity with the Palestinians, Jean Genet was also deeply involved with the struggle. The next chapter will be dedicated to Genet's long entanglement with the Palestinians. Yet I would end this chapter by com-

menting on a short passage from the beginning of Genet's 1986 *Un captif amoureux*, where he, too, portrays the image of the *feday* and his possible relation to it (CA 37, PoL 23).[73] And although it bears some resemblance to *Ici et ailleurs*, it dramatically diverges from Godard's, opening up a different way of negotiating with the Palestinian struggle. Genet writes in this passage that he can now only see the *feday* from behind. The latter has already departed—he went away, we don't quite know where, to his mission, to his calling, to a different life, or to face death. But only then can Genet start describing him. The gap, created by his departure—a hole, a crack—calls for its filling in an image, a portrait of what is no longer present. Yet this portrait does not only substitute the *feday*; it also invokes him (*le rappeler*), calls him back to the scene, brings him from afar.

One can easily see the difference. For Godard, the image of the *feday* is omnipresent. As a result of Black September, the Palestinian fighter is dead; his image, the image of his dead body, appears on the screen over and over again. It cannot be avoided. *Ici et ailleurs* starts with the still images of the dead *fedayeen*, and from that moment on it tells the story of a political space punctuated with the death of its political "actors." The image of the *feday* becomes determinative for both the "*ici*" and the "*ailleurs*"—for the present time and the past events, for the European existence and the Palestinian revolt. Indeed, the image of the dead *feday* marks the very parting of the "*ici*" from the "*ailleurs*": it signifies both the collapse of the revolutionary, collective enunciation and the split between the abruptly failed Palestinian revolutionary enterprise, and the finally conceived French artistic film. Thus, *Ici et ailleurs* is determined by the image of the dead *feday*.

For Genet the image of the *feday* is in the process of vanishing; it runs the risk of total disappearance as it is assigned to a long movement of withdrawal. Genet suggests that the *feday* cannot be encountered directly, frontally, and so no scene of recognition can take place; only his traces—his back as he flees, or his shadow once he is already gone—can be deciphered. The *feday*'s presence, whether alive or dead, is no longer certain. Instead of an image—even a still image of a dead body, yet one entirely present—Genet is left with a gap, a hole, a spatial form of absence. And it is this absence, caused by the *feday*'s withdrawal, that Genet seeks to fill by conjuring the *feday* and his image in the political and textual realm. Genet describes his own task—the task of depicting and ultimately the task of writing—as invoking, calling back, recalling or summoning the lost image of the *feday* ("*le rappeler*"). "From afar," after the *feday* is (almost) lost, Genet strives to re-create his image once again.

Genet's image of the *feday* is utterly different from the one Godard depicts in his work: whereas in the latter the image is abundantly, and also tragically, present, for Genet it is in the course of becoming absent; what for Godard punctuates an entire film—the inability to avoid the dead *feday*'s

body, the unimaginable image of his corpse—is, in Genet's text, an image to look for, a figure to invoke. This difference stands for two distinct positions vis-à-vis the Palestinian revolution. For Godard, the dead *feday* marks the traumatic collapse of the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle, originally accompanied with the attempt to constitute a collective enunciation; the image of death indicates the abrupt end of *Jusqu'à la victoire*; yet it also becomes the starting point, and the structuring figure, of *Ici et ailleurs*—a film itself formed as the afterlife of a political/creative revolutionary trajectory. The death of the Palestinian fighter is, in Godard's project, an interruptive moment, and *Ici et ailleurs* is made of the repetition of these moments. Historically, the death of the *fedayeen* in Black September signified, for Godard, the collapse of the revolutionary trajectory in the Palestinian revolt; critical to the new diplomatic, benign, national trajectory the revolt took in the mid-1970s, *Ici et ailleurs* stages the images of dead *fedayeen* as a recurrent interruption which cannot, and should not, cease. Godard's critical stance is constructed out of these repetitive ends, which themselves form the history of the Palestinian struggle—as well as the history of cinema.

Genet's stance, in comparison, is not only critical: the dead *feday* doesn't only stand for the tragic rupture of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle—its ultimate point of collapse, repeated again and again through the course of the struggle's afterlife. For Genet, the image of the *feday* is not an end point but a space, a realm, a domain that needs to be summoned anew. Even as an image of death—the death of the Palestinian *feday* or of the Palestinian revolutionary trajectory from the mid-1970s onward—it runs the risk of oblivion, of total disappearance from the political sphere, and thus has to be recalled. The image of the revolutionary struggle, however filled with death, should be reinvoked. This image no longer divides between the past struggle and its present afterlife, between "elsewhere" and "here," but on the contrary has the potential of bringing back a shared, intimate space in which actions and death, struggle and images, politics and writing, merge anew. Without revisiting the enterprise of collective enunciation before its interruptive moment—as if such a simple return were even possible—Genet overcomes Godard's dead end, however recurring and repetitive, and the rupture between the political struggle and its writing. Summoning the image of the *feday* and of (what Genet called) the metaphysical, poetic Palestinian revolt, he opens up a potential political-textual space unimaginable in Godard's project.

NOTES

1. Kristin Ross has refuted this benign image of May 1968, "the official story" constructed after the fact by many of its later "ex-*gauchsites*" leading figures, and has stressed instead "the union of intellectual contestation with workers' struggle," paying close attention to Algeria and

Third-Worldism as central components in that seemingly "First World" uprising. See Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 7–12.

2. See, for example, Rahsid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (New York: Beacon Press, 2007); and Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State: The Palestinian National Movement 1949–1993* (Oxford: Clarendoon, 1997).

3. Ibid. And also Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History* (Cambridge, MA: University of Harvard Press, 2003), pp. 240–73.

4. Two prominent Japanese film directors, Massao Adachi and Wakamatsu Koji, visited the members of the Japanese Red Army in Beirut in 1971, shooting the film *PFLP—Declaration of World War*, a propaganda piece for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Shot in a special landscape style, it shows some of the movement's leaders (Leila Khaled, Shigenobu) and repeats their slogans.

5. Irmgard Emmelhainz, "From Third Worldism to Empire—Jean-Luc Godard and the Palestine Question," *Third Text* 23:5 (2009): 649–56.

6. Fredric Jameson famously argued that post–World War II (neo)modernism was nothing but a late-ideological, depoliticized version of the work of the modernist groups of the 1920s and 1930s, who coupled a radical form-based artistic production with militant leftist politics. See his *A Singular Modernity*. He fails, however, to discuss the belated and short history of cinema, which allowed for a 1960s version of modernist activity that even Jameson himself might approve of as nonideological.

7. *Made in USA,* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1966), 90 min., Eastmancolor. *Histoire(s) du cinéma.* Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1988–1998), 265 min., b/w and col.

8. http://www.bopsecrets.org/French/graffiti htm.

9. *Richard Brody, Everything Is Cinema: The Working Life of Jean-Luc Godard* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2008), p. 336.

10. *Everything Is Cinema*, p. 320.

11. On the notion of interruption in relation to modernist art movement, see John Roberts, *The Art of Interruption* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). On the techniques of interruption in Surrealist visual art, see Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Boston: The MIT Press, 1986).

12. Or the opening sequence of *2 ou 3 choses que je sais d'elle*, where Godard's voice-over presents the female figure on the screen twice: first as the actress ("Her. She is Marina Vlady, an actress,") then as the character ("Her. She is Juliette Janson. She lives here"); the voice-over narrator goes on to describe the identical physical attributes of the two, nodding to "Old father Brecht [who] said that actors should quote." *2 ou 3 choses je sais d'elle*, Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1966), 90 min., Eastmancolor.

13. Douglas Morrey names the chapter of his book devoted to Godard's films of 1966–1967 "End of the Beginning / Beginning of the End." Douglas Morrey, *Jean-Luc Godard* (Manchester and New York: Manchester. University Press, 2005), pp. 47–80.

14. Here is Godard's own account of these Ciné-tracts: "Surtout l'intérêt est moins la diffusion que la fabrication. Ça a un intérêt local de travailler ensemble et de discuter. Ça fait progresser. Et puis la diffusion peut se fair dans les appartements, les réuniuons . . . Ça permet de repenser à un niveau très simple et très concret le cinéma." *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard: Tome I 1950–1984* (Paris: Cahiers du cinema, 1998), p. 332.

15. A term suggested by Truffaut to describe the aesthetics of New Wave directors, originally, individually and authoritatively producing their films as if writing them in a *camréa-stylo*. Andrew Sarris famously developed this notion in his "Note on the Author Theory in 1962" in *Film Culture* (Winter 1962–1963), and since then it has become one of the most recognizable, but ultimately the least representative, notions associated with the New Wave.

16. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard*, p. 337.

17. Godard's French biographer Antoine de Baecque writes that, in fact, Godard and Gorin worked as a duo, and that the Dziga Vertov "group" is largely a fiction. Antione de Baecque, *Godard—biographie* (Paris: Bernard Grassset, 2010), p. 466. Colin MacCabe explains that the choice to endorse Vertov—rather than Sergei Eisenstein—as the group's paragon was by no means accidental: "Whereas Eisenstein's theoretical writing suggested that the montage was an operation limited to the moments of shooting and editing, for Vertov montage was a principle

which had primacy in every moment of filming—the Dziga-Vertov group formulated this principle in the slogan: Montage before shooting, montage during shooting and montage after the shooting." Colin MacCabe, *Godard: Image, Sounds, Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1980), pp. 42–43. Furthermore, whereas Eisenstein collaborated, however unwillingly, with the Stalinist regime, Vertov famously remained an oppositional figure throughout his life.

18. And see Rasha Salti, "From Resistance and Bearing Witness to the Power of the Fantastical," *Third Text* 24 (1), January 2011: 39–52.

19. Defining which exact political entities the Palestinians were struggling against in the 1960s is a complicated affair. As will be made clear later on in the chapter, I suggest moving away from the common, statist answers—against Israel, against Jordan, or even possibly against Nasser's Egypt. None of these forces, although connected to the West in geopolitical as well as phantasmatic ways, is at any rate a colonial European power as such.

20. See, for example, the 50-second 1897 *Les pyramides (vue générale),* produced by the Lumière Brothers' film company. And see Michael Allan, "Deserted Histories: The Lumière Brothers, the Pyramids, and Early Film Form," in *Early Popular Visual Culture* 6:2 *(*July 2008): 159–70.

21. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema II: Time-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Robert Galeta (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota), pp. 217–23.

22. Gilles Deleuze et Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Pour une littérature mineure* (Paris: Minuit, 1975).

23. *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 6.31.

24. And see Chana Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism*, esp. pp. 1–20.

25. See Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism: Multiculturalism and the Media* (London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 27–28.

26. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, pp. 223–24.

27. Jean-Luc Godard, "Godard chez les feddayin," in Bergala, Alain, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, tome 1: 1950–1984* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1988), p. 341.

28. Ibid., pp. 340–41.

29. Brody, *Everything Is Cinema*, p. 353.

30. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle and the Search for State*, esp. pp. 262–81.

31. Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), p. 224.

32. Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian People: A History*, p. 243.

33. Eli Galia, *George Habash—Political Biography* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2017), pp. 99–104.

34. *Filastinuna* 11 (November 1960), p. 3. Cited in Helga Baumgarten, "The Three Faces/ Phases of Palestinian Nationalism 1948–2005," *Journal of Palestine Studie*s 34:4 (Summer 2005), p. 33.

35. For a further discussion of the Palestinian struggle as a "metaphysical" revolt see chapter 3. Godard himself told Andrew Sarris in 1970: "The Palestinians are the real Marxist revolutionaries, the disinherited of the earth, but they never speak of socialism and radicalism." *Jean-Luc Godard: Interviews,* ed. David Sterritt (Jackson: University Press of Mississipi, 1998), p. 56.

36. Yezid Sayigh, *Armed Struggle*, p. 148.

37. Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*, p.158. This book, as can be readily inferred from its title, frames the Palestinian struggle as a struggle for a national, independent state. Consequently, it pays scant attention to those pre-1970s Palestinian revolutionary trajectories not necessarily aimed at statehood and definitely doesn't sympathize with them.

38. Samera Esmeir, "Times of Engagement: International Strategies of Rule and Liberation Struggles," paper delivered at UC Berkeley, 5 May 2010.

39. This was the case at least as far as the hegemonic political discourse goes—from the mid 1970s through the 1988 Algiers Convention, the 1993 Oslo Accords and the formation of the Palestinian Authority. The horrific political developments of the past few decades may signify a dramatic change precisely in this tenet in the political discourse, a change which has definitely influenced the formulation of this very project.

40. In his discussion of the film, John E. Drabinski articulates a more nuanced position regarding the cinematic afterlife of what started as a non-cinematic project: "In *Ici et ailleurs*,

Godard, animated by the ethical cinema programmatically articulated in the late sixties and early seventies, enacts just that parricide in and to cinematic language, slaying film in order to let what remains—the ruin of image and sound—be haunted by a radical absence. In that haunting, we catch sight of what is perhaps Godard's best effort at stating, in cinematic language, the site and sight of heterology: the melancholic image." John E. Drabinski, *Godard Between Identity and Difference* (New York: Continuum, 2008), p. 49.

41. The accident metaphor is not accidental here, since Godard had indeed had an accident, which put an end both practically and symbolically, to his Dziga-Vertov period.

42. Quoted in Drabinski, *Godard,* p. 57. "[The film is] finally devoted to that inbetween."

43. Colin MacCabe stresses that "[t]he distinguishing feature of the Dziga-Vertov films is not therefore their collective production, which continued after the group's demise." MacCabe, *Godard*, p. 58.

44. *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 0.21.

45. I follow Stefania Pandolfo's discussion of counterpoint in her "Testimony in Counterpoint: Psychiatric Fragments in the Aftermath of Culture," *Qui Parle* 17:1 (Fall/Winter 2008), esp. pp. 99–102. See also Theodor W. Adorno, "The Function of Counterpoint in Modern Music," in *Sound Figures*, trans. R. Livingstone (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999).

46. See Kaja Silverman's understanding of Miéville's voice as the voice of truth, in Kaja Silverman and Harun Farocki, *Speaking about Godard* (New York: NYU Press, 1998), pp. 180–82.

47. "Translation . . . ultimately serves the purpose of expressing the innermost relationship of languages to one another." Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator.": *Selected Writings* volume 1 (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 255.

48. In an influential text about the film, distributed during its 1977 screening in New York, Serge Daney wrote: "The impossibility of obtaining a new type of filmic contract has thus led [Godard] to keep (to retain) images and sounds without finding anyone to whom he can return them, restore them. Godard's cinema is a painful meditation on the theme of restitution, or better, of reparation. Reparation would mean returning images and sounds to those from whom they were taken." http://kinoslang.blogspot.com/2009/01/preface-to-here-and-elsewhere-by-serge html.

49. Brody, *Everything Is Cinema,* p. 375.

50. See Christian Metz's influential analysis in *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press. 1986).

51. *Ici et ailleurs*, min. 6.02.

52. Thus *Jusqu'à la victoire* is not the end but the movement itself. It is interesting in that respect that Godard and Miéville both say, in this passage, that "this film was called *Victoire*" rather than *Jusqu'à la victore;* as if *Jusqu'à la victoire* cannot be the name given to that "film," only the telos of the revolutionary movement in which it takes part.

53. Delueze, *Cinema 2*, p. 180. Deleuze develops an argument concerning *Ici et ailleurs* that was to become crucial to hims and Guattari in their critique of oedipal thinking: instead of the absent One, the phallus, which structures the exclusive disjunction of sexual differentiation (male vs. female) and the different reactions to it, Deleuze and Guattari have called for an inclusive disjunction (*either* that, *or* that, *or* that . . .) which refuses the binary positions in relation to an omnipotent One. See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), esp. pp. 75–78. The AND of *Ici at ailleurs* serves here for Deleuze as the marker of this inclusive disjunction: non-oppositional differentiation.

54. The near homophone "est" [is]—*Ici est ailleurs*—further complicates the disjunctive relation between "ici" and "ailleurs": what are the conditions under which the "ici" (1976, the film, the afterlife of collective enunciation) can indeed be equivocated to the "ailleurs" (1969–1970, the audiovisual enterprise, collective enunciation)?

55. Drabinski also discusses this shift from the binary opposition "here-there".

56. André Bazin, "The Ontology of the Photographic Image," in *What Is Cinema? Vol. 1*, trans. Hugh Gray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), p. 9.

57. Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 58.

58. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 22.

59. Ibid., p. 19 and p. 4, respectively.

60. *Letter to Jane*, Jean-Luc Godard et Jean-Pierre Gorin (France, 1972), 52 min., b/w and col. Significantly enough, the text of this film, published at the same year in its entirety in Tel Quel (n. 52, hiver 1972), is titled: "Enquête sur une image."

61. In her discussion of *Nightworkers,* an experimental documentary film made in 1975 by members of the Berwick Street Film collective about the fight of female cleaners to unionize, Siona Wilson marks the Dziga Vertov Group as the model for that political avant-guardist cinematic activity. Yet she details the many differences between that feminist film and Dziga Vertov group's cinematic didacticism, political moralism, unacknowledged (or rather taken to the extreme and celebrated) misogynic sexual politics, and the overly triumphant cinematic-political revolution they embark, overlooking messy reality. Siona Wilson, *Art Labor, Sex Politics: Feminists Effects in 1970's British Art and Performance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015). *Ici et ailleurs* presents, however, a different model, closer to *Night-cleaners* with its long period of incubation and post-production and its double-voice, turning from the Godard-Gorin male-duo (staring at a picture of a woman in *Letter to Jane*), to a tensed dialogue between Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville, the latter being the most critical to the earlier Dziga Vertov Group's project. This may also indicate the shift from "production" (the author as (revolutionary) producer) to post-production (the author as a (melancholic) editor).

62. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, p. 81.

63. Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), p. 41.

64. And see Gil Anidjar, "Muslims," in *The Jew, the Arab: A History of the Enemy* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003), pp. 113–49.

65. In Agamben's famous provocative phrasing: "the Jews knew that they would not die at Auschwitz as Jews." Agamben, *Remnants*, p. 45.

66. Ibid., pp. 43, 44, 52.

67. Levi: "The Gorgon and he who has seen her and the Muselmann and he who bears witness to him are one gaze; they are a single impossibility of seeing." Quoted in Agamben, *Remnanats*, p. 54. On non-focalized circulation, see chapter 1.

68. Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab,* p. 142.

69. This is, as Stefan Kristensen notes, the problem of state-produced or market-based television, but also of militant struggles that collaborate with them to produce and distribute "revolutionary images." The question is then how to replace the imgae as an object one looks at to the image that enables one to see from it. Stefan Kristensen, *Jean-Luc Godard philosophe* (Editions l'age de l'homme: Lusanne, 2014), pp. 47–48.

70. See, for example, his 1986 short film *Meetin' W. A.* [Meeting Woody Allen], where the main axis of the conversation between the two directors is the influence of television on cinema. At one point Godard even says that the power of television is like that of radioactivity—it affects the making of films. *Meetin' W. A.*, Dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1986), 60 min., Eastmancolor. In the 1988 Cannes Festival, when closely approached by a television cameraman while giving a press conference, Godard passionately reacted: "This is the enemy. Not the man himself, but the culture. . . . The way they shoot me is disgusting" http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VGG61dzoxKs

71. See "Les années video," in Bergala, Alain, ed. *Jean-Luc Godard par Jean-Luc Godard, tome 1: 1950–1984* (Paris: Cahiers du cinéma, 1988).

72. Steritt, esp. pp. 31–39.

73. Jean Genet, *Un captif amoureaux* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1986); hereafter CA. Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, trans. Barbara Bray (New York: NYRB, 2003); hereafter PoL.

Chapter Three

The Writerly Revolution: Jean Genet within the Fiction of Palestine

The image of the Palestinian fighter is an encounter point between Godard and Miéville's *Ici et ailleurs* and Genet's *Un captif amoureux*. *Ici et ailleurs* shows still images of dead Palestinian fighters and asks what film can be made when "almost all the actors are dead." *Un captif amoureux* starts with the vanishing image of the *feday*—an image fading out, no longer accessible, lost or erased—and asks how to recover this image, to recall or evoke it [*la rappeler*], to call it back into the textual and political realm (CA 37, PoL 23). The disappearing image of the Palestinian fighter, or the image of the fighter's own disappearance, attests to a crucial historical change in the course of the Palestinian struggle: the armed resistance of the late 1960s, exercised in the mode of an anticolonial revolutionary struggle closely connected to other Third-World liberation movements and global guerrilla groups, suffered, at the beginning of the 1970s, a series of military defeats and gradually ceased to be the defining trajectory of the Palestinian struggle. Instead, from the mid-1970s onward, the Palestinian struggle was formalized as a bid for a sovereign state merely on parts of historical Palestine; revolutionary struggle was replaced by a national one. This collapse of the revolutionary trajectory—which I have called the moment of interruption—is signified in the disappearance of the Palestinian fighter: whether by actual death in the battlefield or by symbolic withdrawal from the center of political discourse, whether as dead body in *Ici et ailleurs* or as a vanishing image in *Un captif amoureux*, the *feday* has stopped being the representative figure of the Palestinian struggle.

Yet Genet's project is of a different nature. While Godard joined the Palestinian struggle at its peak of its revolutionary zeal and witnessed its moment of collapse, and *Ici et ailleurs* expresses an attempt to theorize this moment of interruption, refusing to accept the Palestinian struggle's change of course in a critical rethinking of the afterlife of a political and artistic revolutionary trajectory, Genet first arrived to the Palestinian camps in November 1970—right after the events of Black September. Thus, he joined the Palestinian struggle during—or even after—its moment of interruption, when the anticolonial, revolutionary armed resistance was already in decline. Unlike Godard, he did not experience one abrupt moment of rupture that transformed his entire creative project but rather predicated his project, from its inception, on a preliminary sense of loss: it was already at Ajloun in 1971 that he witnessed "the collapse of the Palestinian resistance" (CA 605, PoL 425). The haunting presence of the *fedayeen*'s dead bodies in *Ici et ailleurs*—as images which, even years after they were taken, refuse to fade out and make a place for a more benign, less violent, international politics—turns, in Genet's writing, into an absence, a hole created by the long vanishing of the *feday*'s image. The question here is not how to cope with the collapse of that revolutionary moment but rather how to recall it, to bring it back into political consciousness. Genet started writing *Un captif amoureux* only in 1983—a decade into the strategic change in the struggle and after Israel's invasion into Lebanon and the massacres in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps; indeed, the book is made up of two large sections of *Souvenirs*. But one of his early short essays about the struggle, originally written in 1971, is already dedicated "to the memory of all *fedayeen*" (DE 177, ED 152).[1] Like Godard, and against the historical course of the Palestinian struggle, Genet is concerned in his writing with the image of the *feday*; but this image is now punctuated, from its very introduction, by its own disappearance, thus needing to be—in both a political and a textual manner—*invoked*. It is not the shock of interruption which informs Genet's writing but rather the vanishing of a certain image of the Palestinian revolt and the attempt to potentially summon it up.

From this position, Genet forms a different relation to the struggle, together with a different understanding of it. He joins the Palestinians after a certain modality of the struggle has already ended, having been unrealized, and this unrealizability is fused into his conceptualization of the struggle. The Palestinian revolt poses for him the question of political reality—what it consists of, the ways in which it can be inhabited, and the modes of its transformation. He challenges the very historical factuality of the revolutionary enterprise—its division into discrete historical events located on the course of chronological time, its *Realpolitik* successes and failures—contemplating instead the revolution's mythical and even "metaphysical" sense. And he stresses the writerly mode of this political project; the ways in which

it is not only Genet, but the fighters themselves, that engage in different forms of writing—of symbolic, inscriptive, and gestural activity—within the course of the revolt.

The Violence of the Book

The genealogy of Genet's writing in the 1970s and 1980s, which culminated only a couple of months after the author's death in the publication of *Un captif amoureux*, is a complicated affair. It is commonly assumed that for a long period, throughout the years of his political engagement, Genet abstained from writing—or at least from literary writing. Stephen Barber, his recent biographer, writes that "Genet would maintain a silence in his creative work from 1958 [. . .] until 1983, when he began to write *A Loving Captive*—but it would be an idiosyncratic, often garrulous silence of twenty-five years' duration, encompassing the writing of many newspaper articles and outbursts of revolutionary provocation, within its overwhelming medium of a bleak, mute void: refusal to speak as well as to write."[2] Edmund White, Genet's famous biographer, is a bit more cautious. Employing the genre-appropriate, free indirect style he asserts: "No wonder that this text ["*Quatre heures à Chatila*," written at the end of 1982] signaled for Genet his return to 'the act of writing.'"[3] What these biographical descriptions postulate is that at a certain historical moment, Genet went back to "writing"—actual, serious, artistic one. *Un captif amoureux,* so the story goes, is decisively different from any other writing Genet did in the years beforehand and became the realization of his return to "creative work" (Barber) or to "the act of writing" (White). Yet, in what way does *Un captif amoureux*—whose generic status is highly debatable and whose literariness is constantly put into question, a book which bears more resemblance to Genet's "revolutionary provocations" from the 1970s than to his earlier novels—signify Genet's return, after years of silence, to writing?

In an intriguing invocation of the pervasive trope of "the author's silence," Theodor Adorno addresses in the beginning of his *Aesthetic Theory* the figure of Arthur Rimbaud: "Just as Rimbaud's stunning dictum ['*Il faut être absolument moderne'*] one hundred years ago divined definitely the history of new art, his later silence, his stepping into line as an employee, anticipated art's decline."[4] Rimbaud's artistic silence is therefore portrayed as a horrific and pitiful parable for the demise of modernist art: what started out as a creative explosion of "a new art" came to an end with the silence of "an employee," even a petty-colonialist. For Adorno, this is a story emblematic of all avant-garde eventually turning into commodity. But what might happen if we position Genet's "silence in creative work" precisely in between Rimbaud's high-modernist aesthetic call to arms and its ultimate demise in the exclusively empirical world of exchange-value—that is, *not* Rim-

baud's silence during his years in Africa but rather a "garrulous silence" rife with political and textual activity?[5] There might be an alternative genealogy for Genet's later writing, one that refuses the dichotomy between revolutionary activity accompanied by textual "political provocations" during the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s on the one hand, and an act of creative writing or a return to literary expression with *Un captif amoureux* on the other. Such a genealogy calls into question the distinction between the revolutionary *fact* and literature's *after-the-factness* and proposes instead to think about the ways the two are intertwined and inform one another—the search for a new modality of writing through the new political experience of revolutionary struggle.

Genet's direct involvement in radical political struggles began in 1970. He traveled with the American Black Panthers during the first months of 1970; and then spent six months with the Palestinians at their camps in Jordan in late 1970 and early 1971. He returned to the Middle East several times during 1971 and 1972, and then again a decade later—to Lebanon in 1982, and to Jordan in 1984. In between, throughout the 1970s, he kept up close relations with several key activists in the Black Panthers Party and in the Palestinian forces and became active in the *Groupe d'informations sur les prisons*, dedicated to prisoners' rights in France. This timeline is commonly framed as "Genet's period of political engagement," and hence as "the period of his creative silence." But throughout this time, Genet undertook various textual projects, exercising different forms of "writing:" he wrote numerous articles for French newspapers and journals, made speeches that were immediately transcribed and published, gave some extensive, widely circulated interviews, helped shoot a video essay in Irbid (Jordan), tried to put together two anthologies of political essays, began writing an opera with Pierre Boulez, and authored a full-scale film script. There is evidence that as early as 1973, Genet was "preparing a book about the Black Panthers and the Palestinians," provisionally (and intriguingly) titled *Description du réel*.[6] In light of all this, one could say that Genet was writing—and indeed quite "creatively"—all along. The many projects he undertook, the different media he used and the various forms of textuality he entertained, all reveal Genet's investment, throughout the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, in the question of writing; his experimentation with and inquiry into new possible ways of writing—always in relation to the political struggles in which he was immersed.

I therefore do not accept Jérôme Neutres's model—in his excellent book on Genet's travels to the global South—which distinguishes between two periods of time and two modes of writing in Genet's voyages: "There are at least two *voyages à l'oeuvre* in *Un captif amoureux*: the voyage of a militant who covers his travels in the 1970s, and the writer's voyage in the 1980s. This itinerary of two epochs portrays necessarily two pictures [*tableaux*] of

the South. There is the author of political articles who lives the desire to say 'we,' and Genet the writer who keeps the implacable 'you' of narratives [*récits*]."[7] But there is actually no "we" of the 1970s real political struggle, interrupted in the 1980s with the inauguration of the book project and the split into an authorial "I" and the addressee's "you" (as there is, in fact, in Godard's project, discussed in the previous chapter). Rather, Genet's "we" is, from the very start, not only that of struggle, but also one of writing; of struggle and writing interweaved in ways yet to be deciphered.

Take, for example, the introduction he wrote to a collection of George Jackson's prison letters, *Soledad Brother*, written in July 1970.[8] Jackson, a member of the Black Panthers Party, was convicted of armed robbery at the age of seventeen, and spent the entire 1960s in prison, including the Soledad prison, where he became part of "the Soledad Brothers." In early 1970, the three were charged with killing a prison guard; they were expected to face the gas chamber. A self-taught writer, Jackson was about to publish a collection of his prison letters, and Genet—by then a full-fledged admirer of the Black Panthers, as well as a well-known European author—was asked to write the introduction for the book. The introduction, this short piece of partisan writing, turned in Genet's hands into a dense reflection—as early as 1970—on the act of revolutionary writing and on the book as a locus for this act. Genet begins his introduction contemplating on the novelty of style and narrative form developed by "every authentic writer" (ED 63, DE 49). Genet might be referring here to Jackson, a young writer in the process of retooling his own language, or to himself, an already-established "authentic" writer anointing his young follower. Indeed, a convicted prisoner writing in his own cell as a form of self-liberation—that is all-too-familiar a scene to Genet's readers from his early novels. But Genet's description of Jackson's letters, that started in small forms, and only later developed into "a book, hard and sure . . . both a weapon in a struggle for liberation and a love poem" (Ibid)—already conveys some of the most urgent problematics to be featured in Genet's future writing, as fully realized in *Un captif amoureux* sixteen years later. In writing this introduction to Jackson's letters, Genet revisits the book as a form and rethinks the act of writing. He is particularly drawn to the position of the writer who is on the verge of death; from beginning to end, this writing is deeply informed by the threat of death. And so Jackson's book appears to Genet as a weapon for struggle, at once a call for revolt and a central object within it. It is therefore not only Genet that is written, through Jackson, into what he calls "*l'enterprise révolutionnaire*," (ED 69, DE 54) but also a certain modality of writing, a particular form of book.

In an article written a year later, Genet reaffirms Jackson's complete innocence: "When the assassination [of the guard] occurred, Jackson was writing his murder (his murderous book)" (ED 101, DE 81). According to Genet, the two acts cannot be carried out together since whereas assassina-

tion is "a lone, individual act" of revenge and has little revolutionary implications, writing has many further consequences:

> George Jackson's book is a murderous act, beyond all measures, but never demented . . . it is a radical murder, undertaken in the solitude of the cell and with the certainty of belonging to a people still living under slavery, and this murder, which is ongoing, . . . is the systematic and concerned murder of the whole white world greedy to drape itself in the hides of nonwhite people; it is the—hopefully definitive—murder of stupidity in action. (Ibid)

For Genet, the book is the utmost violent act of revolt, underwriting any action of killing: unlike assassination it is not a calculated revenge but an act "beyond all measure;" even though it springs from the extreme solitude of the prison cell, it is not an individual act but an act indicating a form of "belonging to a people" and taking part in a dispossessed collectivity; rather than a one-time action, it is "ongoing," continuous, and "systematic," potentially endless. The most radical form of murder, "an act of extreme violence: the book" (ED 103, DE 83).

It is quite striking how, in an article allegedly written within the framework of liberal legal discourse—pledging Angela Davis and George Jackson's innocence, claiming the former didn't smuggle weapons into prison and the latter didn't assassinate a prison guard—Genet actually transvaluates the actions, asserting that precisely in refuting the allegations and writing their books, Black Panther members indeed committed the most murderous, violent acts possible. Writing was not—as the liberal *doxa* would have it—Jackson's way of portraying different forms of life, letting his imagination free, expressing himself or even reflecting on violence, all as benign substitutes for an engagement in violent activism. On the contrary, a writing modality which gives form to a particular kind of book—this becomes, in Genet's thinking from 1970 onward, a prominent revolutionary act, the most violent of all.

Textual Objects

This violence of the book was not new for Genet. Indeed, his own sudden appearance on the French literary scene was accompanied by violent images concerning his literary objects. Upon reading the manuscript of Genet's first novel, *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, in 1943, Jean Cocteau wrote in his journal: "The Genet bomb. The book is here, in the apartment, extraordinary, obscure, unpublishable, inevitable. One doesn't know how to approach it." In a later entry, Cocteau recounts: "Last night at dinner I spoke to Valéry about Genet and stupidly I asked him for advice through his layers of senility. 'Burn it,' he said."[9] Anything but a repository of signs, "the book" here is a menacing object, a terrorist's explosive, indeed "*un arme de combat*;" it is

potentially destructive and should be destroyed before it causes any harm. These accounts could, of course, be read as a literary metonymic shift from the social and cultural occurrence of Genet's unexpected emergence into the literary world to the physical entity encompassing Genet's creativity. But at this early stage in the novel's circulation within the literary field, it had not as yet entered the general economy of the literary object's mass reproduction:[10] the sign was still very much attached to the object, and had Cocteau followed Valéry's (serious?) advice and burned the only manuscript of *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, this novel, at least in the version known to us today, would not have existed.[11]

Genet's own relation to "the book," from the very beginning of his career, did not belong in the realm of the aesthetic object, where a book stands for its disembodied, abstract and arbitrary signifying qualities, having "peeled off" its object/material origins. It might seem that Genet entered the French *république des lettres* like many others did, ready to occupy the distinguished, desirable position in it—that of the single writer, the author, the authoritative *créateur* around whom the entire literary field allegedly circles. Genet was indeed drawn to the position of the writer as a young man: after having deserted the French army, at the age of twenty-two, he sent a long letter in highfalutin yet substandard French to André Gide, asking the old, respected author for some instruction and support, addressing Gide as his "*maître*." Genet was following here, perhaps unknowingly, a well-paved path: like that of the young Rimbaud, writing letters to his teacher of rhetorics Georges Izambard, declaring his will to take upon himself the burden of poetry, and the position of the poet—a call for an aspired initiation through an imaginary identification with the authorial position, that is with the authoritative mastery over the system of signs. However, Genet's entry to literature was of a different kind. His act of imaginary identification failed; Gide did not answer him. Perhaps it was destined to fail: such an initiation is class-based and conditioned on both formal and informal education which Genet did not quite receive. Instead, Genet developed a different relation to the book—that of theft. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his monumental psycho-aesthetic biography, famously indicates the first time Genet was accused of theft, in the age of ten, as the formative event of his life.[12] Yet his stealing was attached, from the beginning, to the sphere of the book. Albert Dichy and Pascale Fouché report, in their detailed chronicle of Genet's early years, on his first thefts: "At school the young boy stole rulers, notebooks and pencils—and once, according to Marc Couchert [one of his classmates], also a dictionary. It was a well-known thing: 'whenever something was missing in class, we all knew he was the one who took it'" said Louis Coulerfoy.[13] These thefts are all related to writing—Genet steals writing implements and tools. He would later be sentenced and jailed for other felonies related to writing—documents forgery, loitering with no papers; and in the early 1940s Genet would get in and out of

jail due to recurring book thefts: from bookstores, libraries, and private collections, new or old books, sometimes expensive first editions that he would later pass to a different book seller in Paris. At that time he was selling books in one of the bookstalls along the Seine; that was where Cocteau went to look for him after reading his poem cycle "*Le Condamné à mort*"—in search neither for the *bouquiniste*, nor for the book thief, but the writer.

A thief, a merchant, a reader, a writer—this is Genet's book cycle in the early 1940s, establishing a closed economy of book circulation: he stole books; then went to prison as punishment; while in prison he read books (Genet's often-celebrated first encounter with Proust's *À la recherche*, for example); while also writing his own books there. In one of his trials he declared: "If I hadn't been a thief I would have stayed ignorant and all the beauties of literature would have remained foreign to me, since I stole my first book to learn my ABCs. A second followed, then a third." On another occasion, he "gave his profession as a 'broker' of books."[14] The book as a text and the book as object are inseparable for him: not only a repository of abstract, arbitrary, immaterial signs, and so ready for mechanical reproduction with no remains, but first of all an artifact and an object, a bodily entity, he himself carries from one place to another, ready to explode as the book he writes at the same time would. Genet's double positioning in relation to the book disturbed such disparate figures as the judge in one of his trials (who asked him, "what would you say if someone stole your books?") and Cocteau himself, who urged Genet—after the latter became the rising star in the French *république des lettres*—to stop stealing them.[15] But he never quite did. One could have said that Genet was a book-fetishist who had become a book-writer. But such a developmental dialectical narrative, in which the material is turned into a sign, does not hold for Genet. He did not stop stealing books and sublated it to a higher level—in the mode of *Aufhebung*—into writing about stolen books; he has not only taken an act in reality and made it into the formalized content of literature. The genealogy of Genet's writing is, from beginning to end, the genealogy of his transgressive position vis-à-vis the aesthetic realm and its disembodied (non)objects: for Genet, "the book"—unlawfully changing ownership within the field of circulation, non-peacefully operating within the arena of struggle—is first a "bomb" and later "the most violent act."

It is this thinking about "the book" which launches Genet's own last book—precisely not as a return to "creative work" or to an "act of writing," that is, a return to the realm of literary signification; but rather as another instantiation in a continuous effort to generate the book and the revolutionary act, reality and writing, from each other. The first words of *Un captif amoureux*—written at the end, in the last days of Genet's life—portray the white page and the black marks on it, asking in what way this linguistic system of signification relate to the non-textual reality. This reads as a critique of

representational theories of language, as if Genet invokes here a basic modernist sensibility, and in so doing inaugurates a somewhat-belated high-modernist literary project, securely positioned within the aesthetic realm. The first sentences of Genet's book not only allude quite explicitly to Mallarmé's "*Le Livre*"—or for that matter, to the opening statements of "*Un coup de dés*"[16] —but also join a whole modernist pictorial tradition, stretching from Wassily Kandinsky to Clement Greenberg, which inquired into the reality of the white surface. In *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, Kandinsky contrasts the thick matter, saturated with "black silence [. . .] something burnt out, like the ashes of a funeral pyre, something motionless like the corpse," to the openness of the white silence, "not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities." This silence of the white platform—the silence of the conditions for creation and presentation—also materializes in actual space, as the wall upon which the white canvas hangs: "There comes a great silence which is materially represented like a cold, indestructible wall going on into the infinite." It is a void rife with potentiality and thus the always-actual and very real entity of aesthetic activity; this whiteness—of the canvas, the wall, but also of the page, to return to Genet—might therefore "possess more reality than the signs that disfigure it."[17]

Genet's claim to the "reality" of his book's white page, however, does not quite adhere to the modernist account of forms' indestructible reality; nor does it coincide with its later ("poststructuralist") development, as in Derrida's reading of "the dissemination of *blancs*" in Mallarmé, the one that stresses the indeterminate difference between the semantic and formal meaning of *blanc*—the color of no-color or the void object on the one hand, and the operation of setting intervals or spacing on the other—an indeterminacy which itself lies at the heart of the text's movement.[18] Rather, "the white of the paper" in the first paragraph of *Un captif amoureux* is "real" since it is first and foremost an *object*, an "artifice" bearing its own prehistory—the parchment and the clay tablets that preceded the white paper as materials for writing surfaces. In other words, the white paper doesn't only carry black signs—indeed it carries its own "non-whiteness" (or de-whitening) object-as-status. The blank page doesn't derive its reality from being the only stable actuality of the surface enabling all options to be realized (a "nothingness before birth," "pregnant with possibilities," "going on into the infinite," as in Kandinsky), but conversely in Genet's non-aesthetic genealogy, it is "real" precisely due to the already-lost material qualities it nonetheless carries, as if "the saturated dead silence of the black color" (Kandinsky) is inscribed already into the white paper, not only as black signs. Furthermore, if "reality" is immersed in "every little blank space between the words," this can no longer be the formalist reality of the surface *qua* conditions of possibility, one preceding the "birth" of the signs, but rather reality already generated from a certain relationship between the signs and the surface, between black

and white. This relationship comes into being precisely through the processes, and not the conditions, of writings. The blacks, Genet further writes, are the characters on the page, as Black Americans are figures who write their history on the blank page of White America—which suggests a homology between the level of signification and the level of reference: the structure of writing resembles that of American political history—both are "black on white." But this "image," whether a representational or a formalist-modernist one, in which the signifying black writes itself on the empty white, is "too easy," according to Genet.[19] Instead, Genet suggests that "reality" exists in the amorous relationship between a black American and a white American: reality, construed now as a mode of romantic relationality between black and white, is no longer mapped on a signifying structure; it reveals not the sign inscribed on the surface, but an erotic drama that exceeds the realm of writing and traverses reality itself. Yet this seemingly non-textual reality, one no longer homologous with writing, happens in reality, which is the place where an amorous drama is being played out. Political reality is not homologous here with writing, but is rather itself informed by a certain mode of theatrical inscription. Reality is underwritten with a form of theatricality that can bring together the black and the white precisely *not* according to the structure of signification—as though Genet returns after his years in political exile to the aesthetic realm—but as a violent act of amorous relationality. Indeed, in a book which portrays the rift between black and white America, what can be more violent than this absent romantic relationships? And where does the latter exist other than in the "*drame amoureux*" of the one who declares himself "a Black whose color is white or pink, but a Black" (ED 149, DE 126), the writer of *Un captif amoureux*?

Revolutionary Dreams

"Genet said that [theater] was no longer a viable form of art. I asked him what form he thought was valid today. Something that doesn't exist yet [he replied]"—writes Mohamed Choukri, the Moroccan writer in his book on Genet, based on their numerous encounters at the end of the 1960s.[20] The theater is "no longer a valid form of art:" this might be not only because there exists a form of art *better* than theater, but rather because theater itself can work in a better vein than that of a *form of art*. It is as if Genet, who tried in his theatrical works from the late 1950s to make the structure of theater collapse onto itself—to tear down the theater hall so that it would open onto non-theatrical political reality—found out, in the 1970s and 1980s, that this political theater had actually been performed in reality itself. But then what happens to the notion of reality—political, revolutionary reality—once the theater, with its *drame amoureux*, enters? In an often-quoted passage from an interview he gave in Vienna in 1983, Genet discusses the difference between

his early prison writing and his years of struggle in terms of his changing attitude toward reality:

> That was a dream. It was in any case a daydream, a reverie. I wrote in prison. Once I became free, I was lost. And I didn't find myself again in reality, in the real world, until I was with these two revolutionary movements, the Black Panthers and the Palestinians. And so then I submitted myself to the real world . . . in short, I was acting in relation to the real world and no longer in the grammatical world. . . . To the extent that you can oppose the real world to the world of daydreaming. Of course if you press the issue further, we know very well that dreaming also belongs to the real world. Dreams are realities. (ED 277, DE 239–40)

At first it seems that Genet opposes reality and dream: whereas in his early years he mobilized dreams, fantasies and narratives in order to escape the grim reality of prison, in his later years he "submitted" himself to the real world of revolution and struggle. Reality here stands against dreams, action against writing, politics against literature, in a perfect homology: dreams are the materials of literary writing, a "grammatical world" turning its back on actual reality; and conversely, the locus of political action is the real world devoid of any fantasy or dream. But the distinction between these two ontological realms does not hold up in Genet's discourse, since, as he is quick to assert, dreams themselves—and reveries and fantasies—belong to the real world. To follow the homology Genet sketches out here, novelistic writing and narratives, the "grammatical world" in general—these all take part in political action within the real world; politics, then, is not the cessation of writing but its continuation in other means, or rather in *other forms*. In fact, instead of the distinction between reality and dream, Genet analytically suggests two opposing concepts of *dream*—trying to direct a movement from the former to the latter. The first dream is an illusion, a way to escape reality, a refuge from the real world; his early novelistic writing served as such a refuge, Genet states here. This dream thus appears as a literary narrative situated within a Kantian aesthetic realm and therefore formed around the free play of imagination, neither determined by empirical reality nor derived from moral law. But in questioning the opposition between reality and dream, between politics and writing, Genet gestures toward a second modality of dream, in which dreaming happens within reality, so that the work of narratology and grammar is not only located in a realm separated from politics—in novels, in the theater, in literature—but is rather introduced into political action, and more specifically, revolutionary struggle.[21] Genet formulates in this 1983 interview his interest in the textual modalities of the real: the grammar of reality, the narrativization of the politics of struggle, the place of dreams within revolutionary actions.

In *Un captif amoureux*, Genet would go back to his role as a dreamer. What others considered brave transgressive actions—his numerous crimes, long years of prostitution, sudden moments of betrayal—he recognized as masked imitations. He calls himself a "*spontané simulateur*"—someone who refuses to follow the path of one recognizable identity, instead imitating various modalities of social action to the extent that his life is a constant and very active dreaming of his own subject-position.[22] But Genet explains this dreaming not in opposition to his life's reality but as a direct result of it: an orphan left by a mother he never knew, growing up in several foster families and later in governmental institutions and lacking any familial attachment, he constantly refused affinity for any specific place, and his reality consisted only of his own dreams of shifting identities and short-term occupations. Through his very life-conditions, he was destined to act as in a dream, and it is through his dreams that he entered reality. Thus, when he portrays his life as a page of a book that he folds so that it becomes three-dimensional—perhaps only in his own eyes (CA 24, PoL 171)—he attests to the dreamlike, invented, textual status of his life, so that it is precisely as pages turned into three dimensional objects, that this writing of life is folded into reality; as in the first paragraphs of *Un captif amoureux*, the page of writing—the *drame amoureux* between the white page and the black signs—already forms the real. In so doing, it carries the dreams or narratives of the "grammatical world" into political reality.

This lack of a predetermined social reality, against which Genet became the *simulateur* of his own reality—a dreamer whose dreams are his mode of action in the real world—is what allows him to associate himself with Palestinians' revolutionary action. Since he becomes a dreamer within what is itself a dream (CA 248–49, PoL 172–73)—a writer in Palestine, a place unrecognized, to a certain extent unknown, "a fiction" in Genet's words; a *simulateur* in a reality which is based on simulacra,[23] Genet goes on to consider himself a de-realizing force in revolutionary movements, themselves marked by a certain dream-like quality. This dream, however—by Genet, the Black Panthers Party, the Palestinian forces—does not stand in opposition to grim political reality but rather as a modality of action within the real. Genet is drawn to the Palestinian struggle precisely because it mobilizes a certain fictive quality into the realm of political struggle. As far as he in concerned, Palestine is a fiction and doesn't exist as a distinct geographical unit; indeed, when Genet goes to "Palestine," he is actually traveling either to Jordan or to Lebanon in order to stay with the Palestinian guerrilla forces based in refugee camps or big cities such as Amman or Beirut—since Palestine, as a state, a recognized territorial entity, or a known community—is "fiction." The question of what Palestine *is*, or where exactly it is *located*—what its aspired borders are, what kind of political entity it might form—remained a basic, unanswered query in the struggle's revolutionary

years. Genet captures this when he talks, in his 1973 notes, of "a Palestine without land"—not only a Palestinian people without a land but rather "Palestine" as a notion that can itself signify something other than a geographical unit; and goes on to state that "while the land was being forced under its feet, the Palestinian nation was finding itself in fantasy, but for it to be able to exist, to continue, it had to discover the revolutionary necessity."[24] Revolutionary struggle is therefore woven into fantasy, based on a certain void in political reality—the fact that the Palestinians have no land and were still unformed as a people and devoid of any recognized political institutions; and a void in the struggle, whose revolutionary modality enters its stage of decay. The aim of the struggle is not to put an end to fantasy and make things real; to fill the gaps in political reality, to eliminate the void. It rather mobilizes fantasy to its own course, brings it to the hands of the fighters, uses it as a strategy of revolt, a revolt that becomes textual, poetic and theatrical; but not outside of of the social world, in some realm of the imagination, but within political reality itself—as a different mode of action.

Poetic Struggle

In one of the numerous beginnings of *Un captif amoureux*, Genet recounts his first encounter with the Palestinian struggle: in the summer of 1968, while he was staying in Tunisia, a hotel waiter took him to a bookshop where, in a secret, secluded, small room, opened before his eyes some hidden Arabic poetry books, and read the poems dedicated to the Palestinian fighters (CA 29–30, PoL 18). Genet did not like the poems, but was taken with the beauty of the calligraphy. He had already encountered volumes of Arabic poetry, in Paris, during the May 1968 uprising,[25] but with no calligraphy (CA 32, PoL 20); the Parisian scene, he notices, received these poems only by virtue of their semantic quality, that is, within the intellectual—and so, ultimately for Genet, unimpressive—"aesthetic realm." Back in Tunisia, though, something completely different had happened: what had begun as a failed scene of seduction, set in motion a different kind of encounter which launched Genet's long entanglement—*amorous*, as he kept insisting—with the Palestinian struggle.

Indeed, if it is to be located anywhere, Genet's "return to writing" may as well be here—in this first engagement with the Palestinian struggle, an engagement mediated through poetry, informed by the objecthood of the textual object and immersed in erotic imagination. From this moment on, Genet would participate in various anticolonial revolutionary struggles, while simultaneously experimenting with forms of writing—both implicated in and deriving from them. These political struggles, and specifically the Palestinian one, were themselves portrayed by Genet as informed by a certain procedure of writing, or to put it in his own words, "poetic revolutions" (but also

"metaphysical" and "erotic" ones).[26] Not only has Genet been "writing" all along—experimenting with forms of writing and conceptualizing the status of the book vis-à-vis the revolutionary struggles in which he participated—but these struggles become intelligible for him only through their equivalent engagement with certain modalities of writing.

Genet argues for the poetic character of both the Black Panthers and the Palestinian *fedayeen* throughout his writings from the 1970s and 1980s. In a talk he gave at the University of Connecticut in March 1970, while touring with the Black Panthers throughout the United States, he asserts that their political thought "originates in a poetic vision of the black Americans" (ED 45, DE 32). This poetic vision—or "poetic emotion" as he would later call it—lies according to Genet at the origin of the uprising and is drawn from black peoples' lived experience as an oppressed people. So rather than an essentialist quality of a certain ethnicity, this "poetic emotion" might be something that "Black Americans" have in common with other struggling groups, a sharable quality at the heart of many anticolonial struggles. In his introduction to George Jackson's book, Genet tries to be attentive to this double struggle, commenting on Jackson's language of struggle while forming his own; he argues that the revolutionary enterprise "is the inevitable conclusion of a poetic genius" which should be exalted (DE 69, ED 54). In these essays, he calls for a new political thinking, a theorizing of revolutionary struggle that has underlying poetic qualities; while simultaneously acknowledging that it is already the Black Panthers themselves who develop such a political thinking—"*la pensée politique des Black Panthers*"—in both their discourse and action. This "poetic genius," then, is at once the object of a new political theory for revolutionary anticolonial struggle which Genet would try to compose in the following decade and a revolutionary modality of writing enacted by the forces of revolt themselves. Both are preoccupied with writing what Walter Benjamin could have called the "poetized" quality of struggle.

It is in his first essay dedicated to the Palestinians—a commentary on a photo reportage composed of ten pictures from the Palestinian camps in Jordan—that Genet opens up the entire array of *poetized* revolutionary struggle. He discusses the different images of the struggle and reveals its various formalized elements: the gestures of the *fedayeen* carrying their rifles, the organization of military training, the burial ritual of the fighters' bodies, the laments of mourning women. Genet insists that the formalized aspect of these different scenes is not only a result of the camera's eye—an external gaze that captures actions as gestures—but indeed the very modality of revolutionary struggle carried out by Palestinian fighters. Commenting on a photograph of a masked fighter lying down while holding his rifle, Genet writes that "there irony shows us that it's a game, the staged pose [*la mise en scène*] of the warrior at rest" (ED 95, DE 76). The *fedayeen* themselves

express the stylized nature of their struggle: they inaugurate a theater of revolt in which they perform, pose, put on an act, create a mise-en-scène, play with irony, and amuse themselves.[27] They are conscious of the gestural nature of their actions and present themselves as occupying a role in a revolutionary space. But this role is not entirely scripted—or it may be scripted to the extent that the *fedayeen* are also the ones who write, fashion and formalize it through their own actions. The revolutionary arena becomes, in Genet's precise words here, a theatrical space in which a certain game or play takes place. But this is a serious game—dead serious. It does not, however, make the *fedayeen*'s struggle any less real; it rather unveils the theatrical, dream-like, simulacral, fictional modality with which the reality of the revolutionary struggle is punctuated.[28]

A prominent scene of the Palestinians' scripted struggle, for Genet, is that of the card game. He recounts this scene in his 1971 commentary on the photo reportage (ED 92, DE 76–77); in an interview he gave in 1982, before his visit to Lebanon (ED 228, DE 194); and throughout *Un captif amoureux*. Genet was first drawn to these games when he served in the French colonial army in Damascus, in 1930: the existence of these moments of play within the highly serious military arena and the insertion of an element of chance into the otherwise seemingly organized space of colonial rule caught the young soldier's imagination. And although these card games were forbidden, both by the colonial military authorities and by Islamic religious institutions, they were, according to Genet, quite popular, and managed to bring together, even if momentarily, colonizer and colonized, French and Arab, through the social place of the imagination they created.[29] It is no surprise, then, that Genet turns at the beginning of his book about the Palestinian struggle to the card games in the arbors of Ajloun. Genet tells the story of one of those games, giving a long, detailed, and sometime elusive description of the numerous *fedayeen* sitting on benches: two of them play while others intervene with advice, and Genet himself, with his limited knowledge of Arabic, nevertheless makes sense of the entire social interaction. After a surprising digression into a description of a very different "game"—the Japanese feast of Obon—Genet finally reveals, only at the end, the conceit of the scene: that the game was played with no cards at the hands of the players, but only through gestures, "shockingly realistic gestures"(CA 47, PoL 30). This card game without cards becomes metonymic for the Palestinian struggle, as well as for the politics of resistance, and even for a specific political modality this struggle brings to the fore. In the absence of actual cards, this game played by the *fedayeen* is transformed from a common leisure activity to a series of gestures, however "shockingly realistic:" the *fedayeen* only seem to be playing cards, but no real game is at stake. However, what is a real game to begin with? And how is playing a game different from playing at playing a game ("*ils avaient joué à jouer*")? If games create a space of the imagination

whose ontological status differs from that of reality, the cards themselves—as Genet's description stresses—are only representations of figures from a monarchic-aristocratic world which has little to do with the actual political reality those who are playing the game inhabit. In turning this imaginative game world upside down—in playing a game of cards with no iconic representations—the game may indeed become, by this dialectical movement, "shockingly realistic." If playing the game consists of establishing a representational imaginative sphere separate from reality, then playing at playing a game never quite constitutes that distinct sphere; and if the former serves as one of the origins of the Kantian realm of "the free play of the imagination" ascribed to art, the latter refuses it, dwelling instead in a certain gestural reality of "*gestes scandaleusement réalistes*."[30]

Genet dedicates much of his book to this theater of gestures played out in revolutionary reality, the ceremonial, ritualistic character of what would have otherwise been "*jeux bourgeois et de bourgeois*" (as one of the *fedayeen* furiously comments) informs the "reality" of a struggle located, as we have read in the first page of the book, "where the love drama is being played." The Palestinian struggle is made up of numerous gestures from which Genet constructs the great inventory of a revolutionary theater: the different names the *fedayeen* use, their elaborate cleansing and kissing rituals, the fake accents they make, their musical celebrations and dance rituals, the deliberate exaggeration characterizing their entire behavior. This does not mean that the struggle is any less real: "They are imposing! Each Palestinian is real," Genet exclaims (ED 278, DE 241). Through the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, Genet portrays a political revolutionary modality that questions some of the most basic liberal convictions as to what a true, real revolt should entail: authentic expression of will, spontaneous transgression of limits, and new, anti-traditional acts of resistance. He suggests, instead, the realm of gesture—and not of action (most notoriously advocated by Hannah Arendt)—as the locus of revolutionary politics; and in so doing, uproots the theatrical gesture—in Brecht's epic theater, that "quotable gesture" which interrupts the context of the original enunciation[31]—from institutional theater, mobilizing it into the field of resistance.[32] Both the Palestinian *fedayeen* and the Black Panthers indeed "play"—but neither at a game nor on stage (CA 141, PoL 98). Rather, they play their own actions as gestures: they fashion their rhetoric and tone of speech, invent and enact their songs—songs no longer read in a secluded room in a Tunisian bookstore—even stylize their dialogical interaction.

I am following Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the gesture, to suggest how in insisting on the gestural "*théatricalité*" of these struggles in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet is employing a revolutionary politics anchored in linguistic mediation, mediality, or "being-in-the-medium"—or in other words, in what he envisions in the beginning of his book as a mode of writing enacted by the

revolutionaries themselves: a poetic act of revolutionary writing.[33] This revolutionary "writing" refuses both the teleological and the spontaneous politics of revolt: the struggle is not aimed at gaining an already intelligible political end, and it does not exercise pure acts of free will; in this vein we might understand, on the one hand, Genet's famous declarations that once the Palestinians have their own state, he will betray them; and, on the other, the lack of psychological narration in his writings from that period. These scripted revolutions inaugurate "politics [as] the sphere of full, absolute gesturality," politics as an ethos embedded in language; neither production (toward an end) nor action (as an end in itself); neither communication nor expression.[34] Indeed, in tracing the history of gesture, Agamben points out that the late nineteenth century bourgeois class decisively rejected gesture in favor of personal authenticity and psychological interiority; gestures, he suggests, were exiled to the realm of modernist art and became the prominent subject matter of silent cinema or Proustian narrative, to give two central examples.[35] The Palestinians' inscribed revolution seems to work precisely against this liberal division of labor between the political sphere (based on adequate, authentic, truthful actions), and the aesthetic realm, the only, tightly delimited place where social theatricality can still reside; in merging these two realms, those theatrical gestures leave the secluded locus of art and are now positioned within the political struggle—which can no longer claim an authentic, interior, pre-inscribed, representative identity.[36]

In another invocation of these games of cards in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet insists on the ghost-like character of the card game, where the absence of cards resonates the Palestinian lack of territory (CA 179, PoL 125). Without cards, the game becomes boundless, endless, un-circumscribed by any notion of gain or victory that may bring it to a close; perpetual, it is now not only part of the Palestinian struggle but its very form. This may even be read as a condemnation, since what is a struggle that is not based on an imaginable goal, but instead revolves around a non-image-able absence? The absence of cards, this lack of images as representational objects, stands here for the absence of ground underneath the *fedayeen*'s feet—the absence of "Palestine" itself—which then, as now, has not managed to index a territorially defined homeland, a discrete national identity or an identifiable end for the struggle; the Palestinian revolution as a groundless revolution.[37] Circulating precisely this groundlessness in their revolutionary gestures—asking repeatedly "where is Palestine?" and "what is Black?"—these struggles launch, in Genet's eyes, "a metaphysical struggle" against the origin, a struggle against the origin as the ultimate rule of the political game (CA 239, PoL 166). The Palestinians' fight against the "original" people—one that, in the name of origin claims (and also enforces) its right on Palestine; the Black Panthers' revolt against white America as a "blank," "original" page setting the ground for whatever is to be marked on it. Fighting against the origin, these struggles

start not from empty grounds but from already-full voids: their games of cards consist of images turned into specters. These groundless, ritualized, scripted revolutions thus invert the "genealogical" course: instead of starting, à la Kandinsky, in white silence and moving from "nothingness before birth . . . pregnant with possibility" to its eventual fulfillment, the players start when their hands are already "filled with specters"—from the other side, from the saturated black silence of the corpse. In so doing, the Palestinian struggle ceaselessly relates to the feast of Obon invoking the dead as the inverted point of its departure.

Deadly Acts

The gestural nature of the *fedayeen*'s actions reveals how deeply saturated with death these actions are. The scripted, written, theatrical struggle is marked from its very inception with a strong sense of death; there exists no theater, as Roland Barthes reminds us, that doesn't entail the cult of the dead.[38] The *after-the-factness* of the Palestinian revolutionary struggle—which Genet constantly writes as he insists on its "poetic acts"—is based on an already-existing void, a primordial absence of the "fact:" such a "fact" was not first experienced and then suddenly interrupted, creating a "hole," as in Godard's project. For Genet, the "hole" was there to begin with: death, therefore, does not signify the shift from a "fact" (revolutionary zeal) to an "after-the-fact" (the afterlife of the already-lost revolutionary moment) but rather belongs with the revolutionary moment itself, to the realm of *after-the-fact*; it is, for Genet, part and parcel of the scripted revolutionary struggle. The gestural actions of the *fedayeen* are not a substitute for some original mode of spontaneous activity which was abruptly lost, but constitute a struggle against the origin itself, as ideology and political currency. Genet and the Palestinians inhabit a space devoid of origin, a modality of action opposing the "fact." Instead of being positioned as a cessation of revolutionary action, death pervades the revolutionary space itself—the space of the gestures—and specters-filled card game signifies the saturated absence of the motherland. Death becomes part of the struggle, even a productive element of the *fedayeen*'s modality of action-in-struggle. It bears not only a loss that cannot be reconciled, but a political potentiality.

"Genet's last works," writes Edward Said, "are saturated with images of death, especially *Un Captif."*[39] Many commentators indicate Genet's own proximity to death—he suffered from tormenting lung cancer in the last years of his life and refused to take pain killers while working on his book—as the reason for the tenebrous atmosphere pervading his late writing. But Genet had found these "images of death" already in the very operation of the anticolonial struggles he had joined, precisely in their combination of "images" and "death" as two instantiations of their *after-the-fact* modality.[40] As

far back as in his 1971 essay, Genet writes that "[w]hat he doesn't say, the *fedayee*—the sacrificed—whose image you see, is that he knows that he himself will not see this revolution accomplished, but that his own victory is to have begun it" (ED 90, DE 72). The images Genet discusses are not necessarily images of dead *fedayeen* (as they are in *Ici et ailleurs*), but rather images inscribed with death from the start, precisely through the workings of the vivid revolutionary struggle by way of theatrical gestures, dream-like actions and images. Death does not only belong to the fighter's loss of life or to the revolution's end point, successful or otherwise; there exists, in Genet's view, a sense of death which already accompanies the beginning of action, the struggle's coming-into-being, the hope for victory. Genet insists here on the literal sense of the *feday*: the *feday* is the one who is sacrificed from the beginning, and throughout the course of the revolution. This kind of death does not signify an end, a terminal point, a limit not to be crossed, but rather a generative mode of transformation and transfiguration. It marks an opening up, not a shutting down, of the space of struggle—a space where games of cards without cards are being played out, and liberation struggles with no promised land or national sovereignty on their horizon are being fought. Genet portrays the images of these struggles, and these struggles-by-image, as images of death (ED 91, DE 73). But what kind of death is repeated here again and again?

Genet's engagement with the Palestinian struggle was marked from its inception with a pervasive sense of death. The first time he traveled to the Palestinian camps was in winter 1970, directly after Black September. A decade later, he joined the Palestinian forces in Lebanon in summer 1982, during the siege of Beirut. "*Quatre heures à Chatila*," his seminal essay about the Sabra and Shatila massacres in September 1982—an essay which would eventually give life to the writing of *Un captif amoureux*—is filled with dead bodies. One of the first persons to walk the streets of Shatila a mere twenty-four hours after the end of the massacre—while the bodies were still piled in every corner and their stench filled the air—Genet descends in that text into a Palestinian Hades, recounting the story of the Palestinian revolution as a struggle of young, courageous, free, beautiful, and already-dead *fedayeen*. Their state of death—a saturated, meaningful one—hovers over the entire text: "The solitude of the dead in Shatila camp was even more palpable since they were frozen in gestures and poses over which they had no control. Dead just any old way. Dead and abandoned where they lay. But around us, in the camp, all the affection, tenderness, and love lingered in search of the Palestinians who would never again answer" (ED 256, DE 220). The Palestinian *fedayeen* can no longer respond since they are dead; even those *fedayeen* who managed to escape the Lebanese hell, the ones Genet meets at a Damascus airport upon his return, cannot expect a different fate: "they will die like them" Genet writes at the end of his essay (ED 264,

DE 228). Paradoxically, though, Genet's writing of the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary struggle actually takes off from their death fields: the fighters' gestures and poses, their affectionate state of being, engenders a certain amorous modality with which Genet would keep looking for the Palestinian ("*à la recherche des Palestiniens*") and call for them in *Un captif amoureu*x, even if they can no longer answer. As he goes into Shatila, Genet walks "among them or alongside them—all the tortured victims" (ED 247, DE 211): in between the deteriorated bodies, Genet enters the arena of struggle. His writing of the Palestinian struggle is informed by an immersion in a realm of death.

For Genet, as for Godard before him, the *fedayeen* are those who live "in the danger of death" (from *Ici et ailleurs*): they join a violent struggle knowing they could die at any moment; they assume a position in which they constantly face death. In a joint interview a year after the massacre, Leila Shahid talks about this state of the Palestinian fighters, happily facing death; and Genet writes that they faced death, day and night (CA 137, PoL 96). But unlike Godard, Genet engages with the Palestinian struggle not only in relation to the *danger* of death but already within the realm of death itself—imaginary or real. For the Dziga Vertov Group, the *fedayeen*'s death in Black September signified the end of their involvement in the struggle; for Genet, this was only the beginning. Genet's encounter with both the Black Panthers and the Palestinian *fedayeen* is marked by a realization that their struggles take place within the realm of the dead. And it is precisely these revolutionaries—landless, with their actions-as-gestures and their metaphysical revolt against the origin—who fashion those scripted revolutions, written by those already engaged in a long movement of disappearance, so much so that, like George Jackson, they might already be absent (CA 358, PoL 251). The revolutionary space is composed of written signs, poetic utterances, and the presence of the dead: the very reality of the revolutionary struggle derives from the "poetic act," punctuated with death's loss.

In writing the realm of death as the arena of the armed revolutionary struggle, Genet suggests an alternative modality of political intelligibility. His portrayal of the revolutionary struggle stands in utter opposition to what has become, since the mid-1970s, the main current of the Palestinian struggle: the political plan to establish a national, sovereign, independent Palestinian state. In 1983 he told his Viennese interviewer: "Listen: the day the Palestinians become an institution, I will no longer be on their side. The day the Palestinians become a nation like other nations, I won't be there anymore. . . . I think that's where I'm going to betray them. They don't know it" (ED 282, DE 244).[41] But Genet did not only plan to betray the national realization of the Palestinian struggle when the day comes; he already wrote the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary activity as a death-infused armed struggle forming an antithetical pole to the life-enhancing national political claim for state-

hood. The *fedayeen*, as Genet describes them, reject some of the most basic ideological presuppositions of this postrevolutionary, nationalistic, institutional politics. The claim for statehood signifies an effort to reach an internationally-recognized, lasting, sustainable diplomatic solution based on already-recognized patterns of collective grouping—a sovereign state founded on state law. This claim is made for the promise of a better future, "for the sake of our children," set forth *by* the living and *for* the future living. In contradistinction to this claim to a future, the revolutionary armed struggle—as Genet writes it—is condensed, brief, unrecognized by the international community, and ultimately unsustainable and without a foreseeable future. This struggle is not enacted for the sake of the children; it does not aim at a normalized, familial or state-sanctioned existence but is based rather on a constant refusal to obtain one; it is not executed for the future living, but achieved as an eruption of life and death in acute moments of time.[42] At the revolutionary struggle's core lies a certain death, but this is not that final death which would force any political movement to renounce an armed struggle as if it were only a preliminary stage in an overall political plan for statehood; rather, this death establishes a realm in which different forms of life and alternative ways of action are made possible.

For Genet, the *fedayeen* are the bearers of this new political intelligibility—of gestural actions always entangled with a productive concept of death. In his first essay on the Palestinian struggle, Genet declares that, "[i]n the Middle East a new man will perhaps emerge, and the fedayee, in certain of his aspects, would be for me the prefiguration and outline of the new man" (ED 92, DE 74). Genet writes the birth of the *fedayeen* as a new political entity, through a detailed description of their revolutionary "poetic acts:" their poses and gestures, the self-fashioning of their own image, their songs and music. By their birth, the *fedayeen* give rise to a "new mode of living," an alternative form of sociality; instead of normative familial bonds, they fashion a life of celibacy, constantly moving between discrete forms of singular existence and collective cohesiveness. They replace the realm of consummation and reproduction with that of erotics—multiple erotic interactions, sometimes doomed to failure, sometimes veiled and unrealizable, but always entailing a gestural quality: terrorists, as they seemed from the outside, but "terrorist stars," with the hero quality and the spectacular aura (CA 23, PoL 13–14). But already in this 1971 essay, where Genet details the birth of the *fedayeen* as a new political formation, he discusses their death at length. He first mentions them as those who would not see the end of the revolution—they would die before the revolution is realized, whether successfully or not. The revolution is thus realized through their premature death; and death is entangled in the very moment of the *fedayeen*'s "birth."[43] It is part of their political potentiality, of the metaphysical struggle they execute: they inaugurate death into the political realm of struggle, not as an

end point, but as a starting point. In lieu of a terminal or interruptive limit of the struggle, death becomes an integral part of the violent act of resistance.[44] The *fedayeen* carry death within them wherever they go—the Palestinian revolution happens in this realm of death—but that death is not the end of a movement, the ultimate and final collapse of the struggle, since in the scripted realm of revolutionary gestures and images, the realm of death becomes the locus of individual and collective transformation.[45]

In a surprising move, Genet juxtaposes the *fedayeen* and a different socially-marginalized group that he has repeatedly portrayed in his early writings—transvestites and transsexuals.[46] In *Un captif amoureux*, Genet explores the similarities in death's role and image in the lives of the male *fedayeen* and MtF transsexuals. Genet claims that transsexuals fashion a very peculiar mode of death; "leaving behind" their masculinity as though killing it, they instead engage in fashioning a new gender identity upon its ruins (CA 91, PoL 62). But that masculinity is never completely lost; rather, through the process of self-transformation, it is reserved as the unassailable remains of the act of killing. Here, death is not a limit separating the new mode of existence from the former (allegedly lost) one, but is rather internalized into and incorporated within life and serves as a force of transfiguration: according to Genet, in killing their assigned gender, transsexuals transform their bodies, construct their gendered self, and live. Not the ultimate, final point of life leading to stagnation (or nirvana)—nor even to possible rebirth—death is understood here to be a productive force within life intertwined with *the new*. However, *the new* here is not achieved by way of reproduction—a certain origin giving birth to newly born offspring—but through a constant transfiguration of the self. The thing created is not an entirely new creature, but rather a body formed upon the death of one of its parts, a death carried into a new formation of the body. Genet stresses that the transsexuals he writes about would never disown their former masculine existence and entirely become women; their femininity, to the extent that it is their new form of being, is structured upon the dead-but-not-entirely-gone men they once were.

Accompanied both by the joy of creation and the fear of death, the transformation transsexuals go through becomes, for Genet, the model for the heroic, mythical, death-saturated form of life he associates with the Palestinian *fedayeen*.[47] And, if indeed the *feday* is the new "man" born in the Middle East, as Genet has asserted, his birth is certainly not a result of any reproductive act. The novelty of the *fedayeen* derives from the modality of their revolutionary actions—transformative action inaugurated by a certain productive death. In Genet's view, the *fedayeen* are not threatened by death since death is what constitutes their revolutionary activity as a gestural, image-bound, scripted struggle. Thus, like transsexuals, and in stark opposition to the binary of the masculine and the feminine (fighter/sissy, political/erotic), the *fedayeen* also develop their revolutionary activity as they fashion

their own body images, work through their gendered performance and concentrate on corporeal appearance and disappearance. In so doing, they form politics whose site is the struggling body—where the fantasy of a sovereign body politic gives way to the striving political body. The *fedayeen*'s actions, like those of transsexuals—gestural, theatrical, performative—derive from the killing of the origin, an opposition to claims of origin, as well as those claims the origin has on them: the assigned/socially-recognized gender, the Israeli claim for Palestine. The remains of the origin are the absent core of the transsexuals' and *fedayeen*'s heroic, monstrous, angelic, mythical existence—these are all Genet's adjectives—leaning on this productive, transformative power of death.

Later on in *Un captif amoureux*, Genet follows a different mode of "transsexual" acting. He gives his own account of the 1973 Israeli military operation in Lebanon, called "Spring of Youth," in which a special commando force invaded PLO's Lebanon headquarters, killing three of the organization's leading members, presumably as retaliation for the murder of eleven Israeli athletes in the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. In the official heroic narrative of this operation, the Israeli soldiers were said to have dressed up as women in order to deceive the Palestinian forces. But in Genet's account in *Un captif amoureux*, the six Israeli soldiers actually appear as "*pédés*," "*pédales*," or "*travestis*"—not men disguised as women, but men performing femininity (CA 262–67, PoL 182–86). It may seem at first that Genet is portraying the Israeli commando soldiers' mode of action using the same logic he used for the *fedayeen*'s revolutionary struggle through what Kadji Amin has recently called a "disturbing attachment:"[48] the soldiers kiss each other, echoing the *fedayeen*'s kissing rituals Genet discusses at great length; they make extensive use of their gendered, sexualized bodies and their actions are gestural and theatrical, composing in Genet's words a "Beaux-Arts" performance. The soldiers' mythic, heroic actions thus seem to mirror the *fedayeen*'s scripted struggle. But Genet draws an important distinction between the Israeli soldiers and the *fedayeen*; in the moment of action, when the soldiers pull out their guns and kill the Palestinian leaders, they stop playing "*pédés*," becoming men again. In Genet's narrative, the Israeli soldiers' act of killing is not part of amorous play but actually a crude reality devoid of any play-like element: the soldiers "switched from acting to action," in the apt English translation. The acting—the transsexuals' performance—reveals itself as a means toward an end: decisive murderous action. The form of life that the Israeli soldiers are enacting here is thus not that of transsexuals, argues Genet, but of men disguised as transsexuals; not a performance of love and death, but a performance of performance—yet one with a firm expiration point. Indeed, death is reestablished as a limit, signifying the end of play and a return to "reality"—not a productive mode of endless transformation. The Israeli soldiers remain un-transformed; they never trans-

figure their original masculinity—kill it while keeping its remains—but rather utilize all the resources at their disposal to keep their gendered, and their national, identity intact. Executioners of state brutality—of the Zionist enterprise—the Israeli soldiers cannot, in Genet's view, forget their origin; after all, they are acting in its name. They *play* as transsexuals but *act* as men; the Palestinian *fedayeen*, on the other hand, act and live as transsexuals. Whereas the *fedayeen* play a game of cards without any cards, the Israeli soldiers would never "give away their cards:" the bearers of a historically-established political force, they hold the winning cards in their hands. The *fedayeen*, like Genet's transsexuals, exercise a performance aimed at transforming historical reality, at transgressing the course of historical fulfillment, at including both absence and death in alternative potential politics. The Palestinian revolutionary struggle—with its claim against the origin, the absence of land, the scripted and gestural mode of action, and its descent into the realm of death—inaugurates not only a new man but a new modality of revolt.

To Love a Collective

With these scenes of affection and seduction, erotic games and metamorphosis, Genet finds himself in love. The title of his book frames his experience with the Palestinians as captivation with and through love—a loving imprisonment or a chained ravishing. Throughout *Un captif amoureux* Genet develops his own *discours amoureux*—a lover's discourse which is also a discourse in love of itself[49] —through which he tells the story of the Palestinians and the Black Panthers. But who was the object of such love—the Black activists with whom Genet traveled for two months around the United States or the Palestinian fighters with whom he lived in the Middle East? One or two of them in particular or the whole as a group? Or the political cause, that Genet found right and just, but also beautiful, stimulating, perhaps arousing? Or was it love to his own experience in the time and place of struggle, now turning back to it by way of writing as the retrieval of "memories?" But even more so, what kind of love was it, evoked by an author who had been known for this wild, disgraceful, sexualized novels of his youth: was it erotic love, that of the flesh—realized in the camps, or frustrated and carried on in the imagination? Or aesthetic love, an attachment to the beauty of the fighters, which should not and can never be attained? Or spiritual love, an infatuation with a world suddenly opening up as an arena of freedom, self-constitution, and transformation? And, above all, why is the mode of love the one invoked by Genet, in relation to revolutionary politics—how does it mark the place of the writer and intellectual, his intentionality to the struggle and his own project within it, and how it informs the political theory behind the narrative of *Souvenirs* he proposes?

Genet's summoning of love to his political book is crucial since political theory has gone through a long process of de-eroticization. The language of love, once punctuating the domain of the political, has diminished in modern political theory which strived to clear it from its foreign elements and make it autonomous.[50] Aristotle could still discuss the order of the polis in relation to the household through the conjugal bond, friendship and apprenticeship. With Kant, it was the universality of the moral law and its logical deduction through reason alone that set the terms for modern political thinking devoid of affective biases (notwithstanding the respect to the law) and contingent on situational considerations. But it was Carl Schmitt who did the most to distill the political and distinguish it from other domains. And so to declare friend and enemy as political concepts meant, first and foremost, to separate the political enemy from the morally wrong-doer, the aesthetically ugly, the economically damaging, and situate it beyond the private sphere:

> The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary that one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship.[51]

The distinction between the political enemy and the nonpolitical rival is based on a distinction between the public and the private, and forms a distinction between the collective and the individual: whereas rivalry remains private, is set between individuals and takes the form of confrontation, the enemy is always part of a collectivity, one collectivity in struggle with another, and is based on a state of war, even if yet unrealized, between two publics. And whereas the private rivalry is affectively charged—with love or hate (an affect that can be reversed, as in "love thy enemy" that Schmitt mentions as an expression of private rivalry)—with the public enemy there are no feelings involved, since that enmity lies in a broader state of conflict between two collectives. Private rivalry creates difference (desire) while public enmity is based on similarity (respect).[52] There can be no emotional or erotic relation to the enemy (or to the friend); the meaning of enmity excludes love or hate, desire or revulsion, from the domain of the political; or rather the political constitutes itself as a non-affective relation.

Yet the long effort Schmitt takes to make the distinction between the enemy and the rival attests to the difficulty to do so, to the constant intertwining of these concepts, to the ways in which the friend and the enemy are categories saturated with affect and desire—and Schmitt's almost hopeless attempt to distill them as purely political concepts. In Derrida's words: "Impossible as it may seem and, in truth remains for us, what would have to be thought is hostility without affect or, at least, without an individual or 'pri-

vate' affect, a purified aggressivity, with all passion and psychology removed: a pure hostility and, ultimately, a purely philosophical one."[53] Schmitt's enmity is not only political but also philosophical, suggests Derrida, since it turns away from all that is contingent—the psychological, the affective, the individual—in order to separate itself from the realm of appearances and be anchored in the land of abstractions. But for enmity to be political, it has not only to be de-psychologized but also to become collective. It is political by virtue of overcoming all that is personally rooted and individually biased, and taking part in a strife between two collectives. And, therefore, what cannot be thought here is precisely an affective relation to a collectivity. Since the affective is confined from the start to the private realm, and the collective seems too big and general to be emotionally grounded. The public sphere—plural and broad—is not determined upon personal emotions; the collective cannot be affectively bound.[54]

This is true not only to right-wing, anti-liberal Schmitt. The exclusion of love form the political realm and the impossibility of affective relation to a collective lie also at the heart of Hannah Arendt's formulation of the political. In *The Human Condition* she argues that love is the greatest anti-political force possessed by human beings: that it is completely unworldly as it separates the two lovers from the world, and tears them away from the plurality of men and women, from the being among other people that grounds the realm of the political and allows for political action.[55] And later on, in 1963, answering Gershom Scholem's accusation that her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem* indicates her lack of *Ahavat Israel*, she wrote: "You are quite right—I am not moved by any 'love' of this sort, and for two reasons: I have never in my life 'loved' any people or collective—neither the German people, nor the French, nor the American, nor the working class or anything of that sort. I indeed love 'only' my friends and the only kind of love I know of and believe in is the love of persons."[56] These famous words have been repeatedly quoted over the last two decades. They were celebrated for their non-nationalistic stance, rejection of communal norms, and refusal to collectivist interpellation. They were taken as a manifestation of a dissident position: that of the independent scholar facing the big Other and confronting the duties of the tribe. This was surely Arendt's position back then. But the negation of the very possibility of love addressed to a collective, and the maintenance of love within the limits of personal relationship, are common sensical to the extent that they dub an individualistic and liberal position.[57] Uttered in the 1960s, these words also had specific political consequences. This statement does not only stand against chauvinistic and patriotic sentiments; it also implicitly rejects the plausibility of any affective affinity to the rising collectivities of the decolonized world.[58] What's at stake here is not just the ideological maneuver that makes people love a collective to which they already belong, but also the bond out of which a new collective is born. And if such concept

of love is utterly rejected, if the sole possible love is that to a friend, then it serves to approve what already exists; it is a pacifying force that works through a withdrawal to the private sphere as a place of refuge and consolation.

Genet activates a very different concept of love: he does not love his friends, but rather betrays them. Love, for him, is never confined to the private realm—be it psychological or moral, but rather disrupts the self and transgresses moral norms. Love lies at the heart of political mobilization: it is a transformative force of an individual regarding a collectivity or rather that of collectivity itself. It brings to a metamorphosis of bodies, a shift of identities, a change of heart. It does not draw the limit of the political from the outset; it serves as its *conatus*. Together with Schmitt, Genet understands the political as a realm of struggle between collective entities; but such struggle is filled with desire and beauty, aimed at personal transformation, and portrayed as a theater of passions. Together with Arendt, Genet sees revolutions not only as revolts aimed at liberation, but as struggles of virtue, constituting a new ethos; but instead of opposing the revolution of liberation to that of virtue, preferring the latter over the first—the American over the French—Genet portrays in his writing the virtue of liberation itself manifest in the revolution, not as a new civic and institutional ethos (as in Arendt), but as the formation of bodies in a space they experience anew.[59]

Genet kept saying that he came to the Middle East as a friend of the Palestinians. But this friendship indicated something very different than the Schmittian one. Being friends with the Palestinians meant for Genet joining them in their struggle—that is, quite literally, following them to their training camps and paramilitary bases, to their cities and villages; and then, following their movement, both external and internal, their plans and actions. Friendship with the Palestinians, in Genet's lexicon, was an act of assigning oneself to a collectivity which is not one's own. And this transformative act, he explains, is based on "irrational affinity . . . an attraction that is sentimental, or perhaps sensitive or sensual" (ED 254, DE 218). Friendship with a collectivity as a mode of affinity, and an irrational one: a relation not based on reason and not deduced rationally, but affective, written in the language of desire—operated through the senses, close to the bodies, animating a contact and an exchange. "I am French, but I defend the Palestinians entirely, without judgement. They are in the right because I love them [*Ils not le droit pour eux puisque je les aime*]. But would I love them if injustice had not made them a wandering people?" (Ibid) This is the circular logic of such friendship, now pronounced as love: love results in justice, but justice brings to love. Yet this is not just a simple, and therefore null, circularity. Genet is drawn to the Palestinians, captivated by the fighters, because they suffer from injustice. But it is not through the faculty of judgement that he acknowledges this suffering and decides to join them. Neither a recognition of reality nor a

derivation of moral maxims by reason alone—constative or reflective judgements, in Kant's terms—it is a knowledge shaped in the realm of the sensual. Genet is ravished by struggle—its beauty, intensity, hospitality, transformative qualities—a struggle that, by these virtues, is known to be right.

Genet's love for the subjects of this struggle is therefore not impulsive, arbitrary, or unexplainable; nor is it derivative and secondary. It is the love of persons, of specific *fedayeen*; but it is not personal, in the Schmittian sense, or private, in the Arendtian one. It is a love to the Palestinians as a fighting collectivity, love that is neither cerebral nor chaste: its erotic charge comes from the proximity of bodies, the taking part in their gestures—the games, the rituals, the conversations—and the strong sense of the justice they hold. Genet is attached to their justice—yet not justice manifest in a general idea of right, but justice incarnated through revolt; a corporeal, performed justice. The position he takes is therefore very different from that of the engaged intellectual in the Sartrean tradition for whom the relation to the just cause must remain abstract and be validated by reason alone (historical and dialectical one), so that the cause could be symbolically argued for within the public realm. Genet did not sign the "Manifesto of the 121," a "declaration on the right of insubordination in the Algerian war:" an open letter supporting the Algerian struggle for independence and condemning the war crimes committed by the French army during the war. This celebrated manifesto, published on 6 September 1960, was signed by almost every left-leaning French intellectual of the time; and Genet, who just finished writing *The Screens*, his big play about occupied Algeria, refused to join the letter, explaining, in a private letter, that as a thief and an army deserter he does not hold the moral ground needed for signing it. But this was not just a gesture of self abnegation. Genet deliberately escaped the position of these engaged intellectuals: "their morality," he wrote, "is that of these who condemn them. Except that they—the first ones I've named—put their morality into practice. What would a thief, pornographer, etc., do in their midst?"[60] Genet explicitly refused to speak from an abstract position and in the name of general moral principles. He, therefore, replaces engagement for attachment, and moral commitment for erotic investment: he does not endorse a certain struggle, but is taken by it; he does not sympathize with a political position, but is moved by and with it. He cannot take the position of the intellectual since he is taken by positions to the extent that they change his own. It is not the cause that he advocates, on the basis of a general worldview; the manifest cause—the way it is in the world—excites him and from this manifestation he creates a view of the world. He is attracted to the expressions of the political cause, not its paradigm or plan; to the very gestures of struggle—to its modes of appearance, to the beauty the fighters discover and enact.[61]

Genet's love is most pointedly—personally but not only individually—directed, in *Un captif amoureux*, at Hamza, a seventeen-year-old fighter he

met during his stay in Irbid in 1971. Genet was immediately taken by Hamza—a young and handsome *feday*, stubborn and fearless—and accompanied him for the few hours in which Hamza prepared for the embarking of an operation against the Jordanian army, in the post–Black September days. When Hamza took off he left Genet in his own house, together with his mother. Genet spent the night there, in Hamza's room, on his bed; just before sunrise Hamza's mother quietly went into the room and brought the seemingly sleeping Genet a cup of coffee and a glass of water. Genet saw Hamza the day after, upon his return from the operation, about which they did not say a word. And that is all; Genet would not see Hamza again. But his image would keep haunting Genet: since that day in winter 1971 Genet would look for him, ask around what happened to him, try to collect pieces of information about him, and more than ten years later, in 1984, would go back to Jordan in the hope of finding him. It sometimes seems that *Un captif amoureux* entirely revolves around the figure of Hamza, his momentary presence and abrupt vanishing, his turning into an image and a figure, the myth of the revolutionary stage of the Palestinian struggle personified, with the long, tormented quest after its lost traces. Genet is completely ravished by Hamza; at a crucial moment of the book, he poses a question about the validity of such love—to Hamza and his mother, with whom he spent so little time—which nevertheless directs him throughout the years. Yes, it is the love of an old European man, rife with economic, cultural, and symbolic capital to a young man from the East whose language he does not speak and whose culture he hardly knows; on the short time they spent together in reality he compensates with a narcissistic mythology that forms an impersonal and abstract image of the beloved. This differential, hierarchical, and Orientalist relationship follows the course of modern pederasty, whose importance to Genet's life and work Kadji Amin has stressed—although here, in this book, it takes a highly phantasmatic form.[62]

But this is hardly the entire picture. Genet stresses his love to Hamza and his mother—the mother who opened her heart and her house and took care of him. The two—the haloed son who disappears and whose second coming one should hope for and prepare, and the beneficent, nurturing mother—form the pattern of the Christian pieta which recurs in Genet's book. This allows Genet to think his attachment to a couple, not only an individual; then to the mother and child dyad; and finally, to relationality as such.[63] Besides the young fighter as an erotic object appears the mother, the Palestinian mother who fascinates Genet: the mother who allows her son's recruitment and paves his way to the struggle, knowing he penetrates the realm of the dead; but in lieu of sacrifice—Abraham-Isaac/Ibrahim-Ishmael/God-Jesus—with its logic of rivalry, similarity, and death as a decisive cut, here it is care until and within death that these mothers of the *fedayeen* express.[64] Genet's attachment to the mother leads him to take the son's place—sleep in his own

bed, enjoy the motherly concern, perhaps be mistaken by the mother as her very own son. This is the closest he gets to being a Palestinian fighter, and this is made possible through an economy of substitution. One could argue that what Genet is drawn to—more than Hamza, his mother, or their relation—is the opportunity to turn into another, to become what he never thought he could be, to be carried away and assume a different role "without judgement," as he writes. And it is precisely this transformative action, this metamorphosis, that he understands as both revolutionary and Palestinian—opposed to the claim of origin, blood relations, and generations-long community.[65]

This is Genet's virtue, according to Houria Bouteldja: that he knows how to betray his own race; or in his words, that he is "a Black whose color is white or pink, but a Black" (ED 149, DE 126).[66] Genet does not hold a firm position from which he speaks; his speech is meant to change his position. He does not stand in solidarity with dispossessed groups; he is enamored by them, falls in love with them until he falls, momentarily, into them. His love allows him to escape the flaws of the European intellectual, as radical or leftist as he or she is: the claim for universality, which remains European; the moralizing language, despite the Nietzschean aura; and the persistence of white guilt—as the building blocks of enlightened subjectivity.[67] Genet refuses this universal moral idiom and sticks to a minoritarian position, through an exposure to the affective. Upon being asked why he helped the Palestinians, Genet protested and said that the Palestinians were the ones who "helped me live"—not abstractly (to live as a moral person, to support the right cause), but practically (to live as a social person, to join an attractive cause).[68] Hamza and his mother helped Genet live—but not as a European intellectual or writer. His love for them transformed him and them: his attraction to the young man went beyond the sexual; his attachment to the mother and child extended and exceeded the familial bond. Bouteldja calls it revolutionary love when she imagines the love between Malcolm X and Genet, mediated by Malcolm X's love to his own people—love to a particular(ist) collectivity. Such love, therefore, does not revolutionize the self—as in love that knows no borders, love that goes beyond ascribed social positions, unconditional and singular, all according to a voluntarist grammar. Revolutionary love can only mean love in times of revolution, when the self is transformed vis-à-vis a collective and within movement of sociality.

This love diverges from both liberal morality and left politics. From his early declaration that "the law in our homes do not resemble the one in yours; we love without love" (in *Our Lady of the Flowers*); to his grief over the death of his lover, a Resistance fighter, in the battle over Paris in World War II, that turns into sexual fantasies about a collaborator, then a Nazi soldier, then Hitler himself (in *Funeral Rites*)—Genet's love was never paradigmatic. And it does not become one when Genet turns explicitly to the political

realm. His love is perverse; it does not follow a moral dictum. This is what allows its special mobilizing force. At the 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago, filled with protest against the Vietnam War and marked by the presence of American counterculture, Genet was unexpectedly taken by the erotic charge of the police forces. In the populated demonstrations at Lincoln Park, close to the convention, the demonstrators—leftist students and hippies—seemed to him as "young people of a gentleness almost too gentle . . . being very chaste;" while the athletic, muscular bodies of the cops—their hefty thighs, beautiful bellies, blue outfit and rubber—caught his attention and erotic imagination.[69] The reportage Genet wrote to *Esquire* magazine can be read as a eulogy to the policemen's beauty, praising the corporal virtues of coercive power. The night curfew, tear gas assaults, and police brutality are set in the background of a sexually ravished Genet in what seems to become an expression of a pro-Fascist sentiment.[70]

But his attraction to the police force is of a different kind: "the Chicago police was feminine and brutal," he writes; "an azure policeman" looks to him like a "beautiful girl in drag." He finds there what he lacks in the protestors: potency entangled with gentleness; strength and softness, *conatus* and style. At the end of the essay Genet calls the protesters to adopt this modality: to join, with their flowers at hand, "the children of Vietnam." A few years later, he would recognize that quality in the Black Panthers and the Palestinians: the erect bodies—tough, stiff, threatening—marching in the streets or training in the camps, are also the most delicate ones: "a delicacy of heart" (ED 48, DE 35). The line drawn from the transvestites of Montmartre, through the 1968 cops, to the revolutionaries of the 1970s is not trivial; it definitely does not follow any abstract moral positioning or party-line politics. It does not belong to the left—although it does make a claim on left-wing politics. It is part of the 1968 paradigm: the struggle here is not an implementation of political program but an emancipatory vigor, the self-liberation of bodies whose diffusive eros, both cruel and tender, shapes political meaning.

The one who loved the Palestinian *fedayeen* and who admired the beauty of the Algerians was the same one who could not resist the body curves of the cops oppressing the protesters. To inscribe eros into politics is a dangerous act; no wonder many political theorists rejected it. Genet explored some of its possibilities. His version of erotic attachment was that of tough love—based on social hierarchies and trapped in the death drive. But revolutionary love is just like that: not a plausible relation, politically justified, which exercises what reason already knows; but a disruptive affection, momentary and ecstatic, negating the present moment.

NOTES

1. Jean Genet, *L'Ennemi déclaré: textes et entretiens*, ed. Albert Dichy (Paris: Gallimard 1991); hereafter ED. Jean Genet, *The Declared Enemy: Texts and Interviews*, trans. Jeff Fort (Stanford University Press, 2004); hereafter DE. "Près d'Ajloun" was published only in 1977, but there is no indication that the dedication was added only then.
2. Stephen Barber, *Jean Genet* (London: Reaktion, 2004), 113.
3. Edmund White, *Genet: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 613.
4. Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998), 3–4.
5. In a 1982 filmed interview Genet gave to Bertrand Poirot-Delpech, he was asked about Rimbaud's silence and its relation to his own "silence" and said: "I don't know why Rimbaud chose silence. . . . For me, it seems to me that, since all my books were written in prison, I wrote them to get out of prison. Once I was out of prison, there was no longer any reason to write" (DE 197, ED 230). To the extent that Genet accepts the description of his "silence," he distinguishes it from Rimbaud's, and explains it as putting an end to his literary writing at the moment of getting out of prison; according to this logic, not only his texts from the 1970s, but also *Un captif amoureux*, take part in this silence with respect to literary writing, engaging perhaps in a writing of a different sort.
6. White, *Genet*, 578–79. More on that in chapter 4.
7. Jérôme Neutres, *Genet sur les routes du Sud* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), 120.
8. George Jackson, *Soledad Brother: The Prison Letters of George Jackson* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1970).
9. White, *Genet,* 197–98.
10. Genet's early works, in general, have an interesting, complex publication history, having been at first addressed to a specific "counter-public" in restricted circulation. See Michael Lucey, *Someone: The Pragmatics of Misfit Sexualities, from Colette to Hervé Gilbert* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2019).
11. Indeed, disappearance, or destruction, of book manuscripts is a prominent feature in Genet's creative life (or, alternatively, in the Genet myth)—from the first version of *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* having been itself thrown to the toilet while Genet was in prison by one of the guards, to a lost or deliberately forgotten part of the manuscript of *Un captif amoureux*.
12. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Saint Genet: Actor and Martyr*, trans. Bernard Fretchman (New York: Mentor, 1964), 60–70.
13. Albert Dichy et Pacale Fouché, *Jean Genet matricule 192.102: Chronique des années 1910–1944* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 48.
14. White, *Genet*, 166.
15. Cocteau recounts this scene in his journals: "I said to the court: 'Take care. This is a great writer'. . . ."

    The Judge: What would you say if someone stole your books?

    Genet: I would be proud of it.

    The Judge: Do you know the price of this book?

    Genet: I don't know the price of it but I know its value."

    (Quoted in White, *Genet*, 224. See also 231).
16. "Sois que l'Âbime blanchi, étale, furieux . . .": Mallarmé remains a constant point of reference in *Un captif amoureux* with the question of the book, of writing on the page, as well as the reflections on necessity and chance.
17. Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: George Wittenborn Inc., 1970), 59–60.
18. Jacques Derrida, "Le double séance," *La Dissémination* (Paris: Seuil folio, 1972), esp. 314–15.
19. This image, to which Genet refers here as having already been said (or observed), is elaborated later on in the book (CA 350, PoL 245).
20. Mohamed Choukri, "Jean Genet in Tangier," *In Tangier*, trans. John Bowles (Minnesota: Telegram, [1974] 2010).

21. Jacqueline Rose also explores the complex relations between reality and dream in *Un captif amoureux* in her book on Israel/Palestine: "It would be wrong, therefore, to think that Genet's acute ear for the real does not bring with it its own dimension of the dream, wrong too to think that he does not, finally, if perhaps surprisingly, bring Proust to Palestine." Jacqueline Rose, *Proust among the Nations: From Dreyfus to the Middle East* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 274. Bringing Proust to Palestine has a twofold meaning here: introducing Proustian themes—dreams, daydreams, reality, and memory—into Genet's account of the Palestinian struggle and simultaneously thinking the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from a European perspective. The dream here is indeed a Proustian dream, that is a European one; yet there is no Middle East (quite literally: there would be no *Middle East* as a term) without Europe, without European colonialism as a European dream fulfilled in reality.

22. In his 1987 article in which he developed a critique of modern "aesthetic culture" and its mode of literary canonicity, David Lloyd turns to Genet's works as the marker of a decisive break with the identitarian and representational logic of "aesthetic culture": "[T]he identities imposed upon Genet by others and by himself—bastard, thief, homosexual, vagabond—are all simultaneously terms of non-identity, precisely insofar as what they invoke is a certain failure to undergo proper ethical development." David Lloyd, "Genet's Genealogy: European Minorities and the Ends of Canon," *Cultural Critique* 6 (Spring 1987): 175. For Lloyd, the identities Genet's texts present are all nonidentities, hollowed out, devoid of any concrete, substantial, identifiable content: the bastard without familial origin, the homeless vagabond, the homosexual deprived of the phallus, the impoverished thief stealing other people's possessions and identities.

23. And compare Edward Said's famous words at the beginning of his 1978 book on the Palestinian struggle: "The fact of the matter is that today Palestine does not exist, except in a memory or, more importantly, as an idea, a political and human experience, and an act of sustained popular will." Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books, [1978] 1992), 5.

24. Jean Genet, "The Palestinians," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3:1 (Autumn 1973), 5.

25. There may be an anachronism in Genet's dating: how could the events of May 1968 come "a few weeks after" the start of the summer?

26. To seriously claim the notion of "poetic revolution," we must first reclaim it from its Orientalist connotation: in what has become by now an infamous Orientalist literary tradition, the Western author, writing "literature," becomes fascinated with the natural poetry of the indigenous people and concomitantly aestheticizes every anticolonial struggle as the poetry of the dispossessed. I hope that it is clear by now that Genet's project is very far from this Orientalist tradition of writing: Genet does not come to the Middle East to write literature about the *poetry* of the natives; the status of his writing is put into question, and its tight relations with the "writing" of the struggle is, as I wish to show, what is actually at stake here.

27. In Edward Said's formulation: "His characters therefore are play-actors in a history imposed in them by power—the power of the imperial state as well as the power of the insurrectionary natives." Edward Said, "On Jean Genet," in *On Late Style: Music and Literature against the Grain* (London: Vintage, 2006), 79. David Fieni elaborates on Genet's "politics of performance": "The collapse of theatricality into the political, of art into life, which marks Genet's career from beginning to end" changes the notion of theater: instead of mimesis, "the gesture of the last Genet will be to internalize the other's unassimilable difference in a radical act of self-othering." David Fieni, "Genet's *The Screens* as Media Allegory" in *Jean Genet: Performance and Politics* eds. Clare Finburgh, Carl Lavery, and Maria Shevtsova (Paris: Fabula, 2006).

28. At various points throughout *Un captif amoureux*, Genet assesses the value of this gestural revolutionary modality, sometimes praising it and sometimes lamenting it, but in any case this is the way he portrays the uniqueness of the Palestinian struggle. In the last pages of the book, Genet concludes his analysis of this modality of struggle, capturing its gestural, ceremonial nature, while expressing his dissatisfaction with it (CA 605, PoL 425–26).

29. See ED 228; and White, *Genet*, 90. In *Un captif amoureux* he calls this 1930 game in Syria "un jeu érotique" (CA 403) .

30. This scene bears some similarities to Paul Cézanne's painting *The Card Players*, where the players famously hold blank cards in their hands. This painting is often seen as a visual reflection on "realization" processes in modern art (in Blanchot's terms), where iconic, pictorial representations are emptied out or taken away. See Maurice Blanchot, *Le livre à venir* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1959), 265–74.

31. Walter Benjamin, "What Is the Epic Theatre?," *Selected Writings*, vol. 4, esp. 305.

32. In a 1975 interview, Genet mocks the students who "occupied" Le Théâtre de l'Odéon in 1968 Paris: instead of taking action against this monument of artistic representation, where theatricality does not hide political power as it is "only theatre," the students should have seized, in Genet's view, Le Palais de Justice! A "poetic revolution," in this sense, is not an uprising exercised in the sites of culture, but an act that recasts the relationship between art and politics, between theatrical representation and political power. "It seems to me that power can never do without theatricality. Never" (ED 155, DE 131).Genet does not dismiss here theatricality as a secondary, nonessential, or altogether insignificant dimension of what is otherwise an actual revolt in reality; on the contrary, he expands the reach of theatricality and understands it as the sphere within which actual political resistance qua poetic one should take place.

33. Agamben develops his theory of the gesture in two places: "Kommerell, or On Gesture," *Potentialities* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 77–85; and "Notes on Gesture," *Means without Ends* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2000), 49–60.

34. "Notes on Gesture," 60. The gesture, Agamben claims, exceeds both the realm of *facere* (*faire*, making; the production of a certain thing, acting for a definite goal) and that of *agere* (*agir*, acting; action without any external goal, as an end in itself). Neither a means toward an end nor an end without any means, the gesture establishes the realm of "means without end" of the "being-in-a-medium of human beings." It thus refuses both the teleological and the spontaneous, both language as communication and language as expression, and inaugurates a realm of linguistic mediation, a movement of figuration already in and as reality.

35. "Kommerell, or On Gesture," 83–84.

36. This echoes what David Lloyd suggested in "Genet's Genealogy": instead of identities within a liberal economy of political representation, Genet inaugurates hollowed out identities, "terms of non-identity," on the unnatural, non-immanent axes of power.

37. On the question of what "Palestine" actually consists of, or what it *is*, as a prominent feature of Palestinian twentieth and twenty-first-century existence, see Camille Mansour, "The Birth and Evolution of Palestinian Statehood Strategy, 1948–1972," *Transformed Landscapes: Essays on Palestine and the Middle East in Honor of Walid Khalidi*, eds. Camille Mansour and Leila Fawaz (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2009), 197–230; Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage*.

38. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 31–32.

39. Said, "On Jean Genet," 81.

40. See, for example, Félix Guattari's account of this "*ouverture du grand large, la présence insistante de la mort, de la finitude. . . .*" Félix Guattari, "Genet retrouvé," in *Jean Genet et la Palestine: Revue d'études palestiniennes* (Printemps 1997), 59.

41. "Genet's writing raises the following problem: how to maintain the Palestinian revolution—that is, the no-state, the territorial in-occupation, how to make writing of a non-occupation at the time of an occupation? What is the place that takes the facts and gestures of a people? The notions of people, nation, and state are not the real goal of Genet's text. This is the essence of the fundamental treason in the promise he gave Arafat to narrate [the struggle]. He cannot be but an impostor." Nadia Setti, "Restorses ficelles," in *Les Métamorphoses de Jean Genet*, dir. Nathanaël Wadbeld (Dijon: Éditions Universitaires de Dijon, 2013), 37.

42. I am following here Lee Edelman's rejection of "the future"—and alongside it, of reproduction, the child, and the family—as the basis of political intelligibility, in his influential book *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). Yet, this highly de-historicized study, staging the queer as a disruptive de-historicizing force, related to the death drive and divorced of any political intelligibility, misses specific political events in which "queer" anti-futurist energy was set in motion.

43. Note how close it is to Jean-Paul Sartre's discussion of the anticolonial freedom fighter, in the preface Sartre wrote to Fanon's *Les damnés de la terre*: "This new man knows that his life as a man begins with death; he considers himself a potential candidate for death. He will be killed; it is not just that he accepts the risk of being killed, he is certain of it." Jean-Paul Sartre, preface to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 2004), lvi-lvii. And see Fanon's own assertions right at the beginning of his book: "[Decolonization] infuses a new rhythm specific to a new generation of man, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men." Ibid., 2. Fanon's musical and linguistic idioms echo the language Genet uses to portray the *fedayeen*.

44. In a 1977 article about the Baader-Meinhof guerrilla group, Genet distinguishes between violent acts which form an integral part of the anticolonial revolt and brutal acts which form the core of the political institutional systems—the national state or international economic institutions. Jean Genet, "Violence et brutalité," in ED, esp. 199–200.

45. In his important book on Genet as "a writer of revolt," Hadrien Laroche stresses the role of transformation—of theatricality and gestural actions in the face of death—in the revolts Genet narrates as well as in Genet's own position regarding them: "Entre les révoltes algeriennes et les révolutions noires et palestinnienes, c'est donc la *métamorphose* de Genet qui est en jeu. Commune aux mouvements et à l'écrivain, tout commence par la nécessité de s'inventer une maturité, autrement dit, de regarder ce qui vient. . . . Découvertre, création, invention: voilà la principe révolutionnaire des movements." Hadrien Laroche, *Le Dernier Genet* (Paris: Seuil 1997), 64.

46. I hesitate regarding the nomenclature in this passage, Genet refers to his subjects as "transsexules" but adds a disclaimer—"selon le mot assez horrible de transsexuel." Figures of transvestites/transsexuals feature throughout Genet's oeuvre. In *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, Genet narrates the story of the transvestites of Montmartre; in *Journal du voleur* he writes about the "Carolines" in Barcelona; his play *Les Bonnes* was meant to be staged with two men performing the roles of the female maids. Didier Eribon starts his 2001 book on Genet describing Genet's encounter with the "Carolines." He discusses Genet's portrayal of their glorious, heroic existence as based on social shaming, yet—through collective struggle—as transformed into social pride. Indeed, Eribon stresses that in Genet's writing, these transvestites "[c]'est un collectif." Didier Eribon, *Une morale du minoritaire: Variation sur un thème de Jean Genet* (Paris: Fayard, 2001), 10. Thus, although only marginally discussing Genet's later writings on the Palestinians, Eribon emphasizes Genet's interest in the constitutive and transformative logic of a collectivity of outcasts based on the spectral and gestural qualities of their struggle for existence. In so doing, Eribon himself gestures toward the resemblance between sexually marginalized collectivities and anticolonial ones.

47. Discussing Genet's understanding of fantasy in his earlier writings, Michael Lucey suggests that it may be positioned in between a conservative concept of fantasy, stressing the preestablished, fixed formation of fantasy within an atemporal structure of desire, and a more experimental, constitutive, indeed transformative concept of fantasy—yet a transformative fantasy which eventually collapses in Genet's works. See Michael Lucey, "Genet's *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*: Fantasy and Sexual Identity," *French Yale Studies* 91 (1997): 80–102. In this chapter I am trying to argue that the collapse of the transformative fantasy, both erotic and political, is its very mode of action: Genet keeps staging in *Un captif amoureux* the theatrical, unreal, deadly, and after-the-fact revolutionary fantasy.

48. Kadji Amin, *Disturbing Attachments: Genet, Modern Pederasty, and Queer History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017). In this illuminating book, Amin reads Genet's work in light of what has been by now almost three decades of Queer Theory, acknowledging the gap between this "ideal object of Queer Theory," the ultimate nonnormative outsider, and many aspects of his political and erotic commitments: Genet's valorization of the inegalitarian pederastic model, his attachment to fetishistic objects, his desire to racialized subjects. Amin inquires into this gap to critique the mode of idealization at the heart of queer culture, opening tensions and ambivalences in Genet to oppose its liberal-pluralistic bias. Yet discussing Genet together with Queer Theory is somewhat anachronistic: Genet neither affirmed it nor revolted against it; he was unfamiliar with it. Furthermore, Genet deliberately ignored postliberation American gay liberal politics—which was incommensurable with his own. The language of

political coalitions and left criticism is all foreign to his project which takes place in a conceptual and political world in which these terms have not yet come into being.

49. This is the double meaning of Barthes's 1973 *Un discourse amoureux*, and the two different—but perhaps complementary—ways to read it: as a phenomenological analysis of the lover's discourse, the linguistic gestures of the subject in love; and as a critique of the narcissism and solipsism of such a discourse, which speaks of and to itself, being the actual subject in love, in love of itself.

50. This goes hand in hand with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's call, in the last pages of *Multitude*, to a political theory once again saturated with the concept of love: "People today seem unable to understand love as a political concept, but a concept of love is just what we need to grasp the constituent power of the multitude. . . . Love has become a strictly private affair. . . . We need to recuperate the public and political conception of love common to premodern traditions." Michael Hardy and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 351. Love, for them, is the generative force of the multitude, working against the governance of Empire, and it bears the potential of collective transformation. For a feminist critique of this overly positive and understanding of transformative love which concentrates on the joys of love while ignoring love's vast affective range and its implication in power relations, see Eleanor Wilkinson, "On Love as an (Im)properly Political Concept," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 0 (0): 1–15. Wilkinson, however, writes from a prerevolutionary perspective, concentrating on phenomena from the contemporary social world in Western countries as indicative of what love generally is and what it can be.

51. Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1996), 28.

52. The enemy that must be respected, whom one honors and with whom the relationship is noble—this is Nietzsche's lesson in the first book of *The Genealogy of the Morals*.

53. Jacques Derrida, *The Politics of Friendship*, trans. George Collins (London, New York: Verso, 2005), 124.

54. When Derrida writes about "hostility without affect, at least without individual or 'private' affect," he alludes to the possibility of an affect that is not private, affect that can perhaps coincide with political enmity.

55. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 242–43.

56. Hannah Arendt, "A Letter to Gershom Scholem," in *The Jewish Writings*, eds. Jerome Kohn and Ron H. Feldman (New York: Schocken Books, 2007), 466–67.

57. And a secularist position as well, since *Ahavat Israel* is an ethical notion within the Jewish tradition with a long genealogy that cannot be subsumed under the nationalist chauvinistic love of a Jew to his or her people. See Shira Kupfer, Asaf Turgeman, "the secularization of the idea of Ahavat Israel and its illumination of the Scholem–Arendt correspondence on Eichmann in Jerusalem," *Modern Judaism—A Journal of Jewish Ideas and Experience*, volume 34, issue 2, (May 2014), 188–209.

58. What remains implicit in this statement will become explicit years later in Arendt's book *On Violence*, in her dispute with Sartre and Fanon on the viability of force and violence in the uprising of the Third World nations.

59. See Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London: Penguin Books, 1977). Toward the end of the Shatila essay, Genet mentions this distinction Arendt makes between the two types of revolutions. But immediately turning to the rediscovery of beauty as a prominent trait of the two types of revolutions, exemplified in the Algerian and Palestinian ones, the essay goes very far from Arendt's theory of revolution.

60. Genet, in a letter to Bernard Frechtman, quoted in White, *Genet*, 411.

61. Throughout his Shatila essay, Genet writes about this beauty as the beauty of liberation—novel, naive, and fresh—beauty executed in the movement away from past tradition and toward new modes of liberty. This is, for him, the basic motion of decolonial struggles—the Algerians, the Black Panthers, the Palestinians: fashioning their way as an expression of beauty and emancipation.

62. See Kadji Amin, "Attachment Genealogies of Pederastic Modernity," in his *Disturbing Attachments*.

63. Félix Guattari discusses the Christian imaginary of this scene and its psychoanalytical nature, but shows how it exceeds the Oedipal logic—in its various overdetermination (Muslim-Christian, child-fighter-lover, observer-substitute) Félix Guattari, "Genet retrouvé," in *Revue d'études palestiniennes: Genet et la palestine* (Hors séries, Printemps 1997), esp. 62–64.

64. On the importance of the Palestinian mother for Genet, see Leila Shahid's interview with Jerome Hankins, discussed in the introduction. And beyond Genet, but at the very same years of struggle, see Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Um Saad* in which the fighter's mother is the one who sanctions the revolution.

65. Genet understands these attributes as Jewish and rejects them in what Éric Marty saw, at the beginning of the 2000s during the Al-Aksa Intifada, as anti-Semitic metaphysics of the bad. Éric Marty, "Jean Genet à Chatila," *les temps modernes* 622 (2003): 2–72.

66. Houria Bouteldja, *White, Jews, and Us: Towards a Politics of Revolutionary Love*, trans. Rachel Valinsky (Cambridge MA and London: Semiotext(e), 2016), 22.

67. Bouteldja's book starts with the figure of Sartre—a suitcase carrier for the FLN, a strong supporter of many Third-World decolonial struggles, and at the same time pro-Israeli—and immediately pits Genet against him: "Sartre is not Camus. But he is not Genet, either." Ibid., 20. She critiques the humanist leftist position of the engaged intellectual, whose solidarity with dispossessed people always stops somewhere, and is conveyed from a universalist discourse which remains European; and sees in Genet someone who succeeded to bypass this position.

68. This is quoted on the front page of *Revue d'études palestiniennes: Genet et la palestine* (Hors séries, Printemps, 1997),

69. Jean Genet, "The Members of the Assembly," *Esquire*, November 1968. https://classic.esquire.com/article/1968/11/1/the-members-of-the-assembly. Accessed 18 September 2019.

70. Laura Frost examines the dialectical role of the eroticized image of Fascism in twentieth century fiction—negotiating revulsion and fascination and set as a complex working of the volatile relationship between political tyranny and sexual deviance. Among other works, she reads Genet's *Funeral Rites* as the playing out of erotic fantasies with some Fascist allure. Yet "his fiction affronts both the political right and the left, transposing and recasting the values that each holds sacred into the anarchic lands of fantasy." Laura Frost, *Sex Drives: Fantasies of Fascism in Literary Modernism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 100.

Chapter Four

Writing from Right to Left: Semitic Forms in French Letters

Ultimately, the historical facts remain: the revolutionary stage of the Palestinian revolt was violent, short-lived, and devastating. Its collapse paved the way to a different kind of struggle—the fight for an internationally-recognized state on parts of historic Palestine—an arduous phase whose end, to this day, seems almost out of sight. Concomitantly, the two audiovisual and textual projects that I have narrated in the preceding chapters also failed: neo-avant-garde acts of collective writing merging the political and artistic and disrupting identitarian positions, they ultimately turned into "works of art" bearing the signatures of two renowned French *auteurs*—part and parcel of their artistic corpus. In retrospect, these works might be read as yet new variations on colonial themes: fascination with an anticolonial struggle in the tradition of Orientalist literary and artistic history. The works' revolutionary verve, spontaneity, eroticism—these are well-rehearsed attributes of the Orientalist imagination.

In fact the two French artists go so far as to reveal the colonial conditions upon which their anticolonial engagement is based. The first time Genet traveled to the Middle East was in his teens, as a soldier in the French colonial army—and that is where he became infatuated, for the first time, with an Arab.[1] In his 1970s and 1980s sojourns with Palestinians, Genet returns to this geography, re-encountering the Arab world. In *Prisoner of Love*, a book framed as an accumulation of memories, the earliest are his colonial trips, which can be seen as the primary scene for everything that follows. Godard and the Dziga Vertov Group also carried French colonial history with them—if not personally, then politically. They acknowledged this fact as they arrived to the Middle East: "[w]e found it more appropriate, politically speaking, to come to Palestine, rather than to go elsewhere. . . .

[Since] the Middle-East has been directly colonized by the French and English Imperialisms (the Sykes-Picot treaties)."[2] They follow their symbolic forefathers, whose treaty signed secretly during World War I redrew the map of the Middle East, preparing its subsequently-established political units (one of which would become Mandatory Palestine) for English-French imperial control. It is to this vexed geography that they now return as representatives of what was then still a great Empire—culturally if not politically.

The specter of colonialism haunts—perhaps even directs—both Godard and Genet. Both wrestle with it and with their own positioning vis-à-vis the Middle East, both try to recast their assumed relation to a people in struggle so as to divert it from a colonial scheme (in which valorization, assistance and representation play such a crucial role)—and both seem to have lost.[3] Their comings and goings ultimately result in two distinct artworks—a film and a book—which join a long European tradition, are addressed to a Western public and praised by the humanist intelligentsia.

But this study attempts to address both the political and the creative revolutionary projects beyond their historical factuality: to acknowledge their failure—failure being one of their constituent components almost from the start—but simultaneously, to restrain from reading them as having sunk irreparably into oblivion. It aims to rethink the possibilities of these projects' political significance after their "ends," suggesting that it lies in their *form of signification*. This should not be gleaned from their final textual iteration, now in the form of an artwork—but instead excavated from it: instead of accepting a project's realization in an artwork as its terminal state, I suggest seeing this very realization as a kind of failure. I attempt to unravel the projects' historical textures in a de-fetishizing reading that hopefully opens up inscription to the processes of its own becoming, its attempts—and failures—to become what it did not in fact become in the end. Moving from discrete objects to the actions underlying them—to the struggles, real and phantasmatic, that these projects took part in, and which in turn shaped them—my reading aims to surpass the generic attributes of the final texts (a book, a film) and to destabilize their strict empirical attributes ("French artworks about Palestinian matters"). Underneath the French words of these works it tries to find some foreign syntax, structure, or form—it tries to read them as an act of "writing" realized not only in Latin directionality, from left to right that is, but also in the opposite, Semitic direction: from right to left.

Derrida's *Glas* and the Remains

Two influential philosophers wrote a book about Genet's work, two canonizing figures that, at the time of writing their Genet books, were at the peak of their creative force: Jean-Paul Sartre and Jacques Derrida. But whereas Sartre's book is set as a comprehensive psycho-aesthetic study of the coming to

being of Genet the writer, Derrida's book, *Glas*[4]—printed in exceptional format (wide, square pages of 25x25 cm), divided into two columns (one dedicated to Hegel, the other to Genet), written in palimpsest-like and elliptical form—is fractured, partial, not giving a narrative of Genet via his works, but tearing them apart, to sentences, words, and syllables, following different threads in his texts to show something about their modality of writing. Having been published more than two decades after Sartre's book—and critically referring to it in passing—it nevertheless discusses almost exclusively the same works that Sartre does: Genet's novels and theatrical plays from the 1940s and early 1950s. Derrida's thick, mesmerizing, playful, witty text jumps through them—reading Genet while never giving a *reading* of Genet, ostensibly masterfully leaving no "*hors texte*." No "*hors texte*" other than the text's writing conditions and the nature of its present moment: published in September 1974, *Glas* was written frantically during the summer of 1973 while Genet's works in it were written more than two decades prior, works that he himself was involved at that very time in renouncing, stating he has nothing to do with them and that generally he has nothing more to write.[5]

When *Glas* was written, Genet was in the midst of political engagements—already known in France, in Michel Foucault's words, as "a revolutionary."[6] But throughout *Glas*'s more than 250 large-format pages, Derrida never quite discusses this Genet. In fact the density of his analysis of Genet's earlier works might suggest that they are all there is to Genet, highly surprisingly when one considers that Derrida didn't even know the earlier-period Genet—the two only met in 1964, years into Genet's literary "silence." Indeed their close friendship was shaped during Genet's years of engagement—and against its backdrop. Their relationship was carved out in the early 1970s, at the peak of Genet's political activity—his long stays with the Palestinian fighters, his visits to the United States; their many encounters during those years must have born the mark of Genet's radical engagements. And it was in those years that Derrida decided to write a text dedicated to Genet's work, to pit him against Hegel, to delve deep into his writing; yet, almost nothing about "revolutionary" Genet in *Glas*; nothing remains of Derrida and Genet's conversations, of Genet's radical activity, of *Glas*'s historical and political moment.

Nothing, but the remains. On page 45, in the Genet column, Derrida writes:

> Not to arrest the career [*la course*] of Genet. For the first time I am afraid, while writing, as they say, "on" someone, of being read by him. Not to arrest him, not to draw him back, not to bridle him. Yesterday he let me know that he was in Beirut, among the Palestinians at war, encircled outcasts [*les exclus encreclés*]. I know that what interests me always takes (its/his) place over there, but how to show that? [*Je sais que ce qui m'intéresse a toujours (son) lieu là-bas, mais comment le montrer?*] He almost never writes anymore, he

> has interred literature like no one, he leaps wherever that explodes in the world [*il saute partout où ça saute dans le monde*], wherever the absolute knowledge of Europe takes a blow, and these (hi)stories of *glas*, *seing*, flower, horse, ought to make him shit.[7]

Riding on Genet's figurative coattails in the passage from *Miracle de la Rose*, quoted just before this paragraph, where Genet describes himself in phantasmatic sexual potency as riding "on horseback," Derrida asks, both meta- and intra- discursively, how he can write about Genet without stopping him "in his tracks"—his run, his race, his rush—but also (as in the seemingly-naïve but really quite brilliant English translation) without stopping, or "capturing," his career. In fact Derrida maintains that Genet's career lies elsewhere nowadays—not in the "galloping" horseman Genet had imagined himself to be in his earlier novel, but rather in his "gallivants" from New Haven and Chicago (with the Black Panthers) to Ajloun, Jerash, Amman, and Beirut (with the Palestinian forces) and to various demonstrations in Paris. Genet goes on, beyond his books, beyond the book, going to what's "going on" in the world, "*il saute partout où ça saute dans le monde*." Derrida's French creates a correspondence between the writer's leaps and the leaps in political reality, seeking to join this correspondence: not to arrest Genet's meanderings and draw him back to where he once was but on the contrary *to ride along with him*; not to take him back to his early writings, his past literature, as it would seem at first glance his wish is in *Glas*, but to join Genet in "wherever that explodes in the world."

Derrida's problem in this desire is not one of will: he attests that what interests him also lies *there*, where Genet is at in the present moment ("*Je sais que ce qui m'intéresse a toujours (son) lieu là-bas*"). That place, as Derrida specifically indicates, is Beirut, where the Palestinian Fatah fighters moved after their expulsion from Jordan in Black September. Derrida's problem is that he does not know how to *show* it ("*le montrer*"), to indicate it, to point it out, to discuss it—to bring it forth and make it available and public; to write about it. Derrida can't find a way of discussing Genet's political escapades because Genet has not written about them: "he almost never writes anymore." There is no Genet text about his present time of political engagement, thus there can be no Derrida text about it either. And here lies the aporia: since there are only texts from Genet's earlier years—his novels, plays, essays in aesthetics—Derrida can only dedicate the Genet column in *Glas* to a discussion of Genet based on an engagement with those texts; but these texts do not attest to Genet's present moment, to his political engagements, to his "jumps" around the world, to his commitment to the Palestinian struggle, and it is this very present moment that Derrida is interested in. So Derrida can write only about what both Genet and he have only the slightest interest in; and "these (hi)stories of *glas*, *seing*, flower, horse," to which *Glas*

is dedicated, seem futile since they are, exactly, "histories," belonging to Genet's earlier era of stories, of literary narratives, and to the writer's own history, not his present. How can then Derrida write of the present time of non-writing?

The early 1970s, as discussed in the previous chapter, were not years of "non-writing" for Genet, a time when Genet "almost never writes anymore" because he was so busy gallivanting from one place to another (but even in this passage: how did Genet let Derrida know he was in Beirut, as in "*il m'a fait savoir hier qu'il était à Beyrouth*"? Was it not in writing? Of at least a letter or postcard? And therefore, exactly the kind of writing Derrida would, in the following years, be in the habit of addressing and discussing?)[8] But for now, Derrida's aporia—how to write of Genet's present period of non-writing—also needs to be refined from its other pole: how to show this time of Genet's fierce political engagement, "*comment le montrer*"? In the following paragraph, Derrida finds a surprising way of showing it:

> How right he is. This is what I want to show [*C'est ce que je veux montrer*] by deporting you as swiftly as possible to the limits of a basin, a sea, where there arrive for an interminable war the Greek, the Jew, the Arab, the Hispano-Moor. Which I am also (following), by the trace [*Que je suis aussi, à la trace*].[9]

Genet is right—to turn his back on his earlier period of literary writing and forge a different path; to bury literature and follow the "explosions" in the world. And Derrida seems to find a way to follow him on his new path: not to write about it—since no Genet writing is available—but to show it (*le montrer*). Derrida can show Genet's movement in the world by mimicking it, moving his own readers in his text to a different geography: from Paris, for example, to the shores of a basin or a sea embroiled in endless wars—perhaps the Mediterranean geography of war, with which Genet is occupied at that time, staying "among the Palestinians at war" ["*chez les palestiniens en guerre*"]. Derrida suggests here, then, that he can bring his own text close to the "revolutionary" Genet of the early 1970s, following the war of identities that Genet brings to the fore and that Derrida now echoes. This quarrel between the various identities—the Greek, the Jew, the Arab, the Hispano-Moor—takes place not only on the biographical level of Genet and Derrida themselves, but simultaneously resonates a political and textual quarrel that would inform both writers' practices in the years to follow, and whose seed one can already detect in *Glas*.

I wish to take Derrida seriously on his own suggestion. Rather than argue that *Glas* suppresses Genet's 1970s politics, returning as in mourning for a form of writing that no longer exists, or alternately as nostalgia to an already-canonical French literature, I suggest reading *Glas* as a text *showing* by way

of *following* (even if hardly *writing*) the potentialities of Genet's political practice and its textual meaning. Rather than fearing Genet's reading *Glas* ("*C'est la première fois que j'ai peur [. . .] d'être lu par lui*"), it is a reading *Glas* through Genet himself: the paradigmatic pariah of twentieth century French literature who fled "writing" to join the struggle of the "encircled outcasts." What has remained of *this* Genet in *Glas?*

The European Family Idiot: Genet against Hegel

Reading *Glas*, a book divided in two, from the trace—adhering to what is *shown* yet is hardly *written*—means trying to read, at least for a moment, Genet's and Hegel's columns in tandem. "One column in the other," as Derrida writes on the same page,[10] just before the above-discussed passage. Indeed Hegel is already inscribed into the very passage: when Genet "leaps wherever that explodes in the world, wherever the absolute knowledge of Europe takes a blow," Derrida is explicitly referring to Hegel's Absolute Knowledge ("*savoir absolu*"), which he mentions as early as the first page and discusses throughout the book. This Genet, the Genet of the early 1970s, gallivanting from one radical revolt to another according to Derrida, is in radical opposition to what is developed throughout the book as Hegel's project of Absolute Knowledge. It is specifically in Beirut, with the Palestinian fighters, that Hegel's vision receives a blow; it is in this geography of war, which is also a war between contradictory geographies (of identities, myths, philosophies, textualities)—the Greek, the Jew, the Arab, the Hispano-Moor—that the European absolutist vision collapses. And this Mediterranean or Middle Eastern war, invoked for a brief moment in the Genet column, is already entangled with Hegel's vision, and with the Hegel column.

From the beginning of *Glas*, Derrida writes Hegel and Genet one against the other. In the Hegel column, he discusses Hegel's conceptualization of the family, using it to elaborate the mechanism of Hegelian dialectics—the sublation (*Aufhebung*, *relever*) of one realm to a higher, more general and abstract one. From family to society and on to state, he elaborates the three consecutive moments of *Sittlichkeit* (ethics), itself the last developmental moment of the objective spirit that mitigates right and politics, formal objectivity and abstract subjectivity, on its way to Absolute Knowledge.[11] In the Genet column, however, Derrida attends to an opposite movement: that of the particular not subsumed under the universal. He focuses on the names of characters in Genet's writings—Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, Mimosa, Divine, Divers—in which, as opposed to Hegel, it is the general that becomes particular. He insists on the many appearances of the signature (*le seing*) as a locus of unredeemed singularities; and looks into Genet's figurative language (the language of flowers and flowery language), which does not turn, as in Hegel, into conceptual philosophical language.[12] The Genet column presents the

pole of the non-dialectical, even the un-dialectizable, of different elements that cannot join dialectical movement, and in resisting dialectics' exhaustive scope (since it must be comprehensive), in fact, challenge it.

Genet, the bastard child who grew up on *assistance publique* in foster families and sent to an education colony, the writer of Parisian outlaw thug, thieve, and transvestite subcultures, is juxtaposed in *Glas* with the nuclear heterosexual family as the necessary step on the path toward the constitution of bourgeois society and the liberal state in the Hegel column. Against this dialectic system progressing toward ultimate closure, Derrida stages, with Genet's writing, the debris of dirt and excess, of unmediated singularities.[13] But while distinguishing the two poles and tearing them apart, Derrida also weaves them into one another. Thus, *Glas* begins with a discussion of two passages about flowers in Hegel, turning the name Hegel into an "*Aigle*," confusing the general with the particular right at the start and wondering about the place of the bastard in Hegel's family;[14] and the Genet column, in its turn, multiplies and garbles Hegel's *savoir absolu*, written in acronym as "Sa" (also the acronym of the *signifiant*, i.e., the precise opposite of Absolute Knowledge, Hegel's ultimate *signifié*) and played on through the homonym *ça* ("it," but also the Freudian id). Through the many homologous oppositions created by the two columns—philosophy vs. literature, dialectics vs. galactics, absolute knowledge vs. proper names, family vs. queer sociality, bourgeois society vs. marginal subcultures—Derrida seeks to follow the thread of the remains—*le reste*—in both of them: he takes the remains from Genet's 1967 essay on Rembrandt to articulate anew Hegel's system starting from its remains: "What always remains irresoluble, impracticable, nonnormal, or nonnormalizable is what interests and constraints us here."[15]

Genet, suggests Derrida, undoes Absolute Knowledge through the work of the remains. To unpack how he does so, one needs to follow him, as Derrida does ("*Que je suis, à la trace*") and jump from one place to another ("*il saute partout où ça saute*"), which, in *Glas,* means moving by turns from one column to the other. Thus, on that very page (page 45 in French) in the column facing the remains of Genet's writing—his contemporary engagement with radical politics that can be *shown* if not entirely *written*, brought to the text through the quarrel between "the Greek, The Jew, the Arab, the Hispano-Moor"—Derrida discusses the figure of the Jew in Hegel, the position of the Jew vis-à-vis the family. Hegel's family, Derrida stresses in those pages following the German philosopher's earlier writings from his Frankfurt years,[16] is emphatically Christian, a family based on the principle of love, on a father materialized in the figure of the son, on the internalization of the law that becomes the law of love.[17] This Christian family is constituted, in Hegel's earlier texts, over and against its forefather, Judaism, which in itself fails to form a true family: the distinct, abstract, unworldly father in Judaism—a master whose law is always external—does not allow the movement of filia-

tion, from the father to the son, from the abstract to the materialized. Judaism halts this movement: it is at once too abstract (its God) and too material (its people), denying any kind of transformation of one pole into the other.

And so, even though Judaism is the forefather of Christianity, it does not establish familial bonds with it, since it denies Christianity and dismisses it as its possible son; Judaism rejects filiation. Christianity had to overcome Judaism, to sublate and relieve it; and it is precisely this movement of *Aufhebung* that Christianity, unlike Judaism, is capable of doing. Thus, Christianity, according to Derrida's reading of Hegel, opens the very course of dialectics: the movement between the particular and the general, the possibility of filiation and transformation, the internalization of the law—for Hegel, these are all the building blocks of both Christianity and Philosophy. And just as the family is transformed, in the teleological movement of dialectics, into bourgeois society and the liberal state, so Christianity becomes, through its dialectical negation, Philosophy: from a particular religion to Absolute Religion and to Philosophy that will finally lead to Absolute Knowledge. It is this movement that Derrida writes at the Hegel column on page 45 of *Glas*:

> Christianity itself achieves itself only by relieving itself in(to) philosophical truth . . . with Christianity the speculative family breaches/broaches itself, begins to come to itself, to love, and to the true marriage that constitutes the family as family.[18]

The Jew is a stranger to this philosophical movement which is at the same time the movement toward philosophy; within the true family of love (and the marriage of true religion with philosophy—"The Hegelian dialectic, mother of criticism, is first of all, like every mother, a daughter: of Christianity, in any case Christian theology."[19]—the Jew is a bastard. In Hegel's family, the Jew embodies the forsaken remains of a teleological path leading from particular religion to Absolute Knowledge: divorced from both nature and beauty, he wanders unattached to any one specific place and unable to raise the *letter* into a *concept*. Attached as he is to his *cut* (to circumcision as an act of self-castration), and adamantly forming community around this cut,[20] he refuses to internalize the law into love and is unable to take part in the familial (and later social and statist) movement of progression, transformation, and realization. He is separated from the philosophical movement of *Aufhebung*, and so from philosophy as such.

Many pages in the Hegel column of *Glas* are devoted to the figure of the "un-speculative" Jew. But this figure embodies more than the remains of the Hegelian family, the Jew of ancient times (as realized in the biblical figures of Abraham and Moses); it is also connected, in one way or another, to the 1970s Israeli Jew invoked in the same page of *Glas*, but on the other column: the one shown (*montré*) together with the Greek, the Arab, the Hispano-

Moor. And to Derrida himself: the Jew he follows, and the Jew that he is ("*Que je suis*"). Of course the ancient Jew of the Hegel column and the Middle Eastern Jew of the Genet column are not one and the same; perhaps they even oppose each other. But it is this very double positioning that brings up the challenge of thinking the two together. On the next page of *Glas*, in the Hegel column, Derrida writes: "Here begins the legendary discourse on/ of the eagle [*de l'aigle*] and the two columns."[21] The two "columns" of the Hegelian texts (the Christian family and the Jewish bastard) here become the two columns of Derrida's book (Christian philosophy and its own literary and political bastards); the challenge now is how to think the two together.

There is a similarity between the Jewish "remains" of the Christian family that cannot be metabolized into the dialectics of religion and philosophy and Genet's political engagements with whatever "jumps in the world:" both fail to align, albeit in different (but perhaps complimentary) ways, with Absolute Knowledge. The first signifies a cut within the religious and philosophical movement of *Aufhebung* while the second implies an escape from the rules of the literary realm; and while the first is destined to become non-Christian, the second physically aspires to become non-European. Taken together, they mark a way out of Christian Europe—out of its philosophical traditions and literary procedures and its liberal politics whose epitome is the bourgeois state (structured, as Hegel shows, on the familial conjugal coupling). What lies outside of it? Europe's bastard, the Jew; and European society's bastard, Genet, who paves the way for the bastards of international politics—*les exclus encerclés* in Derrida's words, *les damnés de la terre* in Fanon's—the Black Panthers and the Palestinians. These two groups' struggles, as Genet wrote them in *Un captif amoureux*, were, rather than political revolts in the strict sense of national liberation, actually "metaphysical revolts" against the ubiquitous—and one could say, *Hegelian*—social structures of their times.[22] In fact, in his writings on these struggles—from the early essays of 1970 up to *Un captif amoureux*—Genet doted on the new social bonds created through and around them: the communality of young fighters (both male and female, as he stresses) supplanting the nuclear family; a short life of intense political action in place of the cycle of biological and social reproduction; and a collectivity in struggle (violent and non-violent) to undo the governance of the apparatus of the modern state, instead of civil or bourgeois (*bürgerliche*) society as the aspired social formation and the state as the ultimate and final governing institution. Genet's vision deals a fatal blow to Hegel's Absolute Knowledge when it portrays, through the fighters' action, a radically different social horizon to the bourgeois and statist "end of history." Hegelian Absolute Knowledge is "of Europe" ["*le savoiur abslou de l'Europe*"], as Derrida emphasizes on page 45 of *Glas*—of the liberal or republic but also colonial (or post-colonial) European state; and the forces that fight against it, the forces of decolonization, therefore engage in antico-

lonial struggles. Simon Critchley has suggested, in a pioneering article on late Genet and Derrida, that the blow to European *Sittlichkeit* in Genet's earlier works turned, in his late political writings, into a Hegelian position: the egoistic, masturbatory, aestheticized position of his youth—anti-social and depoliticized—was replaced with a strong commitment to a political cause, the valorization of truth-telling and loyalty to a social project, "an ethics of family and community" which constitutes "a Palestinian *Sittlichkeit.*"[23] But there can be no Palestinian *Sittlichkeit* and Genet's late writings do not suggest any. Hegel's Ethical Life cannot be particularized: it must remain absolute and abstract, that is European. And it definitely cannot take the form of *fedayeen*'s non-bourgeois sociality cut from the nuclear family, non-reproductive, unstable and ever transformative.[24]

Reading *Glas* from what is shown, if not explicitly written, means attending to the two columns together, thus bringing the unloving, extra-familial ancient Jew and the modern resisting Palestinian, formed in struggle, to close proximity: both are the remains of Europe (of European religion turned into philosophy on the one hand, and of European politics, on the other); both deal blows to European Absolute Knowledge. The Jew of Christian philosophy, that is, the Christian image of the Jew as carved out of late eighteenth-century Jewish positions on the threshold of emancipation and reflected in biblical figures (and so most definitely *not* the national Jew of the 1970s Middle East) is articulated in *Glas* politically, not just conceptually. And the cut that the Jew performs to the dialectical process is portrayed vis-à-vis the radical politics of anticolonial struggles. Christian European thought is bound here to Christian European power, and together they are confronted with bastards of many kinds. Thus the Jew in *Glas*—as signifier—is as close to anticolonial politics as it would ever be in Derrida's entire *oeuvre*. And in it, Derrida understands his own hyphenated, torn Jewish identity (as the Greek, the Jew, the Arab, the Hispano-Moor) *not* within the confines of liberal politics with its pseudo-universalist values but rather in a gesture toward the potential radicalism of a Jew entangled in political revolts that renounce the conceptual and institutional power of European political philosophy itself.

The Jew here is therefore a radical, risky signifier. "The risk, then," writes Derrida later in *Glas*, "is the Jewish reading"[25]—a reading of Western-Christian philosophy from the margins, from its theological and political "bastards." But what is such a "Jewish" reading? Instead of a sentimentalizing "Jewish reading" that pretends to recover some ahistorical "Jewish" content and then speak in its name, I suggest a different reading. We could consider Derrida's long pages on the Jew in Hegel themselves as already a type of reading—a reading attentive to the gesture of the Jew as a volatile position within the Christian philosophical tradition; and then relocate it into a different time and space—the moment of *Glas*'s own writing and the Middle East

of the 1970s. In so doing we could dwell on the blow or cut [*coup*] that the Jew purportedly deals to Christian philosophy and thus to Absolute Knowledge, but do so in a way that evades Hegelian motion itself. Thus, rather than read both columns *into* each other in a Hegelian motion of *Aufehbung* arriving at the image of the Palestinians as the contemporary incarnation and realization of Hegel's Jew, we could, in fact, read them separately and in the process also evade essentializing, flat readings of "the Jew."[26] In this way, we attend not to the "meaning" of what is written (i.e., the content of the two columns, the *signifié*,) but to what is shown (i.e., the *signifiant*, the very juxtaposition of these materials side by side and the resonance between them) and regard this signifying textuality as a form of "decolonial writing."

A Decolonial Textual Form

What does the form of *Glas* signify? Its two columns mark a distinct formal shift from Derrida's earlier writing: the deconstructive reading of a certain philosophical text is accompanied here with another reading of distinctly different texts; a Genet is added to Hegel.[27] Philosophy is not only untangled internally, by its very own rhetoric, but uses another force from without; yet this very "outside" is precisely that which Hegel's philosophical system cannot accept. In creating an "outside" to philosophy and to philosophical discourse, *Glas* refuses Hegelian philosophy's internal law—and its law of internalization—as one unitary column that absorbs all elements in an all-pervasive teleological movement of negation toward Absolute Knowledge. In its very structure, the Genet column is a non-ascribable *remainder* of Hegel's philosophy; and this external element brings out—externalizes—the remainders of and within the Hegelian system. When Derrida quotes Genet's title of the Rembrandt essay at the beginning of the Hegel column ("what, after all, of the remain(s), today, for us, here, now, of a Hegel"), he is literally importing, from the outside, the very potentiality of an "outside" to Hegel. *Glas*'s two columns are neither a two that will be sublated into a one (as in Hegel's dialectics) nor a three that is already one (as in Christian dogma); by their very form they exhibit a *non-dialectical* form, echoing and resonating one another, weaving into and outside each other, they do not, however, negate, mitigate, sublate, or relieve one another. Their form is already a blow to Absolute Knowledge, and in more ways than one.

But from where does the form *Glas* derive? And what does it show? Derrida had already experimented with a similar, two-column structure in the introduction to his 1972 *Marges—de la philosophy*, in the essay "Tympan."[28] There, a reflection on "the limit" in philosophy, on the limit between philosophy and its other, on the place of the margin and the threshold in philosophical discourse (extensively quoting from and discussing Hegel), is coupled with a Michel Leiris text on Persephone, quoted on the right column of the

essay. This essay, written perhaps as a foreshadowing of *Glas* (and definitely read like that today), itself formally echoes Genet's short essay on Rembrandt—"What Remains of a Rembrandt Torn into Four Equal Pieces and Flushed Down the Toilet"—published in *Tel Quel* in 1967 and referred to at the very beginning of *Glas*.[29] Genet's essay addresses the singularity of human beings and the possibility of losing it: the left (and more "Hegelian") column describes Genet staring at a man sitting next to him on a train and realizing that the seemingly discrete existence of humans hides a universal identity between of all men ("every man is like another"), and even the exemplarity of each human being ("every man is all other men"). In the other column, he discusses some of Rembrandt's last portraits, insisting that they do not in fact resemble any real person. Looking at different body parts in these portraits, he tears apart the humans in them while tearing apart the work of art itself ("a Rembrandt torn into four equal pieces").

To these well-known and oft-discussed elements of *Glas*'s formal genealogy, we must add another, hidden one. *Glas*'s writing echoes not only Derrida's and Genet's past writing but also Genet's writing of the year *Glas* was being written. Derrida writes that Genet "almost never writes anymore"; and, in fact, Genet, who wrote and published only scarcely throughout the 1960s, published only a few short essays from 1970 onward, during the time of his intense political engagement, only reporting and reflecting on the struggles he accompanied in different magazines. But in 1973, Genet was actually very much immersed in writing, working on an ambitious textual project of a different kind. His biographer mentions a manuscript, entitled *Description du reél*, comprising—in 1973—thirty large-format pages, with a text typed in different colors and various columns. This text, written in fragments, recounts Genet's travels to the Middle East and North America, participating in and bearing witness to the anticolonial struggles of the Palestinians and the Black Panthers.[30] Jérôme Neutres has noted that Genet had shown Derrida this project ("an explosive textual project, written in various colors and arranged on pages divided into numerous 'windows'")[31] which would not only lay the groundwork for the writing of *Un captif amoureux* a decade later, but have a significant influence on Derrida's own writing of *Glas*. Indeed Genet's 1973 writing project can be seen as the seed of Derrida's project of the same year, and through it we can better understand the political horizon of *Glas*'s textuality.

Syrian playwright Saadallah Wannous testified, upon Genet's death in 1986, that the writer had talked to him about his book-in-progress, showing him some of its pages. It was a book "about his life" of that time, the places he visited and the struggles he joined. He goes on to recount that it was on a flight to Japan that Genet decided to launch this particular project as a critique of Judeo-Christian culture: "In this book," he told Wannous, "I am mostly attached to critique the Judeo-Christian religion and to say why I

reject it. I speak of the experience of other peoples. There are chapters on the Palestinians, the Black Panthers, these movements of revolt that shake the Judeo-Christian world."[32] Genet understands the struggles of the Black Panthers and Palestinians as revolts forged against the very core of European culture; he articulates these anticolonial struggles, not only as political revolts for national or ethnic liberation, but as a religion and philosophical critique of Judeo-Christianity, understanding this term as a modern European (and highly Christian) one. Born out of his experience with these struggles, Genet's writing project of 1973 follows them in their own critique of European rule not only in content but also in form: Wannous describes "*la mise en page*" of the manuscript as "recalling certain editions of *Tafsir al-Jalalayn*: in the middle, within a rectangular frame, the main text, and the other texts surround it, each in a different font."[33] The page's large format, the various fonts and letter colors, the different boxes of writing—the fact that the writing of *Description du réel* resembles the famous Quranic exegesis of late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries—exemplifies Genet's desire to move away as far as physically possible from the "Judeo-Christian" form.

Description du reél—Genet's aborted project—was an attempt to practice both the form and the content of anticolonial struggle. Contrary to the common narrative about his years of engagement, then, Genet in fact did not abstain from writing in those years for the sake of action; nor did he only write short texts of reportage that support political activity. Rather, he was experimenting in writing, searching for a textual form that would align with these struggles to summon their most radical horizon. Genet's political-textual activity of the 1970s—culminating, years later and somewhat accidentally, with *Un captif amoureux*'s tangible existence as an object and textual product—practiced as well as theorized a new connection between struggle and writing, anticolonial politics and decolonial textuality; a fact which, though almost forgotten today, was well-known in the Parisian intellectual circles of the time. Michel Foucault, who, not unlike Derrida, became close to Genet around this time, testifies in a 1973 interview that he shares with Genet the will to renounce institutionalized literary writing as an apparatus of bourgeois society no longer capable to produce discursive creativity and political excitation. This, however, does not mean that Foucault sees in Genet someone who rejected writing as such; on the contrary, it was Genet's political *écriture* that Foucault was so fascinated with, eulogizing its constant revolutionary zeal combined with deep political sense. In fact, Foucault had first-hand access to Genet's political textuality of that time, possibly even to *Description du reél* itself: "In fact," says Foucault in 1973, "Genet does work. In my closet I have an entire pile of papers that he wrote about political power, on what power [*pouvoir*] is."[34] Interestingly, it was in Foucault's closet that Genet's textuality-beyond-literature rested in 1973: writing of and in struggle, in search of decolonial form.

Some of these papers made their way to *Éditions Gallimard* in the mid-1970s, where they were eventually published—in large format, with each page of the printed text facing a facsimile of Genet's handwritten manuscript—only in 2010, under a new title, *La Sentence* (*The Sentence*). These pages are organized with multiple columns and frames, accompanied by handwritten indications of text color—red or black—and font size. They can be roughly divided into two parts. The first tells the story of Genet's 1967 flight to Japan, during which the sound of the word "sayonara," spoken by a flight attendant, triggered his transformative expulsion of Judeo-Christian morality, which he describes as "a solitary worm, three thousand years long" within him.[35] The flight is then referred to as an escape, using liberation language. This story appears, word for word and almost in its entirety, in *Un Captif Amoureaux*. Yet in this earlier manuscript, it is set at the center of the page and surrounded by what formally seems to be an exegetical theological commentary of sorts, concerned with the trial of the "Chicago 7" as well as the differences between the monotheism and polytheism.

The second part of the text is entitled—or perhaps it would be more accurate to say distinguished from the first textual part with or by the word "VOLS," ("flights," but also "thefts"). A long reflection on a court scene, on the nature of the sentence handed down by a magistrate to a thief, which Genet sees as a bond between the judge and the condemned, it is extended ad infinitum and endlessly repeated, with Genet wondering about the possible condition of its rupture—the breaking of the law revealed in the court's sentence. Genet's text performs this experiment—an extended sentence of linguistic exegesis—itself. A former thief who knows all too well how these court scenes play out, Genet concentrates on the "enunciation of the sentence" (*la sentence prononcée*), wondering about the possibility of its collapse, of transforming the thief collaborating with the legal sentence into a revolutionary breaking from it.

The text, therefore, poses the question of writing as a form of utterance. The recurring appearances of prison cells and court halls, where sentence and sentencing are in the course of their pronunciation—but also always on the verge of dissipating—is echoed in the windows, boxes, or indeed *cells* and *halls*, which Genet crafts his own text with. The flight *to* Japan as a flight *from* the punishing Jewish God and the Christian holy family, is experienced and summarized by one Japanese word Genet hears on the plane, by one juridical sentence Genet is drawn to. A word, a sentence—this is the very form of writing as arena where a flight from colonial morality can take place. Therefore, however aborted, however partial and unfinished, this text gives us a clue into the potentiality of such a decolonial textuality.

It is this decolonial politico-textuality that Derrida alludes to in his own text; this is what *Glas* shows ("*montre*") about Genet, this is what deals a blow ("*un coup*") to, in cutting into, European Absolute Knowledge. It is a

philosophical-theological-political-textual blow, rejecting the dialectical motion of sublation and its roots in the Christian internalization of the law through the family of love; revolting against liberal politics based on colonial rule and its postcolonial ramifications, and aiming beyond literary institutions and their writing procedures. Derrida knows (and the seemingly-too-quick transitions from one concern to another in the passage of page 45 would suggest this) that Genet's burial of literature—of his own past literary works, and of "literature" as a distinct realm—is connected to his voyage outside Europe to the sites of Third-World liberation struggles. That taken together, those two things challenge European Absolute Knowledge, under which the autonomy of the literary realm is part and parcel of liberal society and art—as an arena of active formation—is sublated to civil politics. This form of "literary writing" must therefore be destroyed.[36] But Derrida also knows that if Genet "hardly writes anymore," what he is writing at that moment bears a vision of a different kind of writing, paving the way to an apparatus of writing-in-struggle—neither "fictional" nor "documentary" writing but one that reflexively examines, in both form and content, the possibility of bearing witness to, getting close to, or coinciding with a revolutionary struggle. In other words, the ways a writer, but also writing itself as *écriture*, "leaps wherever that explodes in the world."

Ever cautious, Derrida is hinting in that direction in *Glas—showing*, more than *writing*, some of the potentialities of Genet's anticolonial writing-in-struggle. "In *Glas*," he would later comment, "it is sometimes from a Jewish or Arabo-Islamic outside that the Christianity, Protestant or Catholic, of Hegel or Genet, is both observed and deconstructed."[37] Yet, in large parts of Derrida scholarship this potentiality is too easily foreclosed upon: no significant connection is made between the Hegel and the Genet columns; Derrida's analysis of Genet is seen as part of his exploration of "French literature;" and the discussion of the Jew is torn from the contemporaneous political entanglement of actual and contemporary Jews, both in Europe and in the Middle East. In this vein, the form of writing Derrida uses in *Glas* is commonly recognized (and celebrated) as "Talmudic," that is, Jewish, and even diasporic Jewish. And, in fact, this "Talmudic" writing, taken together with "the cut of circumcision" and "the signified's state of exile"—that which constitutes the "Jewish Derrida"—is then integrated into Judeo-Christian culture, as almost exclusively located in Europe, and of which Derrida is now seen literally as an embodiment. But understanding the "Talmudic" writing of *Glas* as an invocation of the Tafsir structure of Genet's lost writing from the early-1970s—a textual form Genet originally used to critique Judeo-Christian culture—and situating this critique within the anticolonial struggles of peoples and groups against the real and symbolic rule of Europe and European culture, calls for a rereading of Derrida and Genet's textuality. The Jew as a "cut" within European-Christian philosophy, in the Hegel column, rever-

berates in the entire book as a structural and material "blow"—drawn from Jewish and Islamic textual traditions—to European philosophical and literary writing. Both form and content are grounded in what lies outside of Europe, in an "outside" of Europe, and relate to the political struggles of the time.

Arabic Horizons and Hebrew Undercurrents

Where is this outside of Europe to be located—not only within Genet's aborted book, but within his realized one? Can this outside even be actualized, or does it only take the form of a potentiality? These are questions for *Un captif amoureux* which are also posed within it. Written in French, by one of France's most celebrated authors, published in *Éditions Gallimard* years after the disintegration of the Palestinian armed struggle, in one of the Palestinians' lowest points, after the Sabra and Shatila massacres and one year before the outbreak of the first Intifada—this text nevertheless opens a potentially different space in its mode of address, act of enunciation, and form of signification. As it works against the factuality of struggle, inscribing "writing" into it, so it goes against the factuality of its own writing conditions—against the historically-realized collectivity of readers as its possible literary public, against its ascribed language and position of utterance, and against its genre and "ways of saying."

Genet was supposed to write a book about the Palestinian armed struggle in the course of its happening; the PLO commissioned it, Yasser Arafat personally asked him to do so.[38] He was signaled to explain the armed struggle to Europeans, to be its renowned *porte-parole* in times when almost the entire Western political and intellectual world stood against the Palestinians and considered them a rogue nation engaged in a terrorist, inhumane struggle. Yet for years Genet had refused to write his long-awaited book. On several occasions, when different Palestinians asked Genet when he would publish his book about the Palestinians, he used to answer: "When you finish your revolution."[39] But the revolution would never be finished for him, since Genet arrived after its interruption, when it was already, to a certain extent, finished. He started writing the book after the Sabra and Shatila massacres, being immersed in the realm of the dead.

From this position arises the question of address. In the second half of the book Genet asserts quite decisively that this book will neither be read in France nor be translated into Arabic; and he asks about its possible readership.[40] It is within his own book that Genet anticipates the improbability of its address. This lament for the lack of potential readers was perhaps premature. Historically speaking, Genet was wrong on both accounts: the book has eventually gained many French and European readers and was indeed translated into Arabic by Kadhim Jihad, appearing under the title *Asirun a-shik* in 1997.[41] But Genet's assertion should be read beyond its historical factuality

as a claim regarding *Un captif amoureux*'s conditions of addressability. In his statement, Genet does not only lament the lack of any possible readers but also redirects the question of readership: by actively denouncing the existence of these preconceived national-linguistic groups of readers, he opens up a space for different form of address. After all, he repudiates the addressability of his book in the course of the book itself; and he phrases the book's failure of address as a question itself potentially addressed to someone. "*À qui s'adresse-t-il*?" Genet asks in his book, about his book: to whom are these words, in their impossibility of address, addressed? Moreover, he insists on his writing the book based on the recognition of the lack of any possible readers. The failure of address does not lead Genet to abandon his writing project, to dismiss or doubt it, nor indeed to significantly change the project's modes and goals (as was the case with Godard); on the contrary, the writing of the book is structured from the outset on this impossibility of address.[42] The very work of writing in *Un captif amoureux* is based on a radical transformation of its conditions of addressability: the book rejects the existence of French/European readership, on the one hand, and a Palestinian/Arabic, one on the other, as two preconceived, distinct, and discrete groups of readers. Genet is thus renouncing the linguistic-national divide as the organizing principle of *Un captif amoureux*—in the mode of action it evokes as well as in its mode of writing: instead of having a book written in the French language either for French readership or, by way of translation, for Palestinian one, *Un captif amoureux* sets out to constitute a different modality of address. Its *potentiality* of address necessarily goes through a certain *impossibility* of address (the impossibility of an address to national and language identity-predicated collectivities, to recall Agamben's critique of such a collective formation)—and is aimed instead at a reconfiguration of the book's political-linguistic affinities.

Recognizing the absence of a strictly defined French or Palestinian readership for *Un captif amoureux*, and basing its textual project on such a recognition—"while knowing that, I am nevertheless writing it"—makes the writing of this book not merely the composition of a French book. *Un captif amoureux* is not a French text immediately offered—that is, without recourse to mediation—to a French public; or one given—only through an act of political, cultural, and linguistic translation—to an Arab public. At another place in the book, Genet reflects on the different possible names for the struggle—whether Palestinian resistance or revolution—and the need to use capital letters while writing either one of them; then he notes that in Arabic there are no capital letters (CA 177, PoL 124). Genet thus poses these questions not only in relation to the designated language of *Un captif amoureux*, and the only language in which Genet was ever fluent—French—but also vis-à-vis the Arabic. Arabic is invoked here not as a lexicon but as a writing system: Genet is less interested in the term used in Arabic to designate the

Palestinian struggle, asking instead whether in light of the lack of capital letters in Arabic he should write the French term with capital letters at all. He is *not* posing the question of translation—from Arabic to French, from the language of the Palestinian fighters to his own language of writing. Rather, he is considering Arabic as a written language, one that bears significance on his own textual project: the question of writing, of how things ought to be written ("*s'il faut écrire*"), necessarily passes through Arabic, the writing in Arabic ("*écriture arabe*"). Arabic functions here—and perhaps at *Un captif amoureux* in general—as a linguistic horizon that runs throughout what otherwise seems an exclusively French text. Arabic exists in this text neither as the spoken language of the natives—the language of origin that Genet's text would then translate—nor as the ultimate language of address for Genet's text, the language to which this text should be translated and submitted for readership. Arabic appears as a language of writing—both as the language in which the Palestinian struggle (being itself a "written" struggle) is composed from the start by those who execute this "revolt" or "revolution;" and as the language embedded in every writing of this struggle, such as Genet's, always punctuated by writing in Arabic.

However, the first language mentioned in the book is neither French nor Arabic—but Hebrew. In the book's first paragraph, Genet reflects on the white spaces between the words, on the reality held in them, and on the time it takes to read the letters, as the condensed time, he speculates, embedded in the Hebrew letters (CA 12, PoL 5). Hebrew is then also invoked not in the mode of translation but as a form of writing. It is not Hebrew words but rather Hebrew letters that are of interest to Genet; not the act of Hebrew signification but rather the very shapes of the Hebrew letters are what supplies Genet with a preliminary model for his own writing motivation. This image of a prolonged, dense time captured within the white spaces between the black squares of the Hebrew letters as being part of the reality that is itself present—and not simply signified—within the linguistic realm; this image probably derives from earlier Kabbalistic images very much concerned with the material reality of the Hebrew letters and their mystic qualities. Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem, writing about the relation of the white space of the page (or Torah scroll) to the black letters of the text in Jewish mystical myths dating back as early as the Middle Ages, adds that "[t]he most radical form that this view took was associated with the talmudic *aggadah* according to which prior to the creation of the world the whole of the Torah was written in black fire on white fire. As early as the beginning of the thirteenth century the daring notion was expressed that in reality the white fire composed the true text of the Torah, whereas the text that appeared in black fire was merely the mystical Oral Law. Hence it follows that the true Written Law has become entirely invisible to human perception and is presently concealed in the white parchment of the Torah scroll, the black letters

of which are nothing more than a commentary on this vanished text. In the time of the Messiah the letters of this 'white Torah' will be revealed."[43] Jacques Derrida references the myth in his 1971 essay "Dissemination," where he is fascinated with the concept of the text renewing itself upon a future, Messianic reading. He writes: "it is always possible for a text to become new, since the white spaces open up its structure to an indefinitely disseminated transformation."[44]

Genet's quite surprising mention of Hebrew letters within the first few words of his book—probably one of the last passages written by Genet, only a few weeks before his death[45] —helps him display a theory of writing as negotiating between the reality of struggle and the procedure of textual inscription. Hebrew letters are therefore set at the heart of Genet's own writing, and through them he conveys the dense reality of struggle enclosed within his textuality. It is as though Genet is hinting that Hebrew letters are at the very fundament of his seemingly French text—whose horizon, we should remember, is an "*écriture arabe*" with no capital letters. This is already the case before any act of translation—and in an absence of any possibility of address.

In lieu of a French book—written by a French author, in the French language, for a French community of readers thus taking part in the French literary field—*Un captif amoureux* already marks its impossible scope of participation and belonging in its appeal to both Arabic and Hebrew as potential languages within its own writing position in the textual geography of Israel/Palestine. It is hardly surprising, then, that a decisive portion of this text's afterlife is located in the creative world in and around Israel/Palestine—as in Elias Khoury's *Bab al-shams*, discussed in the introduction to this book; and in Emmanuel Pinto's 2009 Hebrew novel *Tinitus*, where Genet's stay in Beirut in 1982 is destined to end in a dramatic fictional encounter with an Israeli soldier.[46] These are not only late permutations of Genet's text, Middle Eastern variations on a European motif, but rather recent texts from Israel/Palestine that themselves correspond to a potentiality already inscribed in Genet's text—in its Hebrew undercurrents and Arabic horizons. This potentiality does not only transform the qualification of *Un captif amoureux* as a French text; it does not only situate this text in the geopolitical space of Israel/Palestine, but entangles it with the question of struggle. Thus, the transformation in the linguistic and national affiliations of the book is intertwined with the transformation of Genet's positioning vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle as well as with the transformative actions of the Palestinian *fedayeen* themselves. The workings of both the struggle and the text recast the notion of collectivity: in undermining the presumably predicated community, both of struggle (a national Palestinian one) and of writing/reading (a French book), a different notion of political collectivity is being constituted,

a collectivity based on the mode of transformation. As early as 1973, Genet stated:

> A revolution which does not aim at changing me by changing the relations between people does not interest me. What is more, I doubt whether a revolution which does not affect me enough to transform me is really a revolution at all. The Palestinian revolution has established new kinds of relations which have changed me, and in this sense the Palestinian revolution is my revolution.[47]

Genet's notion of revolution is based on the work of transformation: in both the heart of the revolutionary act and its ultimate goal, Genet sees a radical change in the web of social relations concerning first the revolutionaries themselves—the Palestinian fighters, the *fedayeen*—who by entering the revolutionary space change their conditions of living, their mode of gathering, their ways of action, and their conception of time (indeed *Un captif amoureux* may be read as a very detailed ethnography of the transformation embedded in the revolutionaries' form of life), a transformation that affects Genet himself to the extent that he can state, at the end of the quoted passage, that "in this sense the Palestinian revolution is my revolution." If their revolution is based on the transformation of the Palestinians' mode of sociality, then anyone in proximity to them, living close enough to this mode of sociality, can be taken into it or be transformed by it. This act of self-transformation, says Genet, resonates with the Palestinian transformative revolution, making him in one way or another part of this revolution. Instead of revolving around a predicated collectivity, the Palestinian revolution actually "establish[es] new kinds of relations" and has the potentiality of recasting its own collectivity.

An Address to a Collectivity

To be sure, Genet doesn't simply become an Arab/Hebrew author and a Palestinian revolutionary. But his changing, undetermined—transformative and ever-transforming—position vis-à-vis the Palestinian revolution and its formation of a collectivity-in-struggle lies at the core of his conception of the Palestinian struggle. Genet is preoccupied with his positioning throughout his endeavor with the Palestinians. On the first page of *Un captif amoureux* he writes about his involvement in the Palestinian struggle as a "*réalité du temps passé auprès—et non avec eux*" (CA 11, PoL 5), not the time he spent *with* the Palestinians, but rather next to, *beside*, or in proximity to them. Genet stresses the fact that his closeness to the Palestinians formed itself on a certain gap between them and himself; their reality was kept separate from his. However earlier, in "*Quatre heures à Chatila*," while walking in the valley of death "among them or alongside them—all the tortured victims," he

writes that "for the first time in my life I felt myself becoming Palestinian and hating Israel" (ED 247, 251). Among, perhaps beside, the Palestinian bodies in Shatila, Genet finds himself in a transformative state, becoming a Palestinian (a Palestinian fighter? A dead Palestinian fighter?). And if it were indeed the wide circulation of this article that got Genet to finally start writing his book about the Palestinians, then it is this transformation—always in proximity to death—that was to lay the foundations for *Un captif amoureux*.

Significantly, it is only in the long concluding meditative passage found in the last pages of his gigantic book that Genet finally theorizes his complex position vis-à-vis the Palestinian struggle (CA 610, PoL 429). The book that starts as a site of inscription, thematizing its own coming-into-being as a written text, ends with a reflection on the moments before writing. It dramatizes the bearing of witness through a scene staged in a hypothetical courtroom; the act itself, though, is far from hypothetical, since Genet—living beside the Palestinians for quite a while, even as the writing of the book was already under way, around 1984—had been asked by some Palestinians to bear witness to their struggle. What is Genet asked to bear witness about? And to whom? He quotes French law, as if he is to testify under it—a French citizen writing in the French language, testifying under the rule of French-written law, and under the laws of the French language. But he stresses that his testimony is not addressed to the (French) judges: even though uttered in a French setting, his truth-saying, his speech, isn't determined by it. This testimony is not born of the encounter between witness and judges—in being positioned in relation to the judges, in their service or in opposition to them; it is not a mutually-constituted speech in the Hegelian sense. Nor is his testimony addressed directly to the specific Palestinians who asked him to write the story of their struggle; Genet tries to avoid even this immediate mode of address, in which he is supposed to uninterruptedly transmit the Palestinian struggle, to give back what he has just got, in a circular movement whose origin and goal are one and the same. At stake here is not the audience's possible conditioning of the act of testimony. At the heart of this witness-bearing rite lies an oath to tell the truth—and not necessarily to tell it to anyone in particular; this oath is not a deliverance of truth but rather the coming-into-being of a truthful enunciation. The witness's speech is formed by the oath not as an act of communication—a transmission of some propositional truth-value from one instantiation to another, from Genet to his French audience or Palestinian interlocutors, for example—but rather that the oath instituting the witness's truth-telling is taken in separation from the audience.[48] The witness stands "alone," "speaking" only from within this state of solitude. The audience doesn't condition the act of bearing witness, then; standing in proximity to, yet separate from, the audience, the witness testifies to his truth. The speech of truth arises from the witness's solitude, and it

conveys—as Genet would later point out—the convergence of external and internal truth, that is, the reality of the Palestinian struggle both as a "fact" and as the experiences of a witness positioned on this fact's threshold.[49]

In other words, Genet stages here an imaginary courtroom, in which a witness takes an oath, in solitude, to tell the truth to—and in front of—a public. The witness is Genet himself; the oath of truth is his account of the Palestinian struggle; and the audience is whoever might be the collective addressee of this truth. But this addressee can neither be the French judges who allegedly sanction the testimony nor the Palestinian national authorities that historically requested it; Genet explicitly rejects this structure of immediate, communicative address. The collective addressee is not there to begin with, enabling the act of bearing witness; on the contrary, the act of bearing witness—taking an oath in solitude so t hat to guarantee a speech of truth—forms the direction to which this speech is carried on.

In the Arabic translation of this passage, the witness, *le témoin*—Genet himself—turns into *shahed* (الشاهد)—echoing the word *shahid*, which comes from the same root.[50] This Islamic term, *shahid*, with its origins in the Qur'an and significant throughout Muslim tradition has, over the last two decades, become a highly volatile one, both religiously and politically; and it has been associated—if not exclusively then at least very frequently—with the Palestinian struggle, and came to signify, in mass media discourse, a suicide bomber; and for the Palestinians, a martyr, the one who sacrifices oneself for the nation.[51] The Arabic translation seems to hint to the religious-political discursive environment in which it operated. Since already the "*feday*" meant the one willing to blood sacrifice for one's own people.[52] The rendering of that paradigmatic figure of the 1960s and 70s—positioned in a revolutionary-national discourse, but always with theological undertones (albeit not Muslim)—into the Quranic figure of the shahid signifies one of the central shifts in the political lexicon of the last decades. Yet the figure of the *shahid*, in its most literal definition, is also that of a witness: one who is present in an event as witness and who bears witness to truth; indeed, in Genet's above-quoted passage, the witness is portrayed as standing by himself. But I wish to take this reading further, following the influential writings of the Iranian theologian Ali Shariati, who was working in the 1960s and 70s, before the Iranian revolution, in close proximity to revolutionary Marxist and Third World movements—and alluding to his conceptualization of the *shahid*, and to a certain relation between the *shahid* and the political collectivity that surrounds him.[53] Shariati explains that, whereas the Christian martyr dies for his or her faith following in the footsteps of Christ, in the Islamic tradition the *shahid* "is always alive and present."[54] The *shahid* bears witness to truth—the truth of God and the prophet—and does so through an act of self-negation in which his presence is transformed into a different existential register. According to Shariati, the *shahid* becomes the sacred idea to which

he bears witness, the thought of "truth" in the name of which he testifies. Shariati stresses that in this act of self-transformation, the *shahid* is kept "alive"—but in a different realm, in an altered state. The echoes of the Palestinian *fedayeen*'s transformative acts—and to Genet's descent into the vivid realm of the dead in order to encounter them—reverberate here.

Shariati furthermore explains that the "idea" into which the *shahid*'s existence is transformed is a *collective* one ("a shahid is a spiritual crystallization of that collective spirit"),[55] connecting between the *shahid*'s transformative act and the coming-into-being of a certain collective formation. Indeed, the *shahid* bears witness *for* a collectivity—not a collectivity already in place to which his testimony is simply directed, but rather a testimony for the sake of the very existence of that collectivity. In his bearing witness *to* a collectivity, the *shahid* is transformed into the idea that enables it. This act of address, however, is not directed at a future, yet-to-come collectivity;[56] the collectivity to which the *shahid* appeals is situated in a vanishing—and perhaps already lost—past. Shariati underlines the restorative nature of the *shahid*'s act of bearing witness:

> When the belief in a sacred school of thought is gradually eroding, is about to vanish or to be forgotten in a new generation due to a conspiracy, suddenly an individual, by negating himself, re-establishes it. In other words, he calls it back to the scene of the world.[57]

The *shahid*'s gesture is that of calling back: in the face of a political power that persecutes the "truth" and its bearers, the *shahid* sacrifices himself in order to make the truth reappear. The *shahid* thus reconstitutes (or recalls) what is in danger of being lost. He is not imagining that which is yet to exist; and he is not establishing something *ex nihilo*. Rather, he turns his face to the past, not unlike Benjamin's "angel of history," striving to reinstate both the "truth" and the community formerly constituted on its basis. Sacrificing himself, negating his individuality, he is transformed into the very collective belief—"thought," "idea," or "truth" in Shariati's terms—which institutional political power had tried to oppress; and in becoming this politically-rejected "truth," the *shahid* re-invokes the collectivity that used to surround it.

This structure of summoning brings to mind the passage with which the previous chapter began (and the one before ended), wherein Genet formulates his own act of writing through the gesture of "calling back": the image of the *feday* is vanishing, about to disappear, and Genet's task is to call it back into the textual and political realm, "to call the *fedayee* back [*le rappeler*] in every sense of the word." (CA 37, PoL 23). Here, thinking through Genet's violent, bomb-like "fact" of writing; through the *fedayeen*'s gestural, scripted *after-the-fact* struggle; and finally through the *shahid*'s restorative testimony, we may better grasp this act of "calling back." Bearing witness to

the Palestinian struggle, Genet re-invokes a vanishing, marginalized, or rejected collectivity persecuted by colonial political forces, its members either symbolically or actually dead by the time he's writing. Genet's text summons a collectivity-in-struggle, the collectivity of the Palestinian anticolonial revolutionary struggle, the Palestinian *fedayeen*; he bears witness to this lost collectivity, and in so doing addresses his testimony to this collectivity, writing for their sake, for the sake of restoring their collectivity, for the sake of bringing back the form of their collective existence. However, Genet does not try to bring the *fedayeen* back to life—to revive the Palestinian revolutionary struggle—since for him this struggle is itself saturated, from its inception, with death: the Palestinian struggle takes place in the realm of the dead, and Genet—a dreamer, a "*spontané simulateur*"—has to go "*chez les morts*" in order to take part in it. Bearing witness to the struggle, Genet is bearing witness to the realm of the dead, in which it occurs (doing so from his own deathbed); as we have seen, the *fedayeen's* collectivity-in-struggle he is invoking is not a collectivity of the living—a struggle for the sake of a personal, familial, and national future—but a collectivity of the dead, with its totally different modes of relationality, sociality, and erotics. It is to this collectivity that Genet addresses his book; these are the potential (but also impossible) readers of this text.[58] And, as we have already shown, the *fedayeen* are also the authors of their own struggle—they themselves bear witness to its anticolonial truth; in this sense, if Genet is some sort of *shahid*, then he is a *shahid* of other *shahids*: he bears witness to their act of bearing witness.[59]

In calling back and recalling the vanishing collectivity of the *fedayeen*, *Un captif amoureux* aims to transform the conditions of its addressability: instead of an appeal to an abstract, undetermined audience—a public, in Michael Warner's terms—located in the text's future, Genet addresses his writing to a lost collectivity situated in the past. Furthermore, Genet does not appeal to a public produced by historical reality—either a French readership or a national Palestinian one. In its form of address, *Un captif amoureux* wishes to summon a historically unrealized potentiality: a mode of struggle which was pushed to the margins of the Palestinian cause, a rejected course of action; as well as defeated, absent, or dead revolutionaries. Gil Anidjar has suggested that "Genet à Chatila"—the title of a collection of essays concerning Genet's writing about the Palestinians—could be read as "Genet in Shatila" but also as "Genet *to* Shatila:"[60] entering the Palestinian refugee camp only twenty-four hours after the massacre, walking among the dead bodies, writing in and about this place of resistance (and the collapse thereof), Genet also addresses his writing *to* Shatila, to the political collectivity which revealed itself as impossible there, the one Genet insists on calling back. Summoning this vanishing collectivity, Genet re-situates his writing within the political geography of Israel/Palestine. With the collectivity of the Palestin-

ian *fedayeen*, he re-invokes a political potentiality which was marginalized, abandoned, or completely lost, in the realized history of that place: an anticolonial, revolutionary, gestural struggle. Thus, although explicitly addressing the disappearing collective of Palestinian *fedayeen*, this potentiality is not limited to them: the text's address, as form, might be extended—since this collectivity, unlike the national one, has no fixed predicates or preconceived ethnically based community. The anticolonial collectivity is shaped through its struggle; the struggle consists of its own formation. *Un captif amoureux* thus addresses the *fedayeen* as a collective-formation-in-the-making, a collectivity *of* and *in* struggle. Although neither general nor abstract, it is an open-ended collectivity, as the anticolonial revolutionary struggle in Israel/Palestine can be enacted by many. Genet's writing is a call to open up the present moment in Israel/Palestine to the vanishing (im)potentialities of the past: to call them back, invoke or recall them—*les rappeler*—as the reading/writing, dead and active, witnessing collectivity of the text.

Neither Documentary Nor Fiction in Godard's Cinema

Writing with Arabic horizons and Hebrew undercurrents, alluding to the structure of the Tafsir, and positioned as a witness, Genet situates himself within the space—at once political and textual—that is non-European. He enters this space immersively, by way of mimicry, while establishing internal relations to non-Judeo-Christian cultural forms—be they Semitic or from the Far East. With Godard, however, the stakes are different: his position in relation to the non-European, the Palestinian–post-Black September and after the interruption—becomes external; no longer immersed in the struggle, he examines it from a distance, on an axis extended between two poles and through a contrapuntal articulation of *ici* and *ailleurs*. The afterlife of the Palestinian anticolonial struggle results for him in a decolonial critique of the accumulation of images-as-capital in the television of the Empire and of the Orientalist gaze constituting the non-European as its prototypical object. In this sense, *Ici et ailleurs* works as a critique of the European imaginary order, which finds its ultimate manifestation in the televised "uninterrupted chains of images enslaving one another," as he says in the film, an order whose genealogy is much older, going all the way back to the cinematic "*son et image*." The unassailable figure of the Semitic Muselmann, at the end of the *Ici et ailleurs*, persistently situated on the disruptive threshold of that cinematic image, launches this mode of critique.

Godard would remain interested in the question of Palestine over the following decades of his work and would explicitly turn to it in his 1998 gigantic opus magnum *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, in his 2004 reflection on cinema and war in *Notre Musique*, and at the historico-mythical ship cruise in his 2010 *Film socialisme.* All of these films are also set as interrogations of the

cinematic medium, its short history and ultimate decline ("the death of cinema," as Godard keeps stating); as such, every one of them, from *Ici et ailleurs* onward, draws the connection between the question of cinema and the question of Palestine (entangled, as it is, with the Jewish question). For Godard, the Semitic is then a touchstone for the entire consideration of "the art of cinema"—the unfigured figure within an emphatically European medium in relation to which it is positioned both as a lack and as a threat. The Semitic becomes a marker of critique: it is from the semitic challenge that Godard wages his critical analysis of cinema as a "dream factory." Yet *Ici at ailleurs*—which launched his critique—also bears the remainders of a pre-critical modality, one in which the Semitic does not yet hold an external (or semi-external) position to the cinematic: the revolutionary audiovisual enterprise forged together with the Palestinian armed forces in the late 1960s. The failure of that enterprise led to its transfiguration into a mode of critique—turning acts of immersive political-cinematic revolt into a distant critical inquiry. A momentary ecstatic French-Palestinian avant-garde resulted, within the course of Godard's cinematic *oeuvre*, in a long melancholic reflection on European-Christian cinema from a semitic point of view; the Palestinian fighter—once active and fully alive, shaping European cinematic experience in his or her image—is now dead and being replaced, from the mid-1970s with a Semitic vantage point (*point de fuite*), as a critical position on the threshold of cinematic image.

This transformation into the mode of critique is most evident in a prominent, and much quoted, scene from the film *Notre Musique*.[61] The film is divided into three parts, following Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The second part, the *Purgatorio*, tells the story of Godard's trip to postwar Sarajevo. There, amidst the ruins and remnants, in the aftermath of fighting, he gives a masterclass to local film students on the question of text and image in cinema. Godard shows them two pictures—one of Jews arriving to the shores of Palestine, the other of Palestinians leaving Palestine by the sea. It is the year of 1948, he asserts, and the two images are made in the structure of shot/reverse-shot: "When Jews walked out of the water to the holy land, the Palestinians walked into the water," he explains—the firsts are being born from the sea, as an old Zionist myth goes, while the lasts are being swept to it, as an old Zionist warning to the Palestinians went; and there is no Jesus here, walking on the water. In so happening, continues Godard, "*Le peuple juif rejoint la fiction, le peuple palestinien—le documentaire*": The Jews found, joined, or merged with fiction; whereas the Palestinians turned into, or were forced to, documentary.[62]

Godard takes 1948 as a historical watershed, a split between the histories of the two people: one establishes its national homeland while the other goes into exile; the first arrives to the land and takes a hold of it, as the second flees and loses it. Surely this 1948 is not seen here strictly as a calendarial

moment—Jews did not arrive to Palestine precisely in the year of 1948—but as a historical moment, a split and a disjunction, or what Gil Anidjar has called, following Jean-Luc Nancy, a partaking, both sharing and dividing, of roads taking place in 1948, *une partage des voies*.[63] Since 1948, Jews and Palestinians do not inhabit the same history. For Godard, this moment signifies a modal and generic split as well: the Palestinians became a dispossessed people, driven from their homes, expelled from their lands; victims of history, and its ultimate object. From then on, they have been the subject matter of documentary films that narrate their history. They do not represent themselves, but are being represented from without, a passive object of cinematic or televised interest. The Jews, on the other end, turned to fiction: now masters of the land, a nation and a sovereign state, with its own film industry, they create fictional stories—a dream factory, as in Hollywood. They have become a sovereign subject of history, narrating their own stories. And liberated from their historical story—now having entered history—they can imagine other worlds, make feature films, unbind themselves from reality. At the same time, their story also has something fictional, unreal, or even fake—about it: it follows a certain temporal progression, cohesive portrayal of characters, narrative logic, while it hides its conditions of being, swipes out its cracks and wrongdoings. Such fiction blocks reality, whereas within the documentary, Palestinian history is being documented—inscribed, verified, and transmitted.

Godard does not choose between fiction and documentary, prefer one over the other. He rather critiques the very disjunction between the two, materialized in 1948: when Jews go to fiction and Palestinians to documentary there cannot be a film of the two together; the very possibility of a shot/reverse shot—the ones coming out of the sea, the others walking into it—is shattered. These are now two films, two kinds of film, foreign to one another and incommensurable; or rather, since shot/reverse shot is the basic element of montage, without it there is hardly any film at all. This split between fiction and documentary is therefore not a preliminary but a historical one. Yet this split is also generic, informing the film industry at least from the mid-twentieth century onward: a categorial difference that inaugurates two distinct regimes of truth, narrative conventions, and rules of aesthetic appreciation. Within Jewish/Palestinian history, Godard suggests that this split is established in 1948, and that it underwrites the 1948 paradigm: the partaking of the two histories—one of sovereignty, the other of exile; and, in consequence, the formation of the Palestinian in the figure of the refugee, a helpless victim of history in 1948—in contrast to the active, victorious, newly-born Israeli. Indeed, the post-1948 era, governed by the Nakba—the catastrophe waged upon the Palestinians in that war—was known as "the age of the refugee," in which the representative figure of the Palestinian is the one

uprooted from one's land, sent to exile, and there, in the state of loss, waiting for his or her return to it.

Godard's critique of the disjunction between documentary and fiction is then also a critique of the 1948 paradigm in Palestinian history, in which the Palestinian qua refugee becomes the object of documentary films. These films are set to give the "true" historical account of Palestinian history; and do so by positing the Palestinian as an object of knowledge in front of which cinema stands as the narrativizing apparatus. This structure of documentary film is also reproduced in television series and news broadcast—creating a "chain of images," in which the Palestinian serves only as a figure, an object of the cinematic eye. This is the historical and cinematic structure that Godard rejects. He wages this critique from the 1968 paradigm—from the Dziga Vertov Group's audiovisual project and the Palestinian revolutionary struggle; and from its afterlife, in *Ici et ailleurs* and onward, in which the project was transformed into a mode of critique. Since the 1968 paradigm suggests no split between documentary and fiction: within that moment, the cinematic was creative and imaginative and at the same time engaged with the reality of struggle and devoted to it. It took an image of the struggle while shaping and moving it. It documented the political work in the training camps as part of that work itself—shooting footage for internal Palestinian use. The Palestinians were not the object in front of which the camera stood: the "story" was not told about them, but with and through them. They were at once the subject and the object of a politico-audiovisual project—no longer refugees as passive victims of history, but freedom fighters, political players on their own right, ready to transform the course of history.

This moment ended and the 1968 paradigm failed; the promise of revolution was not fulfilled and the audiovisual project was not realized. But it was transformed into a mode of critique—no longer an operation within the political world, it took the form of a reflexive analysis of the ideological-aesthetic biases at the heart of twentieth-century cinema. The failure of the 1968 paradigm did not make Godard return to the older one; it allowed him to theoretically formulate in his later films, many of which are made video-essays, what cannot anymore be experienced politically. Critique is then formed as the afterlife of the revolutionary moment: it continues the political audiovisual activity as it formalizes the theoretical principles structuring it; but in so doing, in this transfiguration of action into theory, it further distances itself from political action. Godard's masterclass in Sarajevo at *Notre Musique* is such moment of critique: looking at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the 1948 moment, he can no longer turn to the 1968 paradigm since it collapsed many years ago; but he can use it as a point of departure for a critique of the 1948 paradigm. From that point, the Palestinians walking into the water, turning into victims, becoming mere objects of documentation, through the break between shot and reverse shot and the impossibility of

dialectical montage, lapsing back to unmediated historical facts—this entire paradigm is being rejected.

The rejection of the 1948 paradigm is made as a critique of its European colonial epistemology: the divide between the two histories, the Jewish and the Palestinian, reflects the Jews' passage to a state-bound order while the Palestinians, becoming refugees, fall out of it. But within this paradigm there is no competing order that the Palestinians can proclaim: they seem to be in a state of lack, lagging behind other modern nations. Unable to form a sovereign state of their own, they are positioned in an incumbent developmental stage, in an eternal state of the "not-yet," occupying "the waiting room of history."[64] They are caught in this allegedly universal in fact colonial order as victims—either of others or of themselves. It is only outside of the state-bound order that they can shift their position: in the revolutionary struggle that challenged the colonial global order, and fought for a different oppositional vision of liberatory and emancipatory internationalism. Yet, within the colonial order, all they can be is a static object for documentation—the strange or the wild colonized—while their opposites, the modern and sovereign ones, are destined to imagine, to invent, to fictionalize.

The Threshold of European Cinema

Questioning the relationship between fiction and documentary runs throughout Godard's late work. *Historie(s) du cinéma* states, in different levels, the impossibility of the categorial split between the two, first in its essay-form that is set to write the history of cinematic art—but not according to a chronological progression of time, and not just as the history of cinema alone.[65] Less a history of cinema, Godard constructs his work as history through cinema; since film, unlike other artistic mediums, "projects its own history" as Godard says times and again. While the histories of literature or of painting are external to them and need to be extracted, condensed and abstracted—to be taken and translated into a different language—the history of cinema is projected on the screen like the film itself and through it. The film projects its own history; it is the history of that specific film, and of film in general; at the same time, it is history of reality projected onto the screen—that is, of the conditions under which cinema is created. Thus, the feature film—"fiction"—also projects the history that led to it, history of the cinematic medium and the history in which cinema is located; it documents these histories, as in a twisted "documentary." *Historie(s) du cinéma* can be seen as the epitome of this fiction-documentary dyad: the histories, but also stories, of cinematic art, made in video through a long, totalizing montage, are told as a film that projects the history of a world in which cinema took place.

At the heart of these histories, as Godard portrays them, lies a failure—a failure in negotiating fiction and reality. The first chapter of *Historie(s) du*

cinéma—"*Toutes les histories*"—revolves around a void or a lack in this seemingly totalizing, all-encompassing projected history.[66] During the years of extermination, in the 1940s, cinema failed to bear witness to the horrors: "the miseries of war," declares Godard, "won't be seen on the screen." This art of the masses failed to give a vision of reality in its most nocturnal moments. It worked in two different arenas: the Fascist propaganda, Hitler's spectacle, and the playful enjoyments of Hollywood; none of them could bear witness to reality. The fictive element of cinema—"a dream factory"—remained helpless facing the horrors of history. "For nearly 50 years, in the dark, moviegoers burn imagination to heat up reality. Now reality seeks revenge. It wants real tears, real blood." In these bloody times, cinema becomes an escapist medium that shatters reality since "suffering is not a star." For Godard, this is cinema's great betrayal. It failed to document extermination, to visualize it, to give it an image. Cinema did not project reality—when this projection was most needed.

From that moment on, cinema is based on this lack of an image—image of the great extermination, and specifically, the extermination of the Jews. The Jew was eliminated from Europe, and the image of that elimination was eliminated from European cinema. This image—of the Jew in the concentration camps, of the Jew as Muselmann, of the Jew becoming Muslim, of the Semite—did not quite enter the cinematic visible space; it remained in its hole. With the failure of attesting to this figure, of projecting this image, of documenting that grim reality, cinema remains entirely fictional—and fictive. It disentangled the imaginative work of the film from its testifying, projective quality—disconnecting fiction from documentary. From that point on, cinema hides its own history—and so projects it reversely or symptomatically. The Semite, on the verge of the cinematic image, becomes its disavowed condition; and when acknowledged, the Semite can be its challenge.

Histoire(s) du cinéma thus turns into the story of cinema as a European form told from the negated vantage point of the Semite; montage of images from twentieth-century film history, projecting the history of that century, the century accompanied by cinema, through what in reality failed to be projected on screen—the catastrophic image of European history, the Jew/the Muslim, an image unrealized and unfigured. In this epic, gigantic, seemingly universalizing film, it is the particularized Semite, on the threshold of Europe, that becomes its structuring element.[67] Georges Didi-Huberman, in his *Images in Spite of All*—a book set around four photographs taken clandestinely by Jewish prisoners in Auschwitz—discusses *Historie(s) du cinéma* at length, together with Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*, as two opposing cinematographic ways of addressing the extermination of Jews, as well as two different modes of montage, two versions of the image, two attitudes to historical reality. Lanzmann's long and slow montage of testimonies, of faces and landscapes, without the use of any archival material from the years of exter-

mination, claims that there is no image that can tell the history of extermination; while Godard's quick and jumpy montage of documents and citations, made almost exclusively from archival material, suggests that "all images 'speak' to us only about that [history] (but saying that they 'speak about that' does not mean that they 'say it.'"[68] By virtue of this comparison, Didi-Huberman proposes that *Histoire(s) du cinéma* is in fact a Holocaust film whose images all speak about or show the history of extermination—even if not explicitly and without naming. Yet this coupling of Godard and Lanzmann is not Didi-Huberman's; it goes a long way: from Godard's famous teasing remark regarding Lanzmann's *Shoah*—"but he did not show anything there"—demonstrating the difference between their cinematic approaches, since Lanzmann's did not, in fact, intend to "show" anything of what Godard wanted him to; this difference was then realized in the controversy over "the missing reel"—should the cinematographer search for the lost reel as a visual evidence of the extermination—as Godard scorned cinema for not doing in real time and urged to do so now, while Lanzmann dismissed such a task altogether; and it culminated in a bitter politico-aesthetic quarrel between pro-Israeli neo-con Lanzmann and pro-Palestinian, radical-chic Godard.[69] Some commentators went so far to formulate the theological dispute underpinning the two positions: Lanzmann, who follows the Jewish ban on image, and uses the reenactment of memory as a textualization of history through storytelling; versus Godard, whose broken images of history all point out to a Pauline redemptive image that "will come in resurrection," as he keeps saying in the film.[70]

But Didi-Huberman suggests that Godard does not so much look for an image—either the image as visual evidence, testimonial document of the extermination (since these images do exist in the archive); or as the final transformative image at the end of times, saving/redeeming (*sauver*) cinema (since Godard engages with the death of cinema no less than with its resurrection). It is not the singular image but rather the assemblages of images exercised through the workings of montage—images attached to one another and collide in a syntactical, and not semantic, logic. Montage, states Godard, makes cinema a "a thinking form" (*une forme qui pense*)—and at the same time a formalizing thought (*une pensée qui forme*)—and in this way it does not follow the economy of showing (unmediated testimony channeling immediate experience) but that of editing (combative, dialectical mediation). Negotiating the incommensurable singularity of the image and the comnunalized composition of history, the task of Godardian cinema, according to Jacques Rancière, is "constructing a world of images as a world of general co-belonging and inter-expression."[71] But what Rancière celebrates as the coming together of images has in Godard a much scattered existence, since montage can no longer be taken merely as a technique of producing meaning out of images—like the dialectical montage had been for the Soviet directors

in the 1920s, for example. Montage—after the extermination and the betrayal of cinema—is for Godard a problem and a challenge. What was once seen as a technique—a formal procedure, oblivious to specific content—has now to cope with the failure of an image positioned on the threshold of figuration that cannot be absorbed into it. Montage can no longer be assumed as the mediating cinematic operation. It is what attests for the lack of image—the image of extermination, the missing reel—for the failure of cinema to confront the real, and is therefore a symptom of "the end of cinema."

Thus, Godard gives two dates for the divergence of fiction and documentary—the early 1940s in *Histoire(s) du cinéma*, and the year 1948 in *Notre Musique.* This split—of the aesthetic realm from the realm of reality, of the the imaginary from the documented, of fantasies from hard facts, of works of art from historical narratives and news—has had a determining effect on both art and politics: it put an unmediated spontaneous historical truth on the one end and the mediated work of aesthetics, devoid of actual reality, on the other. Godard's work is a critique of that structure: from the Dziga Vertov Group's revolutionary avant-garde effort, to its afterlife in *Ici et ailleurs*, then to a long engagement with the history of the cinematic medium. But Godard further shows that this split is entangled with the figure of the Semite: in 1948 it occurred within the colonial history of the Middle East resulting in a failed political partition (between a Jewish state and an Arab one) yet in the disjunction between those who go to fiction and those who go to documentary. In the early 1940s this split happened with the failure to bear witness to the destiny of the Jew—the Jew exterminated as a Muslim—in Europe. In both cases, and around the same time, the control over the Semitic and its political or actual elimination made the divergence of fiction and documentary in mainstream Western cinema possible. And so the return of the Semite—as a figure, a vantage point, a mode of inquiry—has the potential to destabilize it.

NOTES

1. Hédi Khelil discusses Genet's turn from the colonial history in which he was embedded in his youth, through the institutions he participated—the penal colony of Mettray, the colonial French army—to his involvement in anticolonial struggles—in Algeria, America, and Palestine. He claims that for Genet the struggle determined ad-hoc the different colonial adversaries, which were all in the image of France that he hated so much. Hédi Khelil, *Jean Genet: Arabes, noirs et palestiniens dans son oeuvre* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005). Ralph Hyndles suggests that Genet's primal colonial trauma and fantasy was in Mettray, a place of "an organic relation between the institution of penal colony and French colonial politics in the metropole." Ralph Heyndles, "Nuit politique du désir, l'engagement amoureux de Jean Genet" in *Pour Genet.*

2. Jean-Luc Godard, "Jusqu'à la victoire." *Diagonal Thoughts.* http://www.diagonalthoughts.com/?p=1728 . Accessed 17 July 2018

3. See Arthur Tang, "Genet et les palestiniens: La subversion de la politique orientaliste," in *Les Passions de Jean Genet*, dir. Ralph Heyndles (Paris: Schema editora et Alaim Baudry, 2010).

4. Jacques Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1974); Jacques Derrida, *Glas*, trans. John Leavey and Richard Rand (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986). Hereafter *Glas* will be cited with E for the English translation, followed by F for the French original.

5. Jean Genet, "Interview with Hubert Fichte," in *The Declared Enemy*, 137. See also Derrida's testimony of one of his conversations with Genet: "[A]n absolute refusal to speak in general about literature, but especially about his texts. With a gesture that was a bit ironic, a little . . . coquettish, that is: 'No, no, all that . . . all that is far away from me, all that's over, nothing there is worthy. . . don't indict that on me.'" Quoted in White, *Genet*, 566.

6. "Son sens politique—cet homme est profondément révolutionnaire, dans tous les instants de sa vie, dans le moindre de ses choix. . . . Ce n'est pas qu'il ne soit pas capable de les formuler directement, de dire et d'écrire des textes théoriques sur le pouvoir qui sont très, très beaux, mais ce qui frappe, c'est le choix révolutionnaire et absolument constant chez lui, sans qu'il soit un révolté." Foucault, *Dits et écrits, tome II*, eds. Daniel Defert and François Ewald (Paris: Gallimard, 1994), 413–14.

7. Derrida, *Glas*, E 36–37, F 45.

8. Derrida, *The Post Card*. Note that the verbs in the French formulation are in the *passé composé* and *imparfait* tenses, suggesting that the time of articulation and action, of "letting know" and "being in Beirut," is one and the same; the opposite of Genet having let Derrida know that he *had* been in Beirut in the past perfect tense (*plusque parfait*), *before* the time of articulation.

9. Derrida, *Glas*, E 37, F 45.

10. Ibid., E 36, F 44.

11. G. W. F. Hegel, *Elements in the Philosophy of Right* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

12. See Magedera, "Seing Genet, Citation and Mourning: à propos *Glas* by Jacques Derrida," 28–44. Sartre elaborated on Genet's flowers—the flowers of rhetoric—in his book on Genet, and Derrida takes issue with ascribing only a significatory role to flowers in Genet, according to Sartre, doing a lot with Genet's own name indicating a flower (genêt—broom), thus invoking the proper name as confusing the course of signification (of rhetoric).

13. Geoffrey H. Hartman, "Homage to *Glas*," in *Critical Inquiry* 33:2 (2007): 344–61.

14. "A bastard course. Is there a place for the bastard in the ontotheology or in the Hegelian family? This is a question to be left to one side, to be held on the margin." Derrida, *Glas*, E 6, F 12.

15. Ibid., E 5, F 11.

16. Concentrating on Hegel, "The Spirit of Christianity and Its Faith," in his *Early Theological Writings* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975).

17. See Joseph Cohen, *Le spectre juif de Hegel* (Paris: Galilée, 2005), 29–30. There he writes: "The only law that gives birth to a system is the sublation of the law. The sublation of the law, for Hegel, is the Christian concept of love—both the negation, continuation, and final realization of the law—a sublation that neither Judaism nor Kantianism takes into account."

18. Derrida, *Glas*, E 37, F 45.

19. Ibid., E 202, F 227.

20. "[I]t permits cutting but at the same time and in the same stroke, remaining attached to the cut." Ibid., E 41, F 50.

21. Ibid., E37, F 46.

22. See PoL, 166.

23. Simon Critchely, "Writing the Revolution: The Politics of Truth in Genet's Prisoner of Love," in *Essays on Derrida, Levinas, and Contemporary French Thought* (London: Verso, [1999] 2009), 48–49.

24. When Critchely details the content of Genet's image of Palestinian *Sittlichkeit*—"God, property, community, home, family, love, heterosexuality" (Ibid., 48)—he translates the values of the Palestinian revolution into a Hegelian language, completely missing how Genet's recruitment to the revolution was on the basis of their utter rejection: this struggle is not about property or home, but self and collective transformation; the community of fighters would not lead to a national state; the families are broken, and imagined anew; and the affective relations in this entire space are far from being heterosexual.

25. Derrida, *Glas*, E 84, F 97.

26. It is interesting, even significant, that Judith Butler chooses not to address Derrida's discussion of Judaism in her book on the different modalities of twentieth century Jewish philosophical critique of Zionism. See Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

27. This was indeed the order of writing. The Hegel section is based on Derrida's seminar "La famille de Hegel" given in 1971–1972. The Genet column was mostly written in the summer of 1973.

28. Jacques Derrida, "Tympan," in *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Allan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982).

29. Jean Genet, "Ce qui est resté d'un Rembrandt déchiré en petits carrés bien réguliers, et fotou aux chiottes," in *Tel Quel* 29 (Printemps 1967): 3–11.

30. White, *Genet*, 579–80.

31. Jérôme Neutres, "Un captif amoureux et les antimémoires de Jean Genet," in *Les Passions de Jean Genet*, ed. Ralph Heyndles (Fasano: Schena Editore, 2010), 174–76.

32. Saadallah Wannous, "Saint Genet: Palestinien et poète" trans. Jean-François Fourcade, in Arnaud Malgorn, *Jean Genet: Qui êtes-vous?* (Lyon: La Manufacture, 1988), 159. The essay was first published in Arabic in *Al-karmil*.

33. Ibid., 158.

34. Foucault, *Dits et écrits, tome II*, 413. An interview published in *Umi*, March 1973. In this interview, Foucault admits being attracted to writers in whose work "it is thought itself which is the course of speaking" (i.e., Blanchot, Bataille, Klossowski, Artaud), and less interested in the great writers of French literature (Flaubert, Proust): "And so, I am less interested in institutionalized writing in the form of literature." Then he talks about a meeting he had with Genet ("I feel very close to him") during which, as they walked in front of the *Comédie Française*, Genet said that he didn't care about institutionalized theater anymore: "*Je m'en fous*!" says Genet to Foucault. And Foucault adds: "I wanted to say, regarding the whole literary institution, and any institution of writing, I just wanted to say as he said: '*Je m'en fous*.'" Ibid, 412–13.

35. Jean Genet*, La Sentence* (Paris: Gallimard, 2010), 7.

36. Foucault, *Dits et écrits,* Ibid.

37. Jacques Derrida, "Countersignature," trans. Mariéad Hanrahan, *Paragraph* 27:2 (2007): 25. Derrida concludes the transcription of an earlier talk, from 1995, entitled "Faith and Knowledge," with an addendum dedicated to Genet—more specifically to the book *Genet à Chatila*, comprised of Genet's essay "Four Hours in Shatila" written just after the 1982 massacre in the Palestinian camp together with other texts written around this famous essay. An epilogue to Derrida's discussion of religion, mainly within a European geography and a Christian context—Genet and/with the Palestinians appear as a cypher for a theologico-political outside, that is nevertheless inscribed, even if retrospectively, at the heart of the endeavor, a point to which one should ever return and "of which many of the premises deserve to be remembered here." Jacques Derrida, "Faith and Knowledge: The Two Sources of 'Religion' at the Limits of Reason Alone," trans. Samuel Weber, in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 101.

38. See, for example, CA, 150–51.

39. White, *Genet: A Biography*, 555.

40. Genet, CA 410, PoL 289.

41. Jean Genet, *Asirun a-shik*, trans. Kadhim-Jihad Hassan (Paris: Edition Unesco,1997).

42. Georges Bataille's devastating critique of Genet's early novels, written as a response to the publication of Sartre's 1952 *Saint Genet*, concentrates on Genet's failure to address his writing to any possible readership: Genet's writing, in Bataille's view, does not constitute an act of communication, since it fails to assume the "opération souveraine" of literature. "Genet, qui écrit, n'a ni le pouvoir ni l'intention de communiquer avec ses lecteurs [. . .] La littérature est communication. Elle part d'un auteur souverain, par-delà les servitudes d'un lecteur isolé, elle s'addresse à l'humanité souveraine." Georges Bataille, "Jean-Paul Sartre et l'impossible révolte de Jean Genet," in *La Littérature et le mal* (Paris: Gallimard, [1957] 1994), 138. Indeed, Genet rejects the sovereign position as the necessary mark of any mode of activity—be it

textual or political. He thus also rejects possible, plausible address, as an act of communication between a sovereign writer and a historically-realized community of readers. Joining the struggles of the Palestinians and the Black Panthers, Genet inquires into different forms of address based on non-sovereign politics: he asks what mode of revolutionary action becomes possible from—but also toward—a non-sovereign political position. And he asks this regarding those anticolonial struggles whose fighters are non-sovereign subjects fighting the sovereign colonial powers, forming claims and even goals which do not quite adhere to national sovereignty. The "impossible revolt," in Bataille's derogatory language, is therefore *precisely* what Genet is after.

43. Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), 174.

44. Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*, trans. Barbara Johnson (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1981), 345.

45. According to Leila Shahid's testimony in *Genet à Chatila*, ed. Jérôme Hankins (Paris: Solin, 1992).

46. Emmanuel Pinto, *Tinitus* (Tel Aviv: Ha-kibutz ha-me'uchad, 2009). The book was translated into French: Emmanuel Pinto, *Accouphène* (Paris: Actes sud, 2012).

47. Jean Genet, "The Palestinians," 8.

48. "The oath's primary function, in its various forms, is that of guaranteeing the truth and efficacy of language." Giorgio Agamben, *The Sacrament of Language: An Archeology of the Oath,* tans. Adam Kotsko (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011), 4.

49. Steven Miller argues that in his later writing Genet occupies the position of a truthteller; but, unlike Arendt's truthteller (in her essay "Truth and Politics")—a reporter in the strong sense of the word, situated within the public sphere—Genet bears witness to truth through a withdrawal from the public sphere, in a state of solitude: "Genet presents himself telling the truth with his back to the public sphere. Rather than facing those whom he addresses, he faces those who address him." Steven Miller, "Open Letter to the Enemy," *Diacritics* 34:2 (Summer 2004): 104. Miller explores the political significance of Genet's address without communication, with no frontal dialogue, but rather as a truthtelling from behind, beside the stateless peoples, taking part in the political logics of "divine warfare."

50. Jean Genet, *Asirun a-shik*, trans. Kadhim Jihad (Paris: Edition Unesco, [1997] 2002), 448–49.

51. Never more so than in 1997 (the translation's publication date), when many Palestinian suicide attacks were launched in Israel and the notion of the Palestinian *shahid* lay at the very center of the political discourse on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

52. Salma Khadra Jayyusi, "Two Types of Hero in Contemporary Arabic Literature", *Mundus Atrium* 10:1 (1977), 38.

53. I allude here to two of Shariati's texts: "Jihad and Shahadat": http://www.iranchamber.com/personalities/ashariati/works/jihad_shahadat.php. Retrieved 9 October 2018 and "Shahadat" in *Jihad and Shahadat: Struggle and Martyrdom in Islam*, eds. Mehdi Abedi and Gary Legenhausen (North Jaledon, NJ: Islamic Publications International, 2005), 153–229.

54. Shariati, "Jihad and Shahadat."

55. Ibid.

56. And so it stands in opposition to many of the theories of collectivity—some discussed in the introduction—which see the act of address as bearing the potential to constitute a collectivity to come.

57. Shariati, "Jihad and Shahadat."

58. And compare Genet's 1957 essay on Giacometti's sculptures— a good while before he encountered the Palestinians or the Black Panthers—where he claims that works of art are addressed to "the people of the dead": "Non, non, l'oeuvre d'art n'est pas destiné aux générations enfants. Elle est offerte à l'innombrable peuple des morts. Qui l'agréent. Ou la refusent. Mais ces morts dont je parlais n'ont jamais été vivants. Ou je l'oublie. Ils le furent assez pour qu'on l'oublie, et que leur vie avait pour fonction de les faire passer ce tranquille rivage où ils attendent un signe—venu d'ici—et qu'ils reconnaissent." Jean Genet, "L'atelier d'Alberto Giacometti," *Oeuvres complètes V* (Paris: Gallimard, 1979), 43–44.

59. This structure of bearing witness resembles the one Agamben portrays in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Agamben suggests there that the complete witness is, paradoxically, the Muselmann—the non-human, deprived of speech and so of the ability to testify; s/he is the one bearing witness to the processes of desubjectification of the human. The Muselmann bears witness to humanity in its collapse to inhumanity, and testifies of the camp as the ultimate state of modernity: the exception which became the rule. Agamben thus stresses "the intimate dual structure of testimony as an act of an auctor"—the Muselmann and the survivor. As I suggested in chapter 2, the Muselmann, in the context of the Palestinian struggle, bears significant resemblances to the *feday*—dead in Black September or in the camps of Sabra and Shatila; or rather populating the realm of the dead from the start. And so, according to this structure, Genet would occupy the place of the survivor. There is indeed no act of bearing witness which does not bring them together, Genet and the *fedayeen*—not only as two distinct and separate figures, but as figures collapsing into each other in the scene of bearing witness. Genet bears witness to the *fedayeen*'s own bearing witness, in a coauthored testimony revealing "the inseparable intimacy of the Muselmann and the witness, of an impotentiality and potentiality of speaking" (Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 151). And if "speaking" is intertwined with "address," this coauthored act of bearing witness reveals the potentiality—which always passes through impotentiality—of the collectivity to which this testimony is addressed.

60. Gil Anidjar, "'Once More, Once More': Derrida, the Jew, the Arab," in Jacques Derrida, *Acts of Religion* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 24–26. Anidjar discusses Derrida's reference to Genet in the last sentences of his lecture, "Faith and Knowledge" assembled in *Acts of Religion*: "Today I remember what I had just finished reading in *Genet à Chatila* . . . ." Ibid., 101.

61. *Notre Musique*, dir, Jean-Luc Godard (France, 2004), 80 mins.

62. And see Niels Niessen, "Access Denied: Godard Palestine Representation," in *Cinema Journal* 32:2 (Winter 2013): 1–12.

63. Gil Anidjar, *The Jew, The Arab*, 115.

64. Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 8–11.

65. *Historie(s) du cinéma*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 1988, 1998) 267 mins.

66. See Jean-Luc Godard, *Histoire(s) du Cinemé* (Paris: Gallimard, 2006)

67. I read the ongoing controversy over Godard's alleged ant-Semitism along these lines: his relation to the Jew is entangled with cinema's own conflicted relations to the Jews (and the Semite in large). On this question see Maurice Darmon, *La question juive de Jean-Luc Godard* (Paris: Le temps qu'il fait, 2011), where he also quotes Godard: "No one knows how it is going to end in the Middle East. But we can know a bit where or when it really started. It was here, in Europe (it is therefore our war too . . .) In Europe and with its images, it doesn't matter which, and with its great legend." 13–14.

68. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Images malgré tout* (Paris: Minuit, 2003), 157.

69. See Libby Saxton, "Anamnésis Godard/Lanzmann," *Trafic* 47 (Autumn 2003).

70. Gérard Wajcman, "'Saint Paul' Godard versus 'Moïse' Lanzmann?" *Le Monde* 3 décembre 1998. Wajcman argues that Lanzmann stands alone against all those who try to find, and actually to create, an image of the extermination.

71. Jacques Rancière, "Sentence, Image, History," in *The Future of the Image*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 63.

Afterword: The Cut and the Blow

The two projects discussed in this book offer two different modalities—two ways of understanding the Palestinian struggle in the 1960s and 1970s, two attitudes toward it, and two forms of negotiating between action and textuality. Godard's project is structured on the logic of the cut and interruption—momentary, decisive, transformative; it separates and divides, signifying both a turn (from one thing to another) and a limit (between the two). Godard's work insists on the cut as a resolute gesture in the development of the Palestinian revolt: a strategic turning point in the struggle, the end of a revolutionary modality and the loss of a certain political horizon (international Third-World anti-imperial uprising). The historical moment to which his vision of the Palestinians is attached is that of Black September, a moment of rupture, a passage onto death, and transformation. Godard experienced that moment first-hand and keeps returning to it: the division between the living and the dead, between the engaged audiovisual project and its abandonment. The image of the revolt is made of this cut, a cut between promise and failure.

But the cut is never one: it is multiplied. Stressing interruption as both political and artistic modality, Godard creates a genealogy of recurring interruptions. Revolutionary zeal is itself understood as interruption—of liberal politics, of modernist cinema—and is then interrupted and itself brought to an end, abruptly. Its end does not inaugurate a prior, pre-interruptive state, however—but rather the appearance of a cut in the form of critical analysis, critique itself being a modality of the cut, from *krino* (to discern, to divide, to differentiate, to choose, to judge).[1] The critical enterprise Godard had undertaken from *Ici et ailleurs* onward delved into the working of the cut as the *Kulturarbeit* of interruptions. One can sketch its movement in the following

terms: from ecstatic exaltation (in the revolutionary years) through failure and passage-to-death (September 1970) to survival (in *Ici et ailleurs*); followed by an afterlife in the form of critique (the thinking of history in post-*Ici et ailleurs* films up to *Histoire(s) du cinéma*). This melancholic motion does not yield to progression (of narrative), to flow (of images), to teleology (of history); cyclical, it turns upon itself, ever dividing. Godard's authorial voice becomes bifurcated into his own and that of Miéville—his partner in filmmaking; two contrapuntal voices, cutting one another, critically relating to each other—an afterlife of the collective enunciation, but now relating to it from an ever-growing distance.

The image of the dead *feday* in 1970s Jordan is the visual realization of the cut: a cipher of revolutionary effort taken to its extreme, experienced in its fullness and sharply terminated. It encapsulates the warriors stepping onto the battlefield, risking their lives, magnifying their own existence into that of the armed revolt itself. Such death is then reflected in the collapse of the Dziga Vertov Group's efforts—to accompany the struggle, be fully incorporated into it, surpass the division between political and artistic projects. This collapse inaugurates a division between the two projects—the political and the artistic—as well as a division within each one. This is the birth moment of the critical video-essay, in which the project is prolonged by other means that nevertheless achieve an interruptive structure. The revolutionary moment is neither erased nor disavowed; its failure does not turn into the beginning of new times. The world survives the cut, and it survives in the form of a cut.

Godard's artistic enterprise follows the course of history and is committed to its meanderings. The very experience of the cut is historical: the transformation of original revolutionary zeal into melancholic critical analysis adheres to the historical development of the Palestinian revolt. The Dziga Vertov Group's joining the Palestinian forces belongs as much to the moment of the armed struggle—as an attempt to provide it with adequate audio-visual material—as *Ici et ailleurs* (the critical film as a video-essay) belongs to the moment after the cut in the Palestinian struggle. Taking part in the latter does not require the same procedures as taking part in the former: where revolutionary inclination demanded full immersion, no distinctions, blurred borders, commitment to the cause—the postrevolutionary moment recovers critical distance. The video-essay critically addresses both past revolutionary effort and the turn to sovereign state bid. Rather than simply align with the latter, it becomes the platform from which to engage in the intellectual work of the cinematic medium, now also separated from the current stage of Palestinian struggle. The video-essay, made possible in the postrevolutionary moment, specifies this moment as the time of critique: cut from previous total recruitment to the leading political agenda of the time, it is now distant from its own historical period.

We find, then, that Godard's historical cut is fundamentally different than the messianic cut that Giorgio Agamben has traced in Paul's Epistles to the Romans. For Agamben, the fact that Paul is "separated unto the gospel of God" (Romans 1:1), that is, that the laws of the Torah—and specifically those that separate Jew and non-Jew—have been abolished, does not signify a form of universalism.[2] Agamben argues against the understanding of Paul's epistles as dismissing all separations for the oneness of the church; instead of surpassing the cut of the Jewish law, he claims, Paul *is cutting the cut,* "divid[ing] the divisions traced out by the law."[3] Rather than the categories "Jew" and "non-Jew" ceasing to exist in messianic time, they are, in fact, separated in themselves, now denuded of the cohesiveness of identity, existing as revenants of their previous formations. This is a cut within a cut, a formalistic cut with no object, one that cuts through difference(s). Godard's cut, while also multiple, is rooted in historical time—there is no explosion of linear, chronological time for messianic time here. It does not cut within differences but forms them. Rather than cutting through the cut itself, it adds a cut to another, passes the cut across time, punctuating every moment with its own interruption, creating the critical space in the form of a distant engagement with an object.

Opposite the logic of the cut is the logic of the blow and explosion which informs Genet's project—the way he understands Palestinian struggle and relates to it in his mode of writing. Genet came to the Palestinians after a certain revolutionary modality had already ended. He did not witness Black September as a decisive moment, he did not stop and transform his project. He did not experience the cut historically, and does not bear witness to it textually. He arrived after the fact, after the end—and this is why the Palestinian revolution, for him, is without end. It explodes, continuously, ad infinitum—together with its textuality. The book, Cocteau said in 1942 after reading Genet's first novel, "is a bomb." "Burnt it!" replied Valéry. But if one lights a bomb, it is bound to explode. And Genet's books did (as did the books written by the Black Panthers he admired): books as weapons, staging violent acts, ready to blow up. This is the logic of explosion that Genet ascribed to Palestinian revolt. He saw it as a continuous, expansive event—not a momentary one. Rather than an event of separation, the revolt melts and dissolves. It flows through space without barriers—fluid, circulative, transgressive. It grows and increases as it evaporates, further spreading as it dissipates. Working against divisions, Genet undoes the limit between event and after-effects, shock and shockwave: the event is built upon its ramifications. An ecstatic moment, unlike Godard's, it is not originary but in fact secondary and gestural. Whereas the originary revolutionary event in Godard is interrupted, in Genet it is secondary and knows no interruption.

Genet faces death in a different way. His encounter with the dead bodies of *fedayeen* during the Shatila massacre of September 1982 does not signify

a point of interruption—neither to the armed struggle, nor to his attachment to it. Seeing the bodies in the camp, closely staring at them until they start staring back at him, walking through them, smelling them—the realm of the dead becomes, in his eyes, the locus of struggle: a space of reverie, fantasies, and unrealized eros, it is disengaged from historical course, from the vicissitudes of 1970s Palestinian revolt, its plans and its goals. Genet refuses to acknowledge a certain, definite and terminal loss in the revolt. He does not take a critical stance—reflexive and melancholic, distant and astute, which would be doomed to history. Instead, he sets the stage for a theater of revolution, on which the "metaphysical" revolt is played out by living-dead actors. His memoirs, "*souvenirs*," are detached from factual history: he "invents" conversations during his time in the camps, creates sceneries full of mirror halls, he hallucinates and daydreams. But this is not just his personal state: the Palestinian struggle itself flees from realist conditioning and historical fixation. It opens up what Maurice Blanchot termed, in *L'Espace littéraire*, "the other night" ["*l'autre nuit"*]: "the space of literature," Blanchot posits, is radically different from the realized, limited, perceptible, experienced, and mortal space of the living; this space is composed of "the other night," a different death, "a second version of the imaginary."[4] Whereas in the "first night," death appears as a limit, an end point, a moment of disappearance, a state of invisibility, a decisive act of liberation from being, "the other night" is on the contrary an opening up of an involuntary space of withdrawal, of apparent disappearance, of desubjective passivity in which one is taken into an imaginary, dream-like realm that unveils itself. "The other night" is not a limit but a *space*; not an end point but a point of departure; not an abrupt, original act but carrying-away "*en image*."[5]

This is the space that Genet creates, and in this space the Palestinian revolution explodes; the explosion fills the pages of his texts. Yet Genet's writing is not a *reflection* on the Palestinian revolt. No difference is formed between the political and textual explosion: the text never sets the right distance—aesthetic or critical—from the act. If Godard's involvement with the Palestinian armed struggle has ended in a decades long reflection on the challenges the Palestinian cause bears to global politics and artistic activity, Genet's entanglement with the Palestinians reveals the unbounded bliss of the already-defeated, and so unlimited and immortal—up to the death of the author, in the midst of writing about the Palestinian revolution, and beyond death, without stopping it. The fighters' ecstatic gestures, scripting, staging, and writing their own actions themselves, is echoed by the author's gestures of writing, closed to them, within a phantasmic deadly space parallel to actual history.

Interlude: *Notre Musique*

These two ways of relating to 1970s Palestinian struggle—two archetypical approaches to the revolutionary moment (Godard's and Genet's)—not only oppose, they also intertwine, transform into one another, together narrating ways of coping with that which has been lost, with what remains, and with their possible signification today. Godard's 2004 *Notre Musique*[6] narrates this movement of the cut and the blow within a completely different era—decades after the revolutionary stage, but also with the collapse of the Oslo Accords, the peace process, and the bid for Palestinian statehood, and during the days of the al-Aqsa Intifada (a shadow of the Palestinian armed struggle, now weakened and devoid of international support). The film, divided into three parts following Dante's *Divine Comedy*, responds to that state of affairs while also reflecting it. The first part, *Inferno*, is a mesmerizing montage of news images of various warfare zones with footage from the history of cinema, creating an open-ended chain of images of political catastrophes: massacres and carnage, masses of refugees and piles of bodies. An overarching presence of death, when "in the time of fable, after the deluge, there appeared on earth men armed for extermination." This eight-minutes part of the *Inferno*, in the form of a non-narrative video work, presents an archive of human victimhood with hardly any trace of political struggle: villain perpetrators chasing desperate victims outside of any recognizable political structure. One of the rare traces of a political project is found in the image of a *keffiyeh*-clad Palestinian female fighter clutching a Kalashnikov rifle—a haunting figure from *Ici et ailleurs*; but that later turns into the image of the ultimate victim—12-year-old Muhammad al-Dura, who was caught with his father in crossfire between Israeli and Palestinian forces in the Gaza Strip during the first day of the al-Aqsa Intifada, possibly targeted by the Israeli forces and definitely killed during this incident. The event was caught by a French news camera and broadcast to the entire world, making al-Dura a renowned martyr and the representative hero of the new uprising—this time not a fighter, taking part in a larger political project, but an arbitrary, innocent, passive victim: filmed from afar, by a news crew, he is created as an object to the universal gaze of the media, and immediately enters the repository of historical footage. The first part of *Notre Musique* opens with this repository. The rapid move from one image to the other, flaring up in the darkness of hell, torn from their political contexts—is the visual realization of the cut. A reflective video-essay, made of accelerated montage, screening images of events far removed from the viewers, it casts a melancholic movement—not in the direction of the events, but away from them. Piles of incomprehensible horrors, they reflect a state of endless victimhood.

The second—central and longer—part of *Notre Musique* moves to the *Purgatorio*, not in the form of an archive of images, but as a voyage film,

scattered and not fully narrativized but consequential and developmental to a certain degree. Set in Sarajevo, in the aftermath of war, and written in the idiom of survival, this part follows old Godard traveling to give a masterclass to film students on the relation of image and text while also touring the city with a few of his friends—journalists, poets, screenwriters. Yet they never form a group, each one closed in his or her speech—reflexive and citational. They reflect on the place of art and the role of the poet, upon the ruins of disaster. And they all do so presupposing the cut: the difference between the actual and the textual, fighters and poets, "those who act and those who tell," Achilles and Homer (who "knew nothing about wars")—is the basic structure of their reflections, as if the possibility of a poet who acts, and of poetic actions, together within a politico-artistic revolt, has been totally neglected and forgotten. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict plays a major role in the film. But the language of struggle is completely substituted here with the language of reconciliation. The object of concern is no longer the Palestinian cause, and the locus, real or imaginary, ceased to be historic Palestine and its surroundings; the question of Palestine, paired off with the Jewish question, is entirely understood through the lens of exile. Mahmoud Darwish, the Palestinian national poet, makes an appearance in the film as the poet of exile. Interviewed by a French-Israeli journalist, being asked in Hebrew and answering in Arabic, in the confusion of tongues turned into a split between them, he declares himself to be the Trojan poet who bears witness to war from the perspective of the vanquished. The war is then over, the battle has been won, and poetry can only testify from afar. Valorizing failure upon victory, stressing its romantic and inspirational character, Darwish marks with these words the ultimate and last shift from the romantic exaltation of struggle to the romantic melancholy of defeat. And when the interviewer teases him that he sounds Jewish, Darwish replies: "I hope so, because nowadays this is seen as something positive."

Uttered in the days of the al-Aqsa Intifada, when a struggle—however bitter, hopeless, desperate—was being fought, Darwish's devastating words are set within a discursive space in which the only war worth fighting for is over the position of the ultimate victim. The exilic Jew, the Jew in the eyes of Europe, becomes a cipher for the Palestinian—now in a double movement of disentanglement from and re-entanglement to Jewish history. Yet Darwish, whose political initiation dates to the revolutionary years of the Palestinian struggle, is smarter than this: when he maintains that he takes the Trojan, defeated, exilic position since "nowadays this is seen as something positive," he acknowledges the historicity of this discourse of victimhood in which the Palestinians are now caught. Darwish's words are also a critical reflection on shrinking political possibilities—on victim-oriented politics. Pronounced in deep despair, they implicitly speak of the tragic cut from any politics of struggle.

Notre Musique manifests the modality of the cut through a realization of its repetitive and reflexive character: a series of critical cuts, each ever more removed from the original material. But the politics of victimhood faces here its critical assessment. Close to the end of the *Purgatorio*, screenwriter Jean-Paul Curnier says: "The world is now split in two: those who live up to the voice of their misery, and those for whom this public display provides a daily dose of moral comfort to their domination." The split at the heart of the economy of victimhood—between providers and beneficiaries—is reflexively and critically examined here, and so it becomes a split from the split. But the question is whether there is a way to escape this economy of cuts, to blow it from within. "What lies ahead of us now," he continues, "is like a story [history] without thought, as if bequeathed by an impossible will. More than ever, we are faced with the void."

The *Purgatorio* ends with such a story of a thoughtless act, of a will that engenders a void. After Godard's return to his Swiss home, he gets a phone call from his translator in Sarajevo telling him about an incident that happened days beforehand in Jerusalem: a young Jewish girl locked herself in a movie theater and "wanted to blow herself up." She told the audience to step out, asking if there was anyone willing to die with her—"for peace, not for war." No one stayed with here and she was left all by herself and her big red bag. Then "the marksman arrived and killed her before she could open the bag. [Yet] it contained only books." They both know that girl, says the translator to Godard: a Bosnian film student, she participated in Godard's masterclass, opening and closing her eyes according to his explanations about the future of the image. She briefly met him in Sarajevo, trying to give him a film she made. At the end she had managed to pass him the film before he left the town. The title of her film was "Notre Musique."

Godard's genealogy of cuts ends here with an explosion, quite literally: a suicide bomb, in a time when such bombs were part of the Palestinian revolt during the al-Aqsa Intifada. It is a strange bomb, though—carried by a Jewish woman, "for peace, not for war," it manifests not the struggle but a form of renunciation. And it does not explode; a sniper kills the suicide before she manages to operate it. Alas, there was nothing to operate—the bag contained no explosives, only books. In that case, what seemed like a dramatic shift in modality, a turn from the reflexive cut to the ecstatic explosion, is revealed as a culmination of the critical deterioration of action: a suicide who cannot kill anyone, not even herself, only to be killed—a passive victim whose act is peaceful and humanist, substituting ammunition with books, dynamite with signs. It seems that art—be it the film student, the movie theater, the books—remains here helpless vis-à-vis violent reality. Exposed in its weakness, it does not explode; attached to victimhood, critical, and inoperative, it reveals here as the ultimate cut.

Or maybe not. What if the suicide's bag indeed contained a bomb meant to blow and explode? What if the books were that bomb ("it's a bomb!") and were to be burnt ("Burn it!")—an explosive material, entailing not only signs devoid of action, but a means of struggle, "a weapon," a transformative tool? What if these books were to blow the movie theater—and to finally bring cinema to an end? And if so, they were to make the final cut, the cut that ends all cuts, that is an explosion. The young woman, the filmmaker, is no longer an acted upon victim, and the film, the artwork, is not an apparatus bearing witness to external atrocities. The filmmaker takes the role of a *shahida*, active and violent, transforming herself into a different state, bearing witness from within a community, calling the latter into existence. And in so doing, surpassing the visual archive of atrocities of the *Inferno* part—this event remains imageless and does not leave any record or trace; bringing to an end the melancholic critical reflection of the *Purgatorio* part, it is laconically narrated to Godard, with no exegetical commentary and no visual archive. A shadow of the *feday* era, of the culmination of artistic creation and political action—exploding the cinema with books—it is a reminder of what was lost but perhaps still can be retrieved, in times of stagnation, as a potentiality.

Critical or Explosive Work?

This present book was written in an attempt to invoke an event of explosion together with its after effects: the revolutionary moment in the Palestinian struggle and two artistic projects that accompanied it, reflected upon it and continued to write it even after it had dissipated. Attending to the evolution of these artistic projects, to the process of their coming into being, to their mode of addressing political reality, by way of reading their last but not final instantiation, this book is formed as a critical engagement with the explosion. Exercised from the distance of time, in the contemplative serenity of scholarship, attuned to the historicity of the events and actions in question—it seems to adhere to the modality of critique, the modality attributed here to Godard's work. But a book, as we have just seen, can be explosive. And the explosion—of the revolutionary moment, of the avant-garde artistic projects immersed in it—is carried out as it evaporates, its echoes and ramifications playing a major role. The critical work then turns uncritical—it no longer forms the right distance from its object, it withdraws from the work of historicization and starts to de-historicize, it seems committed to the cause, even after the latter has proved itself nonviable. The book then becomes a Genet-like text. It writes about a revolutionary moment whose historical validity remains doubtful, it fantasizes this moment via literary and artistic inscriptions, it textualizes the political event, explores its figuration, constructs and imagines it as a "revolution"—non-originary, imitational, and potentially endless.

The cut and the blow, critique and ravishing, rupture and rapture—these two modalities were explored in the book while being two possible modalities of this book. Melancholic critique and ecstatic explosion. The first is melancholic since its object of attachment, the revolutionary moment, is lost, and the work finds itself in an unbridgeable distance from it; but, in fact, it may have constituted the object, from the beginning, as already lost—being attached not to the absence of the object but to the fullest presence of loss.[7] The second modality is ecstatic since it imagines its unification with something that lies outside itself, its incorporation to a greater order of being, its finding the object of attachment—and the euphoric constitution of that object as completely present. In the first modality, the Palestinian revolt of the late 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s is lost, and this loss structures it—as a critique of the present political moment after the revolutionary one has ended, and from which it is absent. But this moment, constructed as once fully present and now already lost, keeps coming back and posited as the focal point for critique of the present moment. In the second modality, the revolutionary moment is never lost but ever more present, reverberating throughout regardless the historical reality, opening a different dimension of being. Its present moment is suffused with the revolutionary zeal—as memories reincarnate, signs turn into bodies, and the dead keep acting. These two modalities host two forms of collectivity: the melancholic critique with a sense of recurring ends looks at a collectivity once historically assembled, as a collectivity of struggle, and now torn apart; while the ecstatic explosion with no end constitutes a cohesive collectivity—but ahistorical, gestural, and citational. The first mode of collectivity is viewed from the outside—by a commentator and an interpreter, close to the events in the days of revolt and by now far from it. This is Godard. His whispering voice in the films laments the lost possibilities of a collective gathering from a distant and secluded position. He no longer belongs to a collective social formation which has come apart. The second mode of collectivity is envisioned by an internal witness. This is Genet—the paradigmatic outsider to the social order who becomes, by way of imagination, an insider to a different one, who at one point gets to double the Palestinian fighter, enters his home, sleeps in his own bed, treated by the fighter's mother as if he were her own son. He belongs to the fantasy of belonging.

The two modalities have been discussed here as opposites, but it is as opposites that they come together in this study. Together they negotiate the distance from the past revolutionary effort, the ways of returning to it and making it present, the status of its historicity; and the position of the artist, ventriloquizing the political cause and critiquing it, recognizing the current state of affairs and transcending it. Beyond their differences, these two projects confront—whether in the form of a cut or of a blow—some of the basic coordinates of contemporary political discourse around Palestine and the

political art corresponding with it. They stand in opposition to the reigning human rights discourse which replaced organized politics and its efforts to mobilize people for collective action with a focused, often legalistic actions executed by small groups of professionals and subsidized by Western governments and liberal elite donors in accordance with their ideological guidelines. Whether in its liberal universalist version or its particularized identity politics one, human rights actions tackles the suffering of individuals outside of the political context that led to it and lacking any image of a political project to end it. Both Godard and Genet's projects reject the 1948 paradigm and its portrayal of Palestinian history: they do not portray the Palestinian as a victim and refuse the valorization of such a position as that from which the political claim must be formulated. They both open the divide between fact and fiction, *istoria* and *poesis*, and call for an imaginative understanding of history—beyond *Realpolitik* and "facts on the ground"—and urge for the introduction of creative textuality into radical political action. The two projects suggest an alternative to identitarian art, liberal or radical: they do not assume an indigenous or subaltern identity that has the sole right and obligation to tell his or her story. They oppose the rule of immediate, unmediated experience—and the role of art to transmit such experience as closely as possible. They insist on the task of mediation—in both politics and art—not as something foreign and external to the project, but as its internal modality. These are only some of the things the two projects can still teach us.

NOTES

1. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. "Crisis" also goes all the way to *krinein*. On the philosophical project of critique, from eighteenth century onward, going beyond the act of judgment inscribed in its classical version, see Severre Raffnsøe, "What Is Critique? Critical Turns in the Age of Criticism," *Outlines—Critical Practice Studies* 18:1 (2017): 28–60.
2. Giorgio Agamben, *The Time That Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 50.
3. Agamben, *The Time That Remains*, ibid.
4. Maurice Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire* (Paris: Gallimard folio, 1955), 340.
5. Blanchot, *L'Espace littéraire*, 201–2, 214, 352. I am trying to mobilize Blanchot's aestheticist thought—in which the "other death" is solely the quality of "the space of literature," made up only of the writings of a few Franco-German exceptional authors—into Genet's political thought, in which the other night, the second death, and the second version of the imaginary all operate as a new modality for anticolonial struggle.
6. *Notre Musique*, dir. Jean-Luc Godard (France, 2004), 80 mins.
7. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholy." And see Agamben's reading that stresses the invention of the lost object itself. Giorgio Agamben, *Stanzas: Word and Phantasm in Western Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 19–21.

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