

Haifa and its Refugees: The Remembered, the Forgotten and the Repressed

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The Arab-Israeli conflict appears to be one of the multiple cases where the weight of history, added to the burden of everyday colonial practices and geo-political and economic machinations, condemns the present to the repetition of violence. Sixty years after their eviction, Palestinian refugees have lives marked by a collective trauma. Some of them were well integrated in the host societies but the loss of their homes and property remains a persistent nightmare, while others are subjects to two types of trauma: historical one related to the *Nakba* (“the catastrophe”) and a structural one related to the harsh living conditions and institutional discrimination in the Arab host countries (such as Lebanon and Egypt). However, one can wonder whether the omnipresence of the past in the daily life of the Palestinian refugees is unique. The answer is definitely no. What [Koss and Auzas 2008] call the “patrimonialization of the past” is indeed a global phenomenon.

This patrimonialization trend has been accompanied by the emergence of the figure of the witness, in contrast to the expert who has lost his credibility with the public. Individual memory has become a very important source for historians in the production of legitimate knowledge. The presence of the past in our lives has taken different shapes, to the point that the boundaries between present, past and future have blurred. The identities allow the actors to mobilize them in favor of the political forces that refer to the past, not only to construct the narrative of their existence as a continual project, but also to legitimize it and to claim the rights of recognition, reparation and restitution. In the name of the ethics, the injustice of the past becomes more important than the inequality of the present [Koss and Auzas 2008]. Right to memory, the wave of memorialization, as well as the use of law to legitimize the positive character of colonization are all symptoms of this general new trend. The new discipline, transitional justice, emerged in the beginning of the 1990s against the amnesia that has struck post-conflict societies, calling for the importance of memory and memorialization as one of the approaches to victim-centered justice.

This paper will explore some of the ways in which Palestinian refugees from Haifa have reported the war of 1948, their expulsion, and the social and cultural life of pre-war Haifa, including encounters between Arabs and Jews. In this last matter/subject, there is a discrepancy between the written and oral histories. Oral history has better reflected the

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heterogeneity of Palestinian society around the world and how this is often overlooked in favor of a unified national character.

An extensive historical and sociological literature on Palestine during the Mandate period has been accumulated. Broadly speaking, several features can be said to characterize this literature. For one, it gives greatly disproportionate attention to elites to the disadvantage of other social groups, and it emphasizes diplomatic, political, and military history over the social, economic, and cultural dimensions. Moreover, the literature presents the Arabs as hopeless, facing a mighty enemy and is unable to see a capacity for agency which often intrudes upon and alters Zionism's conceptions of itself and its mission [Lockman 1996]. Then, this paper will rather raise some conceptual problems concerning collecting of oral testimony from the Palestinian refugees. This paper is based on listening to around 300 interviews that the Palestinian Center for Refugees and Diaspora (Shaml) collected from Palestinian refugees mainly in refugees camps in Jenin and Jalazoun in the West Bank and Yarmouk in Damascus about their experience of eviction, the social history of their place of origin before the exodus and finally about their exile/migration experience. Special attention was given to those who are originally from Haifa: a major pre-war city that had populations of varied background but had witnessed a quasi total ethnic cleansing. Indeed, out of the 61,000 Palestinian Arabs who used to call Haifa home, only 3,566 Palestinians were allowed to stay.

Oral Testimony: Some Conceptual Problems

In spite of the magisterial importance of oral history sources, they raise three challenges. First, the status of the witness and the limits of her testimony; second, the status of oral history as a source of knowledge; and finally, the necessity of getting the testimony of the perpetrators.

Witness vs. Victim

There is growing literature on testimony [LaCapra 1998; Felman 1991]. Collecting and archiving the "victim/survival" narrative raises the question of the status of the victim as a witness. Giorgio Agamben in his seminal book *Remnants of Auschwitz, the Witness and the Archive* [Agamben 1999], studies the survivors' accounts and explains the predicament of writing the history of the Holocaust by the fact that it is difficult for the survivor of it to be at once a victim and a witness: "one who cannot speak, is the true witness of the camps" [Agamben 1999]. For him, assuming the task of bearing witness in the name of those who cannot speak reveals that the task of bearing witness is fundamentally a task of bearing witness to the impossibility of witnessing.

What happens to speech when the deracinated subject speaks? Is it an experience of shame, guilt or culpability? The survivor, broadly speaking, does not experience the guilt, but rather the shame [Leys 2007]. Agamben indeed rejects interpretations of the shame of

the survivor in terms of guilt or innocence to argue that the experience of shame comes not from culpability, but from the ontological situation of being consigned to something that one cannot assume [Agamben 1999: 105]. The survivor has not done a morally or legally wrong thing to be feeling guilty, but just to feel ashamed: “the shame of the fact that what should not have happened did happen” [Agamben 2000:131]. Other scholars [Sa’di and Abu Lughod 2007:10; Kammen 1995: 41] insist on the question of individuals who undergo traumatic events produced belated memories. Ever since I was young I have wanted to know just how my families were evicted from Haifa. In 1948 my father was 20 and my mother was 17. I had some fragments of stories from my paternal grandmother, who was a teacher at a school in Haifa, but never the full story. My father always complained that he was tired after long hours of work, and that it was difficult for him to remember. I would chase him at weekends without success. One day I confronted him, accusing him of hiding a shameful experience. Considering my provocation an insult, he refused to speak to me for a week. Suddenly, one Friday morning, he started talking about his exodus story. During the following year——it was 1999——I asked Palestinian friends and acquaintances whether their parents had told them about their own exodus experiences. Out of 28 people, only three received the full story.

How can one interpret this silence and unspeakability? For Salim Tamari [Tamari 2008], testimonies at the end of 90s kept on flowing in a manner that confounded narrators and listeners. The former were perplexed at their own silence for what seemed like eternity, before releasing their concealed stories. The listeners were also perplexed at the narrators for having failed to explain those stories——whether the stories represented to the narrators divine retribution or a collective inability to face a superior enemy. The work of Efrat Ben-Ze’ev and Edna Lomsky-Feder is particularly interesting about the silence of the first generation of Israeli warriors concerning the war of 1948 [Ben-Ze’ev and Lomsky-Feder: forthcoming]. This was a silence more generally characteristic of Israeli society until the 1970s, where the individual was required to bridle his emotions in the public sphere, a silence that was most notably felt towards the Holocaust and its survivors.

My father’s solemn voice started to shake when he spoke about what he had seen on his way north from Haifa to Bint Jbail in Lebanon, being spotted by an armored vehicle that open the fire on him. He talked bitterly about his *shame* at the weakness of the Palestinians and their betrayal by Arab “bystanders.” My father, who loved poetry and spoke eloquent, spontaneous Arabic, suddenly became speechless, searching for words to express the experiences of the final months before fleeing to Lebanon. Reminiscent of Goffman’s theatrical metaphor [Goffman 1959], I felt that he spent the night rehearsing on the backstage, yet no drama in the frontstage and the collective trauma is still shaping his testimony.

In spite of his time spent fighting in the Army of Salvation, his testimony was in no way heroic. Similar private testimony, which I heard on other occasions, is very different from

another genre, the publicly-staged statements celebrating Palestinian heroism and martyrdom compared with brutal massacres by the Israeli enemy. However one does not often find the fabric of daily life in pre-war Palestine discussed by either side.

How much the narrative of victimhood does affect the individual memory? To cope with the needs of a family with five children, my father had two jobs: a schoolteacher and an assistant-pharmacist at my uncle's pharmacy. Leaving around seven in the morning and coming home late every evening, he often had his dinner alone, and he would ask my mother not to warm the food. Food, for him, was for "filling the stomach in order not to feel hungry" and "One doesn't live to eat, but one eats to live." He often repeated, "I am done with life," as if his watch had stopped in 1948 and that any time after was a supplement, a sort of overtime in his melancholic existence. Anxious and bitter, he always said, "We, Arabs, go from defeat to defeat." All this is an expression of a lack of agency and individual voice.

In 2002 I decided to test my theory about the inability of 1948 expellees to discuss these issues with their children. Shaml carried out an oral history research project in the Jenin camp. Around 100 in-depth interviews were conducted, of which half were with young people. The results showed a relatively important contrast with my experience (and that of my acquaintances). Only one third of the young people hadn't heard about the eviction experience of their parents. This can be explained by the relative proximity of Jenin to the place of origin ('Ain Hod - Haifa, Zara'in, etc.) compared to the Yarmouk camp in Damascus where I had been living, but also by a growing awareness of oral history.

Different projects were established in the 1990s. The resulting oral histories have been published in Arabic, Hebrew, and English in books, web-book, journals, web. Among them, Palestine Remembered (www.palestineremembered.com) is the most significant. Its website carries interactive material about each city and village of historical Palestine. Archive fever is, as Bshara Domani points out, spreading among Palestinians everywhere. Whether in Ramallah or Haifa or Beirut or elsewhere in the world, someone or some group is busy interviewing old people and compiling genealogies, searching for photographs and letters, collecting textiles and folksongs, visiting and renovating graveyards, scanning and repairing manuscripts, compiling dossiers on old houses and destroyed villages.

So, during the last ten years or so, the silent victims have been liberated from their "shame." Three factors are key. First, the new local/regional context: these victims see the peace process/return of PLO leaders/the intifada as new hopes that necessitate opening all the files and playing all the cards. Secondly, the role of TV stations like al-Jazeera and al-Arabiyya is crucial: many documentary films and programmes based on Palestinian testimonies are being produced and screened. Finally, oral history is seen by many Palestinian refugees as a response to Zionist narratives and has mirrored and counteracted the efforts of Zionists. Refugees' narratives are establishing the legitimacy of claims——claims that might

be used as the basis for implementing UN Resolution 194 guaranteeing the return to their lands or compensation for their loss [Berger Gluck 2008].

In the forum created by Palestine Remembered, one of the participants wrote: “Many Palestinians want to help and do not know how but what some of us forget is that remembering our history and our heritage is just as important as raising money, writing books or engaging in politics. We need to know what we are defending and why. Part of the effort of the Zionist movement is to replace not only our land, but our tongue, our olive trees and our history with theirs. If we don’t know who we are, who will? And if we won’t speak on our own behalf, who will?”

Over the last ten years, the Institute of Palestine Studies and its affiliated Institute of Jerusalem Studies have published a growing number of memoirs, diaries and letters by prominent Palestinians. Now ordinary people from Palestinian refugee camps in Syria are, remarkably, writing their own memoirs, sometimes having them published professionally (by Dar al-shajara in Yarmouk camp, for instance) or via self-publishing [Davis 2007] However, these memorial books are usually eyewitness accounts of the war of 1948 and the later exodus. Publications recording the fabric of daily life and the cultural history of Palestine or the Palestinians remain very rare.¹

Two trends can be found: a mainstream trend where the re-imagining of pre-1948 Palestine was “romanticized,” full of “visions of escapism, like images of the citrus plantation” and “nostalgic,” a sort of freezing the homeland into “frames of pastoral, idyllic, paradise lost” [Tamari 2008: Ch. 4]. The second trend is more complex and critical, presented by ordinary people, returnees,² writers and novelists,³ and scholars.⁴

Many of these accounts are subject to what people remember. People lost many of their personal documents, photos, and property records, which were often burned when the Israelis took over their homes. Even official documents in municipalities often disappeared. Additionally, the Arab community originating from Haifa, scattered around Syria, Lebanon, Israel and the West Bank, did not traditionally keep written records [Seikaly 1995: 9].

Selectivity of the Narrator’s Memory

The second challenge to oral history as a method is the selectivity of the narrator’s memory —what the witness wants to remember and to overstate, and what he or she wants to forget. There is the forgotten and the repressed, but also the problem of self-censorship, or of people saying one thing to one person and another thing to another.

¹ See e.g. [Tamari 2008].

² e.g. [Khader 1997].

³ e.g. [Hourani 2001; Turki 1994; Barghouthi 2000].

⁴ e.g. Mahmoud Issa and Isabelle Humphries in [Masalha 2005; Sa’di & Abu-Lughod 2007].

When I visited my family in Yarmouk camp my father refused to look at photos I had taken in Haifa because, in his words, it was not “his Haifa.” Haifa was now an Israeli city, he declared, and he insisted that he could not return so long it remained under Israeli sovereignty. The very next day, however, a Swiss journalist friend of mine interviewed my father and asked him if he would return to Haifa if it became possible. Suddenly ideological and elegant, he announced that, “as a Palestinian, like anyone, I long to return no matter the conditions.” Self-censorship is about what is told and what is untold. Ted Swedenburg reported how reluctant people to talk about collaborators and treachery [Swedenburg 2003: 12]. Another example comes from Jenin camp. The properties declared by the Palestinian refugees are clearly overstated. The *mukhtar* (village leader) of Zarain and Ain Hod provide evidence about properties which showed the problem of selectivity and exaggeration.

Selectivity of the narrator’s memory raises the question of the relationship between individual memory and collective memory. There is an obvious gap between contexts of transmission, and in group representations that influence personal accounts—bound to an attempt to make the past greater. For Paul Ricoeur [Ricoeur 2004], with no memories there can be no history involving people. An individual remembers what was done or suffered. At the same time, individuals share common memories with other members of their group. Collective memory, thus, is the ability of any citizen of a nation to view himself in the eyes of another fellow citizen, regardless of the differences that may divide them, and through which a group of people have access to past events that have been reconstructed and narrated to them. Indeed, from one perspective, this collective memory antedates individual memories. We are born into a “familial” discourse replete with accounts of our group’s (family, locale, nation, etc.) past. Our individual memories take shape against the backdrop of this collective memory, and it is often difficult for the individual to sing outside the chorus [Ricoeur 2004]. This makes the task of historiography very difficult—of distilling elements of individual memory from those that are heavily influenced by the national meta-narrative. As a result gender, class, and religious differentiations could be largely ignored [Sayigh 1997]. The challenge I am talking about does not concern only the oral history but the written one.

Oral History: What about the Executors?

The last challenge of oral history is the extent to which it can be inclusive, not only from the victims’ perspective, but also from that of the perpetrators. The American historian Raoul Hilberg, author of the groundbreaking book “*Destruction of the European Jews*,” is highly critical of history based on victims’ or survivors’ narratives [Sivan 2003]. He bases his work on the perpetrators’ and executors’ documents and testimonies. Hannah Arendt claims that the history of the Holocaust was not written by the victims themselves, but was written after the trial of Eichmann in Jerusalem when the perpetrators had spoken. She justified her

absolute need to attend the Eichmann trial by writing “I wanted to expose myself not to the actions themselves—which are after all already known—but to the ones who did them.” Researchers—Palestinians, Israelis and foreigners alike—have long neglected the need to carry out interviews with Israelis on the social, economic and political life in Palestine prior to 1948 and their participation in the War.

Centrality of Haifa

If pre-war Jaffa was the most important commercial cultural center of Arab Palestine [Tamari and Hammami 1998], the city of Haifa was the most important economic and cultural Palestinian mixed city of that time.

In contrast to many historians who link modernity to the imperial European presence, [Tamari 2008] shows through his study of many Palestinians who lived in Ottoman Haifa and Ottoman Jerusalem, how these cities enabled the emergence of local, nationalist but also regional, and to a certain extent “globalized” figures. The presence of technology and modern means of communication in Palestine since the late nineteenth century led to the emergence of a social environment which had a secular cultural base and a commercial nature, enabling it to survive the pressure of conservative social environments.

It was during the Late Ottoman Period that the port began its transformation into a modern city. Aspects of this change were the growth in Haifa’s population and the change in its demographic character. Haifa’s population stood at some 4,000 Palestinians at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its population began growing during the second half of that century, when its largely Muslim and Christian Palestinian demographic character likewise began to change. In 1869, German farmers from the religious Templar Society movement settled in Haifa. In the 1880s, Jews began arriving from Europe—even before the onset of political Zionism. At the same time, Haifa began to be transformed by the period’s global economy and global transportation. Increasing numbers of European steamships began calling on Haifa’s ports as Europe’s trade with the eastern Mediterranean increased. In 1859, the Russians built a quay to facilitate such trade, and the Ottomans built the first port facilities in 1908. The Ottoman government had earlier linked Haifa with Tiberias by road, and by 1905, they linked it to Damascus via a spur of the Hijaz railroad. By 1919, the city was also connected to Egypt via railroad, due to British military needs. By World War I, Haifa had replaced Beirut as the main port serving northern Palestine, southern Syria, and the transjordanian hinterland. Grain and other commodities flowed in its direction. During the Mandate period, political life was generally seen as the domain of Haifa and Jaffa, with their trade union activities, radical politics, left-wing journalism [Tamari 2008: 201] and the preponderant role of women as militant and activist [Fleischmann 2003]. All this was

accompanied by spectacular projects specifically in Haifa. The new deep-water harbor that opened in 1933 was the largest public-works project carried out by the British in Palestine during the Mandate, and it heightened Haifa's economic importance. Haifa was also the terminus of an oil pipeline extending from Iraq; it housed an oil refinery as well. The city was home to one of Palestine's two civil airports and connected to Jaffa by asphalted road, completed also in the mid 30s. Haifa's population grew during the Mandate from 24,634 in 1922 to some 128,000 in 1944, of whom 66,000 were Jews.

The Hijaz railway and later on the Palestine railway and Technion (Technical University) played a pioneering role in providing the elements required for the development of Haifa from a small town to a large city, enjoying all the advantages of an increased population and in turn, increased services. Haifa thus developed into a central city of northern Palestine and transit city in the Muslim pilgrim road, whose prominent status and future development enabled it to attract significant political, social, and cultural activity [Mansour 2006]. Merchants were able to benefit from these two important economic institutions due to the commercial activity they brought to the city and the successful building of a trade network with grain merchants in southern Syria's Houran province to export their crops via the Haifa port.

What Do Refugees Remember?

What distinguishes the testimony of Palestinian refugees from Haifa is that the *lieux de memoire* [Nora and Ageron 1997] are not the land of their ancestors, but rather the city and cosmopolitan life of twentieth-century Haifa.

The most poignant of the Nakba oral testimonies deal with how they heard the Haganah, the Jewish paramilitary groups, broadcast terror messages, via loudspeakers, to scare Arab inhabitants into fleeing. This has been confirmed by the work of the historian Benny Morris [Morris 2004: 76]. Palestinian accounts are contested by some Israelis who point out that the leftist, tolerant mayor of Haifa told the Arab population not to leave. This is contradicted by what Morris wrote: "In Haifa, the civilian authorities were saying one thing and the Haganah was doing something else altogether. Moreover, Haganah units in the field acted inconsistently and in a manner often unintelligible to the Arab population"[Morris 2004: 90].

Two bitter issues are raised by some who fought, interviewed in the Yarmouk and Jenin camps. The first is the political fragmentation of Haifa at that time, with leaders divided over different agendas. The second is faulty munitions and the lack of military training, confirmed by the memoir of Rashid al-Hajj Ibrahim [Ibrahim 2005].

Haifa was not only divided politically, but also socially. It is interesting to contrast the testimony of my paternal grandfather, Muhamed al-Hanafi, and that of my maternal uncle. My grandfather had moved to Haifa in 1921 with Izzedin al-Qassam from Jabla near

Latakia in Syria, fleeing the French repression. The charismatic Syrian cleric Sheikh Izzedin al-Qassam, who preached a powerful mixture of Islamic reformism and national resistance, found fertile soil for his message in Haifa, especially among the destitute urban community. My grandfather described a Haifa of migrants from Syria, Egypt and Lebanon and a working class in the port, the railway and oil refinery.

My uncle talks about young people from all over northern Palestine drinking alcohol in Haifa's bars. By the early 1920s, the influx of Russian and Eastern European Jews and then, in the early 1930s, the immigration of a large number of German Jews, made the city open to many influences. May Seikaly describes it as a pleasant city, whose famous orchards brimmed with orange and lemon trees. Many popular poets talk about Haifa as a place for entertainment: walking, swimming, bars, good restaurants, and so on.

Add this the French missionaries and German Templar migrants with their educational institutions. Haifa became a place of extraordinary encounter. Unlike the other large towns with mixed populations, however, Haifa was relatively new, and was unhampered by long tradition and history. For this reason, Haifa was more receptive to change than other places.

What was the relationship between Jews and Palestinians in mixed cities like Haifa? Zachary Lockman points out the dual society paradigm as a lens by which Mandate Palestine has been seen [Lockman 1996]. Influential scholars like S.N. Eisenstadt, Dan Horowitz and Moshe Lissak embrace the dual society model [Eisenstadt 1967; Horowitz and Lissak 1978]. But as Talal Asad has shown, Palestinian Arabs play virtually no role whatsoever in Eisenstadt's analysis: the Yishuv appears to have developed in a vacuum, entirely disconnected from and uninfluenced by the Arab society in its midst. Instead, for Eisenstadt and many other sociologists and historians, the contours and dynamics of Jewish society in Palestine, and of the future Israeli society, were shaped decisively early in the twentieth century by the generation of Zionist "pioneers" who brought with them from eastern Europe those values most conducive to successful institution-building and launched the Yishuv on its own distinct trajectory toward statehood.⁵ This is interesting in the sense that the Zionists adopted the method of not seeing the Arabs from very early on, something that continues to this day.

Palestinian historians, broadly speaking, also failed to depict the relationship between Jews and Arabs at that time. The dual society paradigm allows only to see the conflictual and violent mode of interaction between Arabs and Jews in Palestine. Written material among historians rarely goes beyond this; important exceptions are worth noting. For example, the work of Rosemary Sayigh based on oral testimony of the Palestinians in Lebanon [Sayigh 1979], Ruth Kark and Joseph B. Glass on a Sephardi family, the Valero, and their relations in Ottoman

⁵ [Asad 1975] cited by Lockman.

and Mandatory Jerusalem [Kark and Glass 2004], and the work of Salim Tamari about Ishaq Shami and what he called *Arab Jews* and not European settler Jews [Tamari 2008].

The differences are significant if one takes into account the distinctive social history of both groups, and the way Zionism tried to manipulate the first group. According to Tamari, in most places in the world today, the term “Arab Jew” is considered an oxymoron. In his book, *The Arab Jews* [Shenhav 2006], Yehouda Shenhav, an Israeli sociologist, traces the origins of the conceptualization of the Mizrahi Jews as Arab Jews. He interprets Zionism as an ideological practice with three simultaneous and symbiotic categories: “Nationality,” “Religion” and “Ethnicity.” In order to be included in the national collective, they had to be “de-Arabized.” According to Shenhav, religion distinguished Arabs from Arab Jews, thus marking nationality among the Arab Jews [Shenhav 2006: 270-280].

Oral history material shows different levels of relationship and encounter: in the neighbourhood, at work and in bars. Sometimes, relationships were instrumental, as reported in one of the accounts: “my father who has blood illness used to go to a Jewish doctor. Jewish doctors are known as excellent ones.” In neighbourhoods like al-Hadar in Haifa, many contacts were established between Jewish and Arab families. Even when the Palestinians speak about the different lifeworlds (Jewish and Arab), they raise many examples of encounters, as in the case of L.S., a 77-year old housewife: “we used to invite each other. My mother loved their food, especially a sort of shakshoka with eggs. My family used to see our Jewish neighbour Umm Yacob almost every week [...]. Among the topics we talked about was the invasion of Haifa by many Jewish foreigners [...]. Even Umm Yacob talked about them as invaders and was worried about their immorality. You should understand that Jews and Arabs are conservative and were always shocked by the women’s dress of the European Jews.”

Zionist ideology prevented Arab Jews from speaking Arabic or sympathising excessively with their national brothers. This is brilliantly depicted in *Forget Baghdad*, a documentary by the Iraqi director Samir, which tackles the dilemma of Iraqi Jews in Israel (Shimon Ballas, Samir Naqqach, Moshe Hour, and Ela Shuhat). Sami Michael, in this documentary, depicts the dilemma that some Iraqi Jews face in Israel. Michael reflects elegantly that: “It is as if, sometimes, I feel I am two persons. One is an Arab Iraqi, the other an Israeli Jew [...]. During the war on Iraq, I felt as if they were bombing my childhood.” The other side of the problem was, unfortunately, how the Arabs dealt with these Jews, and how all contact was forbidden, as if a human being could only belong to one side.

Isaac Shami (1888–1949) who lived in Haifa and was considered by critics to be one of the most brilliant writers in Palestine at that time, reflected through his person and literature a phenomenon on its way to extinction, namely the identity of the Arab Jew. His dilemma constitutes a perfect example of this problem. The Balfour Declaration placed Arab Jews and the Safardim, who identified with the Arab culture in Palestine, in an awkward position. Their

resistance to the imposition of the Zionist identity was mostly a cultural resistance, not an ideological one. On the other hand, some of them saw in the Zionist movement the seduction of modernity, which they experienced as the seduction of European culture and socialist thought.

In the realm of work, Haifa also was an exceptional place. Unlike nearly all Arab-owned enterprises and most Jewish-owned enterprises in Palestine, the Palestine Railways employed both Arabs and Jews. It was therefore one of the few enterprises in which Arabs and Jews worked side by side, encountering similar conditions and being compelled to interact in the search for solutions to their problems. According to [Lockman 1996] “The Palestine Railways was also one of the country’s largest employers, with a workforce that numbered about 2,400 in 1924 and reached a war-swollen peak of 7,800 in 1943. This workforce comprised numerous unskilled Arab peasants hired to build and maintain roadbed and track, but it also included substantial numbers of skilled personnel in the running and traffic departments and at stations across the country and (in 1943) some 1,200 Arab and Jewish workers were employed at the Haifa repair and maintenance workshops. Indeed, until the establishment of an oil refinery in Haifa at the start of the Second World War and then the proliferation of British military bases during the war, the Haifa workshops constituted Palestine’s largest concentration of industrial wage workers.”

Oral testimony among Palestinian refugees highlighted the discrimination against the Arab workers. Jewish workers were paid up to twice as much as their Arab colleagues. One Palestinian refugee, a leader of Arab workers in the port, reported this anecdote: “After a strike we carried out around 1938, Histadrut (Jewish Workers Union) succeeded in increasing the wages for Jewish employees. I went with some Arab workers to protest. The British supervisor justified the raise for the Jewish workers by the fact that they are accustomed to eating chocolate and this was costly.”

Conclusion

In this article, I have explored the Palestinian memory work and the fact that refugees witnessing the Nakba took long time to have a detached perspective and to assimilate their experiences and give their reminiscences meaning and form. I pointed out some of the ways in which Palestinian refugees from Haifa have reported the war of 1948, their expulsion, and the social and cultural life of pre-war Haifa, including encounters between Arabs and Jews. In these encounters, there is a discrepancy between the written and oral histories. In spite of some criticism I formulate in this article about the spoken and unspoken issues on the oral testimonies, they can carry deep truths. As Ahamd Sa’di and Leila Abu Lughod formulated eloquently [Sa’di and Abu Lughod 2007: 23], it is only through testimonies that holes can be done on the wall of the dominant story of 1948 and opening up to questioning.

Oral history has better reflected the heterogeneity of Palestinian society around the world and how this is often overlooked in favor of a unified national character. This is the heterogeneity that I would like to explore in this conclusion as it has reflected social and cultural diversity and political fragmentation that reminisces have highlighted in pre-war Haifa and continue to be till the present. Here I will argue that this constitutes a backdrop that facilitates the meticulous and perseverance works and plans of the Israeli intelligence apparatus and anthropologists to create hard social boundaries between Palestinians. To that, one should add the physical borders that separate the Palestinian communities, scattered all over the countries in the region and elsewhere.

The Palestinian sociologist Aziz Haidar observed that encounters after the 1967 War between Palestinian refugees living in the newly-occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip and their relatives within the 1948 borders were problematic. After many years of separation, people quickly understood the differences. Occupation, surveillance, and control had created a new Palestinian world inside Israel.

In addition to the impact of the political system, a social class issue had arisen. The Palestinians inside Israel had become much wealthier than their relatives who were living as refugees in the occupied territories. Haidar notes that visits stopped quickly. One interviewee who lived in Haifa explained that he became too upset when he accompanied people to their former homes in Wadi Salib and other parts of Haifa, and that he had to stop doing this. In Andre Mazzawi's work, there is more of a sustained critique of the way the Palestinian in the diaspora have failed to recognize the existence of the current realities in the 1948 cities [Tamari 2008].

There are many explanations for this gap between the citizens of Haifa and refugees living in the Palestinian territory and abroad. The Palestinians of Israel channelled the power of Israeli society, absorbed it and then exercised it against Palestinians living under occupation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as Cedric Parizot argues [Parizot 2008]. Differences in their socio-economic situation created a feeling of superiority. The sociologist Nabil Saleh argues that the Palestinians of Israel did not worry about what the occupation meant for the Palestinian territory. He remembered from his childhood how the Palestinians of Israel would say when the West Bank was "*opened*" and not "*occupied*."

On their first trip to East Jerusalem in 1967, Palestinians from Haifa took pictures of Israeli soldiers in their uniforms and their guns. According to the Palestinian historian Adel Manaa, who studied the case of 350 Palestinian families from the north of Israel who moved to East Jerusalem to be closer to Palestinian universities, some of them felt both a minority in a racist Israeli society and state, and also among the Palestinians of Jerusalem.

One can argue that these prejudices among different groups are no different when a Palestinian Bedouin of Beersheba goes to live in Haifa. In highly-segmented and tribal

Palestinian society, prejudices are aggravated by border separation. The current Israeli politics of space also hinders connections between Palestinians inside the West Bank and Gaza Strip. In the long term borders are created in the minds of people [Hanafi 2008: 4]. A border does not necessarily change national identity, but it does change the everyday practices of people, including their willingness to move to places of origin. Similarly the current fragmentation of the Palestinian population, mainly through the exercise of Israeli bio-politics and states of exception [Hanafi 2009], creates local identities in the population. This does not necessarily cancel the national identity, but it interacts with it, sometimes harmoniously and sometimes conflictually.

The Palestinian refugees of the West Bank and Gaza, but also of the diaspora, have greater attachment to the land of Palestine than to the people of Palestine. In interviews, refugees often insist on talking about property, land, the Mediterranean Sea, the Khader tomb, al-Aqsa Mosque, Bir'im Church and so on, avoiding the question of how they might live, and with whom.

I am not suggesting here the impossibility of the cooperation between Palestinian returnees and their Jewish neighbours but the necessity of thinking of return not only in terms of geography but also in terms of social relations. The Palestinian refugees should not create a myth of a land without a people for refugees without a land. This is nothing more than a parody of the Zionist myth.

The issue of return is determined by factors that go beyond the mere right of return [Hanafi 2007]. But the right of return is the key to any durable solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—will open up the various choices available to Palestinian refugees after more than 60 years of exile. Shaml's fieldwork and my own studies in 13 Palestinian diaspora countries from 1990 to 1995 uncovered a very heterogeneous population of five million, all of whom would claim the right of return but would not necessarily exercise it. It seems that a smaller number are objectively ready to return. The original places of birth of some of these refugees are today populated by Jewish immigrants. Among the Palestinians in Lebanon, Fafo's 2002 survey found that whereas nearly all came from parts of historical Palestine now inside Israel: forty percent came from places that are now completely Jewish, such as Safad and Tiberias/Bisan (33.1 percent and 6.3 percent) or have a large Jewish majority, such as Acre (36.6 percent from Akka and 9 percent from Haifa), and only ten percent came from Arab cities, notably Nazareth (9.5 percent) and southern Palestine (3.3 percent). Only 1.2 percent were originally from the Palestinian territory. In fact, although two out of five Palestinian-Lebanese were born in Palestine, very few have maintained ties with Palestinians inside Israel, according to the Shaml and Fafo surveys [Khawaja 2003].

In a survey conducted by Shaml, 82 percent of the interviewees from big cities like Haifa have lost direct contact with close relatives living outside of Israel. Visits decrease as

people age. Whereas the economic situation seems irrelevant to the frequency of visits, better-educated people seem to visit their close relatives more often. It seems then that education increases the possibility of travel to meet with transnational relatives.

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