# A Study on Forms of Violence in Azmi Bishara's Love in a Shadow Zone

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## *Abstract*

*Representations of types of violence featuring in modern world literature have been recognized by literary critics as part of the human condition facing incomprehensible conflict-resolution situations. This has been more so in the novel as a popular literary genre. However, not much has been said about the aesthetic representation of violence featuring in the literary works written by contemporary Arab Palestinian novelists. This paper examines the aesthetic dimension of the act of violence as addressed by Azmi Bishara in his novel Love in a Shadow Zone. In this novel, the drama that unfolds through a dream-like love relationship between Omar and Dunia goes beyond the private lives of the two distanced lovers to touch upon the public life of the Palestinians, both natives and refugees. As the two lovers exchange intimate moments through words, thanks to their almost non-stop msn-chatting rounds, the private and the public conflate to relay images of violence rarely depicted in modern Arabic literature. With the least sacrifice of the artistic, much more of the sensational, Love in a Shadow Zone, as an epistolary novel, portrays characters who seem to be straddling the border between past memories recollected to glue the fragmented vistas of a once-intact national identity and future aspirations summoned to reconstruct that identity in a world governed by asymmetric power relations where images of violence go unchallenged and unchecked by the indifferent world at large.*

## Introduction

The 1948 war between the Arab Salvation Army (1) and the Jewish immigrant settlers (2) over Palestine as a British-Mandate legacy (1918-1948) resulted not only in the loss of Palestine as the only homeland of the Palestinian people and all the manifestations implied therein but also in the loss of the Palestinian voice for a score of years to come. The Palestinians, whether those who stayed on and became Israeli Arab citizens in the newly established State of Israel or those who were forced

to abandon home and property and thus became homeless refugees in the Arab neighboring countries and elsewhere, must have been shocked by that great defeat and would remain dumbfounded for almost two decades until the Nakba (3) generation writers began to voice themselves as a cultural entity existing in space and time and seeking to reconstruct the concept of their national identity against all the existing odds by trying to re-enter history through the gate of the geographical space in which they took root for ages. This generation of writers braved the security apparatus of the Jewish State by carrying their long-hidden transcript as a dominated minority into the public sphere of the dominant and hegemonic Jewish culture in Israel, and beyond.

Although the pioneers of the Palestinian national consciousness during the early 1960s were more poets (*Among those poets are Mahmoud Darwish, Sameeh El-Qassim and Tawfiq Zayyad*) than novelists, the common theme that permeated most of the literary production then, albeit in different ways, was almost the same: the search for the usurped Palestinian national identity. Some of those writers called for a third identity that would eventually emerge from the problematic yet inextricable relationship between Arabs and Jews (*See Mahmoud Darwish, "An Interview with Hilit Yeshurun in Rabat Amon, Feb. 7, 1996," Hadarim, 12 (Spring 1996), 194-5. Also, see p. 57 in Edward Said, "An Ideology of Difference," Critical Inquiry, 12 (1985), 38-58* ); for those writers the Jewish State was a matter of *un fait accompli* that the Palestinians must accept as a historical reality. Others called for the practical immersion of the Arab in the political life of the State on the basis of equal opportunity for equal citizenry (*See p. 321 in Azmi Bishara, "The Arab in Israel: A Study in a Split Political Debate," in Pinchas Ginossar and Avi Bareli (eds.), Zionism: A Contemporary Controversy-- Research Trends and Ideological Approaches (Boker, 1996, 312-39*); for those writers Israel was viewed as an extension of western democracy. A third group defended the consistently patient attitude of the silent Arab minority whose strategy of forbearance would eventually pay off.(4) However, in the works of all those writers, irrespective of genre or mode of writing, representation of the types of violence, inflicted by the security apparatus of the State of Israel and a large sector of the Jewish immigrant settlers on the Arab minority that stayed on, is a telling example that needs to be addressed through the fictive dimension of imaginative literature.

## Literature Review

Fact and fiction interpenetrate in bewildering ways. In his seminal work titled *Literature, Rhetoric and Violence in Northern Ireland*, Patrick Grant contends that the interconnection between fiction and fact cannot be overlooked or dismissed as a contrived effort. For him, "no work of fiction can really engage us unless it evokes in some compelling way our experience of the actual world" (Grant, 2001: 16). Thus, far from reporting a violent event as it really occurred, imagination comes into play to shape meaning in the form of words, compelling us to see certain key-mechanisms by which violence is conducted and how these are represented in the printed text. In this context, for violence to be justified, it depends on a depersonalizing of the enemy who is objectified to be acted upon. The victim, who is thus reduced to a nonentity, is no more viewed as an individual human being in his/her own right but as a representative of a feared group. Feeling intimidated and tortured by the victimizer, the victim can be tempted to reply in kind. Thus violence becomes a game of mutual recrimination, a plane mirror of hate held by the victim for the victimizer to see their own image.

Unlike propaganda used by the victimizer to sustain societal stability and prevent the disruption of civil life, literature uses imagination as a powerful moral agent that provides an attitude to the means by which violence is perpetrated. Literature challenges the depersonalizing strategies on which violence thrives. It suggests a pattern of redeemed relationships, and is therefore seen as the bearer of a myriad of felicities counteracting the stoniness of our separateness (cf. Grant, 2001). From this stance, violence depicted in literature is not a self-serving phenomenon or an end in itself. To this effect, examples from modern literature across the world abound, and the Palestinian literature is no exception. Modern literature is concerned with the human condition, and thus images of violence depicted as part of the human experience can hardly escape the tragic realization of universal injustice. Azmi Bishara's *Love in a Shadow Zone*, whose fictional world is fragmented and chaotic reflecting the inner worlds of its main characters, is at the heart of the preoccupation of modern literature. If metaphorically seen as a seedling breaking rocks to reach sunlight, literature on violence may provide a chance of contemplative hesitation

in which a moral sense might grow and out of which some ample understanding of the human condition might surface.

Some scholars argue that accounts of violence addressed in a work of fiction are always embodied in narratives which attempt to make sense of violence from a hidden political agenda (cf. Foucault in Morris and Patton, 1979; Harlow, 1987; Scott, 1990). The dissenting transcripts of the dominated cannot be separated from the stories of atrocities and brutality that the dominating power wishes to conceal; rather, these texts originate in acts of domination which become, in turn, an integral part of the dissenting story. Although this is not further from the truth, the question that this assumption raises is whether or not literary language colludes with or exposes the "encoded narratives", and whether or not literature is inevitably political in the first place. Peter McDonald, in his *Mistaken Identities*, outlines the controversy over the element of ideology permeating historical facts and how this ideology may reduce the significance of literature and its power of imaginative representation. Literature, he says, offers to "redeem violence from the narratives in terms of which it is habitually understood" (McDonald, 1997:56). After all, words do not protect us against violence, though they often expose it and might at times reduce its impact on targeted individuals and groups. Ironically, however, words may also incite violence or contribute to its continuance by perpetrating the lies of propaganda and the illusions of ideology on which violence feeds. In this sense, literature cannot part with the system of signs constituting a given culture where language, being a collective construction, is clear enough in literary works and the words that constitute them" (Barker, 1993:82).

The Israeli Arab narratives, including Bishara's, tend to demystify the myth of the Promised Land by exteriorizing the hidden transcripts of inadmissible truths that the Israeli Jew has been hiding even from himself since the establishment of the State in 1948. Those narratives can also be meant to dismantle Israel's historical self-narration which has obliterated the other side of the story that might contradict and therefore undermine the official single-handed version. Thus the exposure of the hidden text makes the dialogic relationship between the reader and the text increasingly complex and multi-directional. In one way, the dialogue emerges from the Israeli reader's need to, in Hans Jauss's terms, "question the alien horizon of the other" (Jauss in Valdes and Miller, 1985: 148). In short, those narrative texts introduce the

Israeli Jew to the untold side of their own story; that is, the side of the defeated whose tale of suffering has been deliberately denied and erased from the official annals. In the encounter with Israeli Arab literature, the Israeli Jewish reader must negotiate what Walter Benjamin calls "the fullness of the past" (1969: 254), that is, the complete history which includes the stories of violence and oppression that made the Jewish settlers' military victory over the Arabs possible.

In no way, however, does narrative art replace history or take it out of interpretation. It rather views history as a platform for a convergence around certain ethical questions embedded in key historical events. To this effect, the concept of collective memory has been recently paid the credit it deserves as a critical means of understanding how societies reconstruct their unwritten history. For an individual, "shared memories set the terms of his or her membership in a society" and that "… Identity is not only determined by direct links of groups to their traumatic events, but also by a choice to engage today with the consequence of the past" (Chanin and McConnon, 2008: xix). The telling of stories about traumatic violence is indeed shared by the various societies that have suffered from it. (5)

Whether recognized as part of a collective memory or viewed as part of an ongoing drama, types of violence addressed in literature are there to sustain a challenge. This challenge is to protect the authenticity of the original voices against institutionally studied efforts to delete, falsify or muffle the other side of the story. Alongside with other Palestinian novelists, Azmi Bishara tells yet again the Palestinian side of the story addressing types of violence, one of whose symptomatic manifestations is "ego disintegration or dissolution and a blurring of boundaries" (cf. Grinberg, 1989: 164). Bishara, an outspoken intellectual and a highly respected political mind, breaks the ugliest symptom of violence whose clearest representation is silence (*Silence is further illustrated by Nietzsche in his "master" and "slave" moralities. See Walter Kaufmann, ed., The Portable Nietzsche. New York: Viking Press, 1865*), for "...silence in  the face of violence can also be taken for consent or consensus" (Joyce in Kelly, 1994: 83). In Palestinian literature, silence of the Arab minority in Israel is made to speak up against violence through the public sphere of art which, alone as it seems, can tolerate a meaningful interaction between the self and the "other". In this sense, Bishara diverges from Scott's postulation that "the

hidden transcripts of dominant and subordinate are … *never in direct contact*" [Italics in the text] (Scott, 1990: 15).

## The Story

Possibly a sequel to his first novel *al-Hajez(Azmi Bishara's first novel, written and published in Arabic in 2004)* (The Checkpoint), Bishara's *Love in a Shadow Zone* (6) is fashioned in the form of the epistolary type of fiction where most of the narrator's thoughts addressed to his lover coalesce around the idea of hyper fiction that transcends the original love story between Omar Ali El-Janaby, the protagonist of the tale who is an Arab citizen of the State of Israel, and Dunia, presumably a second cousin of his extended family, who is a Palestinian refugee living as an exile in London. Except for the first and last casual meeting which takes place in London between the two star-crossed lovers, all subsequent events making much of the plotline are part of a virtual world created by non-stop msn chatting rounds initiated instantly and spontaneously by either of the two lovers but often punctuated by philosophical reflections on the part of the narrator portraying a composite picture of his personal experience and beyond.

 "I must have been born some 150 years back from the present moment, for I belong in the Age of Philosophers" (LSZ: 14). Expressive as it is, this sentence which Omar uses to introduce himself in the first chapter of the novel epitomizes his ambivalent identity as someone who does not belong or fit in the world he will soon describe as a world of shadows created by military checkpoints that not only obstruct the fluidity of ordinary life of the Arab citizens living in Israel and the occupied territories but also obstruct the dream-world he is trying to build for a lasting communion with the woman he loves. "He [Omar] wrote her stories about the countless checkpoints, stories about the love that had been blocked behind those checkpoints" (LSZ: 15).

Much of the love story portrayed, a romance too delicate to materialize, is invaded by intrusive intermissions set up by a third party, the security apparatus of the state of Israel and its military stronghold over the life junctions of the Arab minority – all filtered down as acts of violence, the ugliest of which are confiscation of Arab land and property, ethnic cleansing, pre-emptive night storming-ins and assaults accompanied by police-dogs, detention centers, countless life-freezing checkpoints, and not finally, perhaps, the erection of the snake-shape,

nine-meter high wall ornamented with watch-towers provided with machine-guns and cutting through populated Arab citizens across the occupied Palestinian territories in the West Bank. Within this strict enclosure of place and space, into which Dunia, as a refugee, cannot be allowed passage as a repatriate, Omar is only left with narrow choices: resort to philosophical speculation, reminisce a bygone past and a shattered space to tell a coherent story untold by the Israeli Jew, and at best to build a virtual, dream-like world into which Dunia and he can meet intermittently for relief. Facing such constraints, this love story is condemned to suffer much before it ever has the slimmest chance to bloom.

Like most of the epistolary novels, *Love in a Shadow Zone* is constantly shifting in time and space. This shift is implied in the subtitle of the novel, *a tale of a place fragmented*, where the place reconstructed to make a story is so necessarily associated with temporal lapses that selective memory can only piece together. Despite the forced dispersal of the ego by virtue of the consistent process of disintegration and fragmentation, Bishara, in this novel, is rebuilding the sense of history shaping the life of the Palestinian community, for without this sense of history people turn into slaves for whom making a living, not a life, comes first. It is the presence of the "other" whose violence denies the Palestinians their sense of history and belonging that Bishara turns into an imaginative kind of volition by means of which the self is reinstalled and reaffirmed if it is difficult to be replicated. The fragmented structure of the novel responds, aesthetically, to the quest permeating the tale: the search for identity. This search is an existential matter in a closed world policing even individual aspirations and dreams. Hence, it is noteworthy to read the historical background Bishara provides his narrative with as a network of discourses foregrounding the future dilemma in the fruitless love relationship described. These discourses derive for the most part from the historical context of the struggle between Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Zionists over the ownership of the holy land. The conflicting agendas of the Arab and the Zionist projects in Palestine offer a perspective that impacts the set patterns of domination and subordination. In this sense, the narrative text under study struggles to shape and probably recover what has been suppressed. However, the improbability of regaining the distinctness of the Arab identity in terms

of the protagonist's concept of history that defines national unity and cultural wholeness is reflected in the fragmented world of the novel.

In terms of plot, the novel is, to a large extent, the protagonist's persistence to reunite with his exiled love once and for all. Physically, the two lovers cannot meet to crown their intimacies with marriage. Such a marriage, if it came true, would be highly representational; that is, between the Palestinians who remained in their land and those who were forced to flee it and have become refugees ever since. The plotline epitomizes the Palestinian power of endurance and their deep sense of waiting for an almost impossible reunion between the two constituents of the homeland. The space conditioned by forced distance is, willy-nilly, filled by stories recollected from collective memories spanning some considerable part of the Palestinian national history during and after the British Mandate of Palestine. Although these are not organically part and parcel of the love story making the plot, they are, by representation, a major part of an absurd drama whose players replace deeds by words and the immediacy of the present by desperate attempts to blow life into the ashes of a reminisced past, only to make sense of their present and allow their aspirations to flourish and shape their future national project.

## Representation of Violence

*Love in a Shadow Zone* is replete with images of violence addressed through a series of representation at both animate and inanimate levels. Such representations include invasive changes and transformations targeting space and natural landscape, native culture and language, and above all basic human rights of the Arab minority in Israel. All of these are deftly described by Bishara as manifestations of a colonial mindset shaping the Zionist project in Palestine as the home of the homeless and wandering Jew[1] across the globe (see Kanafani, 1966; Hever, 2002; Zakim, 2006).

## Space and Natural Landscape

A striking representation of a pre-meditated, state-run violence perpetrated by the Jewish immigrant settlers is the drastic change and transformation inflicted upon the Palestinian space and natural landscape. Omar writes to Dunia about the harm done to the remaining Palestinian citizens who are denied access to their property which has been confiscated for alleged security matters in the first place and then

for the sake of beautifying the public space. One cannot miss the irony underlying the second reason for land confiscation. … but since the new settlers came and occupied the public space, then re-parceled land and renamed places, each of the peasants has kept the number of the piece of land confiscated and a receipt … to confirm their ownership in court (*LSZ: 21*).

The natural landscape has also been transformed by the effect of modern technology used for archaeological excavation, urban planning, and transportation networks. In his *Theory of the Novel*, Luckas (1971) uses the term "second nature" for a highly mediated space that lies between artifice and myth. In this context, Bishara, by implication, shows how the landscape has gradually lost its identity and become so strange in the eyes of the narrator who observes that the beautiful wetland… was dried up by the new comers. They planted eucalyptus trees to enhance the drying up of the marshes and constructed pathways decorated by white-washed stone walls on either side that reminds of the days of the Second Temple (*LSZ: 23*).

The shrines of the saints do not look the way they used to, for they have, also, lost their identity and acquired another. The narrator, cynically, reports how "names of places were removed, others, if Biblical, kept same names. It seems that those saints have changed their faith many a time after their deaths to suit the new settlers" (*LSZ: 24*). Further descriptions of the changing landscape appear throughout the narrative and become part of the plotline the central issue of which is, perhaps, an absurd search for a distorted identity. The space has totally occupied the place and changed it into a scene, a sightseeing, and the natives of the land have been asked to choose between being part of the new landscape or removed as is the case with goats that do harm to nature (*LSZ: 33*).

The public space has been interrupted by newly constructed roads and streets, a network of transportation to connect the new comers' towns and settlements. In contrast, the villages of the remaining [Arabs] are no longer part of the public space, for there are no sign-roads as those indicating the settlers' towns and settlements. The only sign-road, written in Hebrew and Arabic, indicating an Arab village is placed just before you enter that village … The village only defines itself, for it indicates no other connections or directions (*LSZ: 38-9*).

The narrator goes further to describe the ruins of the abandoned Arab villages demolished in the wake of the establishment of the immigrant settlers' State of Israel and how they are excluded from the public space – no road-signs but places renamed in Hebrew, leaving behind remains of some "cactus hedges and visible traces of rubble that used to be Arab house structures" (*LSZ: 39*).

Apart from the stylistic and semantic functions of the narrative, Bishara's art of telling a story produces a certain type of intention conveyed by fictional utterances. Works of fiction "are seldom entirely completely fictional, but tend to be a mixture of fiction-making and assertion" (Douglas, 2007: 133). Thanks to the contextual features of the narrative, identity seems to encompass both the animate and the inanimate.

## Native Culture and Identity

Another striking representation of violence addressed by Bishara through both the narrator and the protagonist is associated with native culture and the process of distortion it has undergone. As the dominant culture, including the daily use of Hebrew language as a medium of communication and life-style appearances, Israeli "Jewishness" fills the cultural space and impresses Israeli Arab citizens in many ways. Some Arab notables and key-figures in their village/town community would mimic the settlers in almost everything, even in the way Hebrew is used for daily communication, stress falling on fricative consonant sounds of letters. They would also celebrate "Independence Day" and "Nakba Day" at the same time, for they happen to occur on May 15. Whether this behavior sounds opportunistic or otherwise, it cannot be understood apart from the cultural transformation to which the Arab community has been long subjected. If this transformation is not complete yet, it is because the process of assimilation in a State that labels itself purely Jewish is out of question (7). Bishara's narrative style, sarcastic as it is, leaves almost no stone unturned when the socio-economic structure of the Arab minority as well as their life-style can be part of a game of mimicry. "Some of them," Omar writes to Dunia, "ape the settlers without being obliged to do so … even they mimic the settlers' fear of the remaining [Arab community], for they haven't yet transformed their fear into a firm standpoint that is their own" (*LSZ: 35-6*). Even in the way they dress, especially the younger Arab generation, Omar observes that "the suit has

been replaced by shorts and T-shirts" (*LSZ: 23*). Asked by Dunia if he usually talks about his observation in public, Omar replies "I'm afraid they may think I am a mad man" (*LSZ: 48*).

Besides these observations, each of Omar and the narrator, interchangeably, dives in the history of his people and recaptures stories of mass expulsion and psychological disorientation which communicate a sense of entrapment in a no-exit situation. The epistolary narrative used by Bishara as a literary form and vehicle hints at some kind of confession that reveals the innermost hidden transcript filtered down into an insistent need for a listener to whom this side of the story of suffering must be told. In this respect, Dunia, who is aware of this side of history, is there as an agent that aids Omar to transmit the voice of the defeated to the victimizer to effect a shift in conflicting identities. Remembering the suppressed past signifies an acknowledgment of the "fullness of history," to recall Benjamin; that is, the realization of the extent of suffering that the culprit has inflicted on the victim. When the two sides of the one story mirror one another, then the issue of identity for either of them is equally compelling What bothers them [the Israeli Jews], in particular, is the existence of another people in the public space, the existence of those who remained in their place … for the new settlers (8) are amazed why we are here, [for] it seems nobody has ever notified them of our existence (*LSZ: 34-35*)

In their unscheduled msn chatting rounds, Omar and Dunia touch upon instances where borders of identity and characters are inseparable. Both identity and character seem to shuttle between the two conflicting cultures that constitute a psychic territory of crossing. Bishara, transforming this ambivalent image of identity into textual enterprise, shows that the printed word also constitutes borders where identity is caught undefined, incomplete.

## Human Rights

One further representation of violence addressed by Bishara in this novel is the sense of being alienated. The alienation of man from his ancestral associations to history, land and the values therein is registered through story-telling (cf. Chanin, 2008; Yuknavitch, 2001; Harlow, 1987). Uprooting, displacement, landscape transformation and space redesign, checkpoints installed for security measures, and military zones are all among those images of violence felt and lived on daily basis when it

comes to the right of individuals and groups to commute from place to place, more especially in the occupied Palestinian territories. However, the most compelling feature of human rights implied within the chatting rounds between the two lovers is the right to return. Palestinian refugees, and Dunia is one of them, are denied the right to return to their long-abandoned home and property at the time any Jew across the globe enjoys that right by Israeli law. (*This law that grants Israeli identity is exclusive to any Jew who comes to Palestine as an immigrant settler. It never applies to Palestinian refugees who are denied the right to return home*) A dialogue between Omar and Dunia says it all:

- Can you take me back home, or can you spend on us here in London?
- No. How unbelievable! This is your country and I cannot bring you in, not even through family reunion. If I wish to do so, I need the mediation of collaborators, and you cannot stand my doing this.
- No! No! I don't accept it for you, not for myself either. You always avoid this subject [marriage] and run away into politics, just like my father. You are all a defeated generation.
- And so was my father. What to do? (*LSZ: 157*)

More compelling, also, is the daily humiliation of the Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories. If the State of Israel is described by the narrator as the checkpoint country, the occupied territories are described as the land of checkpoints at the crossing of any one of those, a ritual of humiliating passers-by is performed by soldiers round the clock. The title of the novel indicates that shadows and fragmentation fill the daily lives of civilians under occupation. One of the features laying shadows across life there is the construction of the spiral roads connecting Jewish settlements to the Jewish towns in the State of Israel, thus denying the natives smooth and safe passage. These spiral roads consume large areas of agricultural land owned by Palestinians who, in this game of power relations, are segregated by virtue of the discrimination wall eating up their property and separating families and neighbors.

An Israeli reporter, a new settler as introduced by Omar, wrote a newspaper article describing the Palestinians as follows:

> Do you believe it? Those are barbarians by all means. Do
> you believe that even in their Qor'an [Muslim holy book]
> you find the expression 'Allah Akbar' [God is Greater]?
> (*LSZ: 252*)

This quote lends meaning to no other interpretation than the absence of cultural awareness on the part of the new Jewish immigrant settlers due to the Zionist propaganda, ignorance and stereotyping. To misinterpret basic Islamic precepts and libel the Arab natives as "Muslim barbarians" implies ethnic and racial discrimination on which violence can feed. Arab Palestinians are not all Muslims, and Palestine is also the cradle of Judaism and Christianity.

## Conclusion

In *Love in a Shadow Zone: a tale of a place fragmented*, Azmi Bishara tells more than one story. The central narrative, that is the love story, is continually punctuated by other sub-narratives that may not organically relate to the plotline of the story but rather to the fragmented fictional world whose parts add to the significance of the exhaustive search undertaken by the protagonist to define his existence as a cultural being. It is an interwoven textual enterprise whose narrative discourse essentially transfers the hidden transcripts, to recall Scott, of the two sides telling the one story into the public sphere of readership. However, if the novel suffers from an organic unity due the shifting scenes filling its world as a political satire, its unifying agent at the aesthetic level is the uniform voices of both the narrator and the protagonist, who unquestionably use the same wavelength frequency to relay one message to the indifferent world at large: this is our side of the story. When it comes to the representation of acts of violence affecting the experience lived or reminisced, Bishara is keen enough to transmit the authentic event through the aesthetic dimension of art, so that the search undertaken through contextualization is excusable. Violence literature, as the novel asserts through implication, does not only intend to record cases of violation or testify to the violent practices perpetrated, but it also provides a forum for moral imagination to be cultivated. Is there anything called violence literature after all? As long as representation maps out or historicizes conflict aggravated by asymmetric power relations, the answer is yes. Bishara's narrative, eschewing reporting in the interest of showing, succeeds in trading the value of the event for the efficacy of representation.

## Acknowledgments

## Notes

1. Reference to the army created in a hurry by the governments of the Arab countries neighboring Palestine to attack the well-armed Jewish settlers and repatriate the Palestinian refugees, and that was in the wake of the British troops leaving Palestine Mid-May 1948

2. Reference to the combatant Jewish settlers, known as pioneers, who came to Palestine mainly from Europe and joined the militant groups Haganah, Stern, and Argon that later constituted the backbone of the Israeli army (IDF)

3. This Arabic term means catastrophe but it was anglicized as it has no equivalent term in English

4. See the fictional work of Emile Habiby who created a Palestinian literature alongside the Hebrew literature and not part of it, for Habiby wrote in Arabic but his work was translated into Hebrew for the Jewish readership in Israel

5. Genocides have reshaped international discourse around our mutual responsibilities as citizens of the world, thanks to historians and story-tellers who have recorded the Armenian Genocide, the European Jewish Holocaust, and the Arab Palestinian Nakba

6. All page references are to the Arabic edition Hob fi Mintaqat el-Zil: Riwayat Shazaya Makan, Beirut: Arab Cultural Center, 2005, and all translations from the Arabic into English are mine

7. Edward Said in "An Ideolgy of Difference," p.58, qtd. in Critical Inquiry (1985), Mahmoud Darwish in "An Intewrview with Hilit Yeshurun," p.198 qtd. in Hadarim (1996), and other Palestinian intellectuals discuss this problematic dual loyalty as part of the indefinable borderlines between Israeli Jewish and Israeli Arab identities

8. Reference is particularly made to the one million Russian Jews, who migrated to the state of Israel in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union and its disintegration in the early 1990s

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