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AN ANXIOUS STATE:  
THE SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR PEACE  
IN IRISH AND PALESTINIAN LITERATURE

By

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B.A., The University of Montana, Missoula, MT, 2010

Thesis

presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in English, Literature

The University of Montana  
Missoula, MT  
May 2014

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## An Anxious State: The Search for Identity and the Struggle for Peace in Irish and Palestinian Literature

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This thesis works to connect the literature of two geographically and historically disparate people – the Irish and the Palestinians. One can observe patterns of disjuncture, identity crisis, and identity formation in the history of one people; one can then apply the principles learned to analogous historical situations. I argue that the Irish and the Palestinians share a kind of communal psychological trauma brought about by the experience of imperial/colonial domination, violence, and especially diaspora. Because of this shared trauma, Ireland's historical experience can offer insight into that of Palestine. The situations are unique, but at certain human levels they have a great deal in common. Out of a shared struggle for identity, competing and sometimes mutually exclusive claims to legitimacy rise – but so too do voices calling for humility, empathy, and unity. These are the voices I attempt to locate in the literature I engage.

In the first chapter, I introduce the initial theoretical framework I employ to analyze two Irish novels. Bakhtin offers an understanding of speech in the context of a novel that I find to be a valuable lens through which to view Irish (and later, Palestinian) society itself. I identify Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* as an inalienable truth underlying the makeup of all societies.

I then note some of the connections – not only theoretical, but political, social, and ideological – between the Irish experience of diaspora and identity formation and the Palestinian experience of the same.

In the second chapter, I deepen my theoretical approach significantly to supplement the theory I borrow and modify from Bakhtin. I then use several Palestinian works to locate certain trauma-induced commonalities between the texts, and show how this trauma creates an anxious field of possibilities for the diasporic population.

I conclude by showing that current events continue to point to the ongoing traumatization and polarization of Israelis and Palestinians, and note that even in Ireland and Northern Ireland “peace” can be an anxious state. I attempt to show how real peace can only be found through empathy, which comes through listening to and caring for the voices of the Other.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis works to connect the literature of two geographically and historically disparate people – the Irish and the Palestinians. “To what end?” one might ask. I believe that oversimplification when dealing with incredibly complex issues like world politics and social identities is unhelpful (if not dangerous). On the other hand, humanity shares among its members commonalities that go beyond geography, culture, and individual histories, and as such philosopher George Santayana’s well-used maxim “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it” is worth bearing in mind.<sup>1</sup> What I mean is this: one can observe patterns of disjuncture, identity crisis, and identity formation in the history of one people; one can then apply the principles learned to analogous historical situations. The alternative is to forget the lessons of the past and try to essentially grope blindly for solutions, and such an approach is likely to end up simply repeating old mistakes. I argue that the Irish and the Palestinians, in addition to sharing connections that go beyond historical coincidence (which I also briefly explore), share a kind of communal psychological trauma brought about by the experience of imperial/colonial domination, violence, and especially diaspora. Because of this shared trauma (of the so-called “post-colonial” existence), Ireland’s historical experience can offer insight into that of Palestine. While again, the situations are unique on many levels, at certain human levels they have a great deal in common. Both peoples saw their homeland colonized and partitioned, both peoples have fought against the occupying forces by various armed and unarmed means, and both peoples have struggled to internally develop a sense of identity unique and fundamental to their society. Out of this struggle, competing and sometimes mutually exclusive claims to

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<sup>1</sup> From *Reason in Common Sense*, the first volume of *The Life of Reason* (284).

legitimacy rise – but so too do voices calling for humility, empathy, and unity. These are the voices I attempt to locate in the Irish and Palestinian literature I engage here.

In the first chapter, I introduce the initial theoretical framework I employ to analyze two Irish novels from different literary eras: Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys*. M. M. Bakhtin offers an understanding of speech in the context of a novel that I find useful not only in literary analysis, but also as a valuable lens through which to view Irish society itself. I identify Bakhtin's *heteroglossia* – literally different tongues or languages – as an inalienable truth underlying the makeup of all societies. While some societies appear to be more “polyvocal” than others, this appears to be the case because other societies in comparison employ varying levels of hegemonic apparatus to control the speech allowed within the society.<sup>2</sup> Just because speech is controlled, however, does not mean that unheard voices do not exist. Gayatri Spivak theorizes these unheard voices as the voices of the subaltern – the abject “outsider” of a community. I show that O'Brien crafts a complex and sometimes-chaotic world of voices in his novel, including dominant as well as subaltern voices.

O'Brien mocks the oppressive nationalist forces operating in Ireland in the 1930s and their attempt to “green” Ireland's ancient literature and to repress and silence the undesired voices of society. The comic narrative of *At Swim-Two-Birds* ostensibly follows the life and writing of an unnamed student, whose father and friends debate the merits of which social activities should really be seen as authentically “Irish.” This

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<sup>2</sup> These apparatus, according to Louis Althusser, can be institutional – i.e. actual governmental policies – or ideological – i.e. religious, social, or cultural constraints.

narrative forms only the outermost frame for O'Brien's tale; within which multiple layers emerge and proceed to run into and over one another. Cowboys interact with a Pooka and Sweeny and Finn MacCool trade conversation in verse form. Eventually the characters rebel against the narrator's fictional author (Trellis), judge him in court, and punish him for his oppressive treatment of his characters. The work operates as a satire to show the foolishness of the hegemony Ireland's government was forcefully attempting to impose during O'Brien's time – Irish society is too “colorful” (as opposed to merely “green”) to be funneled into a single, monovocal narrative.

O'Neill writes a different sort of novel – a kind of love story, *bildungsroman*, and historical work all rolled into one – but his intentions resonate with O'Brien's. *At Swim, Two Boys* primarily follows the life of Jim Mack, a youth beginning to develop ideas about love, patriotism, and independence on the eve of the Easter Rising of 1916. As political events begin to move towards the rising and revolution, Jim and the socialist Doyler strike up a friendship and then a romantic relationship. In the background, the Oscar Wilde-like figure of MacMurrough provides a worldly-wise and embittered commentary on Irish nationalism and politics as well as heteronormativity. I argue that O'Neill positions a non-heteronormative love story (as well as doubly-meaning and ironic vocabulary) in the context of the narrative of the emerging nation-state in part to add to O'Brien's critique of Ireland's historical nationalist project. By using sexually queer figures like Wilde and Roger Casement, socialists like James Connolly, and Protestant nationalists like Wolfe Tone, O'Neill points to the heteroglossia undergirding what it means to be Irish and posits a definition of Irishness as “queer” – not conforming to the linear and traditional narratives championed by the dominant nationalist forces of



the time. Such a novel serves as more than an historical commentary but also as a critique of modern-day Western hegemonic controls.

Before I move into the second chapter, I note some of the connections between the Irish experience of diaspora and identity formation and the Palestinian experience of the same. I find parallels between the two situations to be more than theoretical; real political, social, and ideological connections have existed between the Irish and the Palestinian people for some time and remain quite strong through the present day. I find evidence for this in the political murals of Northern Ireland as well as newspaper headlines from the last decade as well as in other sources.

In the second chapter, I deepen my theoretical approach significantly to include Judith Butler, Valorie Thomas, Paul Gilroy, Arjun Appadurai, Gayatri Spivak, and others to supplement the theory I borrow and modify from Bakhtin. As I initially began delving deeper into works about and/or by Palestinians, I found myself seeing patterns that resonate not only with some of O'Brien and O'Neill's moves in Irish literature, but also with what these writers have theorized about the psychological trauma of diaspora and oppression. I use multiple fictional and non-fictional works to locate certain trauma-induced commonalities between the texts, and ultimately rely heavily on Elias Khoury's *Gate of the Sun* to show how this trauma creates an anxious field of possibilities for the diasporic population. Khoury's narrator (Khalil) works as a nurse in a defunct hospital in Galilee, trying to coax his friend and father-figure (the comatose Yunes) back to the conscious world through constant attention and an ever-flowing stream of stories – stories about Yunes, stories about Khalil, stories about their friends, acquaintances, ancestors, and others. I argue that dispossession and diaspora create in Khalil a space

of possibility. In this “break” (a term I borrow from Valorie Thomas), Khalil (and by extension the Palestinians and other diasporic/traumatized peoples) can form new means of identification and deeper potential for empathy. Khalil takes on the personae of the individuals whose stories he tells and at times loses his own sense of self-identity as he is overwhelmed by the waves of heteroglossia he encounters. I supplement my close reading of Khoury with works that reinforce this interpretation of the “break’s” empathetic potential, but also show how the anxiety inherent to this place of psychological disjuncture can lead in turn to hardened ideologies like hatred and militant nationalism.

Finally, I conclude by showing that current events continue to point to the ongoing traumatization and polarization of Israelis and Palestinians, and note that even in Ireland and Northern Ireland “peace” can be an anxious state. A thesis of this scope cannot faithfully survey all of even the most acclaimed works in Irish or Palestinian literature of the last century, nor can it offer a comprehensive political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. What I do attempt is to show how real peace can only be found through empathy, and empathy comes through listening to and caring for the voices of the Other. Heteroglossia inheres in all societies, but societies historically have repressed those voices that are undesirable to the hegemonic forces in power. Unless individuals work to listen and develop empathy and compel their governments to do the same, peace will remain a naïve and ever-elusive ideal.

## **CHAPTER 1: At Swim, Two Novels: Heteroglossia and Irish Cultural Identity in O'Brien and O'Neill**

Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* were written over sixty years apart, and yet both present countless and colorful voices which represent competing or complementary cultural languages and ideologies in Ireland. The respective authors situate their novels squarely in their times: *At Swim-Two-Birds* interrogates the identity of the Irish "soul" as captured in its literature during the aftermath years after the War of Independence and the ensuing Civil War, while *At Swim, Two Boys* depicts a youth's struggle to locate his own personal and sexual identity within the framework of an Ireland that in 1916 (especially) was disturbed and factious, with numerous forces vying for cultural as well as political supremacy.

A close reading of *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *At Swim, Two Boys*, this chapter argues that Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia* does more than describe a linguistic phenomenon readily apparent in both novels. It can also be applied more broadly to help describe how a reduction of Irish culture to a monovocal and linear narrative – whether nationalist, unionist, Gaelic, English, queer, straight, Catholic, Protestant, etc. – fails to capture or even acknowledge the real existence of the countless voices and forces composing Irish society.

Formally speaking, the novels apparently have little in common. O'Brien litters his text with dictionary definitions, alleged excerpts from press releases, lowbrow poetry, epics translated from the Irish, and other eclectic pieces of literature; at first glance a reader could take *At Swim-Two-Birds* as a modernist aesthetic project rather than as a meaningful social inquiry. O'Neill composes a narrative arguably easier for

the contemporary reader; he tells a relatively straightforward *bildungsroman* revolving around the contemporary issue of queerness and heteronormativity<sup>3</sup> in a skilled way, but in a way that shows little of the modernists' penchant for experimentation – little too, for that matter, of the postmodern satirical bite.

However, both novels question the idea of a uniform and monovocal sense of national identity. They both display something closer to the reality of culture: while one voice or identity might wield greater influence or “volume” than others in the political or cultural worlds they inhabit, they remain but a single voice in an ever-shifting, polyvocal morass of unique perspectives, ideologies, and experiences. This assertion holds true for all cultures, but resonates particularly within the context of Irish history, in which the authors of both books firmly place their respective works. O'Brien satirizes the attempts of “green” nationalistic cultural forces to impose hegemonic control over Ireland's complex and multifaceted society and also portrays the impossibility of binding characters – and by extension real persons – to an artificial and contrived linear narrative. O'Neill also satirizes the Irish nationalist project of the early twentieth century, but he uses the historical situation to question other hegemonic “norms” he detects not only in Irish history but in contemporary society as well – particularly that of heterosexuality. O'Neill conflates his sense of “queerness” with his sense of Irishness<sup>4</sup>, aligning his argument that Irish society is inherently non-normative and polyvocal with O'Brien's satire of the opposite claim.

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<sup>3</sup> Which is not to say that the issue is wholly recent, but rather that the legal and social status of non-heteronormative sexualities have continued to be regularly in the news and opinion headlines of the last two decades particularly.

<sup>4</sup> This initially struck me as an unhelpful move until I considered that “homosexual” and “queer” (“strange or odd from a conventional viewpoint; unusually different; singular”) are rarely used synonymously; O'Neill does not so much elevate non-heteronormative sexuality as he does non-normativity as a whole.

*Heteroglossia in the Novel and in Culture*

M. M. Bakhtin defines the novel as “a diversity of social speech types (sometimes even diversity of languages) and a diversity of individual voices, artistically organized” (261). A reader locates the style of a novel and its overall message in how it combines these subordinate voices. The language of a novel is really its specific combination of many different languages. Bakhtin theorizes the way that voices within the novel interact with one another and with the reader, arguing that:

The novel as a whole is a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice. In it the investigator is confronted with several heterogeneous stylistic unities, often located on different linguistic levels and subject to different stylistic controls. These heterogeneous stylistic unities, upon entering the novel, combine to form a structured artistic system, and are subordinated to the higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole, *a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it.* (261, emphasis mine)

This lack of stylistic unity in effect means that a novel always speaks many languages at once; it cannot be limited to a single dominant voice. The novel creates in its “language” then what Bakhtin calls *heteroglossia*.

Bakhtin uses heteroglossia to describe the “way of referring, in any utterance of any kind, to the peculiar interaction between the two fundamentals of all communication” (Holquist xix-xx). The first of these fundamentals is the largely fixed, unitary, and repeatable unitary system in which one expresses. In the context of a

novel, one finds this fundamental in the actual formal text and the language in which the author presents it. The second fundamental is the context in which the author presents the utterance, and as Michael Holquist notes in his introduction to Bakhtin's essays on heteroglossia and the novel: "this context can refract, add to, or, in some cases, even subtract from the amount and kind of meaning the utterance may be said to have when it is conceived only as a systematic manifestation independent of context" (xx). These two fundamentals always interact within any given utterance. Context always shapes an utterance, and without specific utterances communication remains impossible.

Further complicating the picture, any given utterance does not possess a purely inherent and objective meaning that exists beyond its context in part because language, "when it means, is somebody talking to somebody else" (Holquist xxi). One cannot perceive the language of a novel empirically because the novel in a sense speaks to the reader, who interprets what the novel says through the reader's own contextual lens. One finds the meaning of a novel in this unavoidable social discourse; as Bakhtin writes: "we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon" (259). As such, the conscientious reader should recognize that the supposition that a novel represents a single unified voice is flawed and overly-simplistic. The idea of a single voice being the "real" or "valid" voice is false. According to Bakhtin, a "unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited and at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (271). The novel cannot escape "the realities of heteroglossia" and must always be subject to context because of the plurality not only of the intended "meaning" at its source but at the received "meaning" created in interaction with a reader's perception.

Like novels, societies (particularly post-colonial ones) also exist in a hybrid state. Just as multiple languages make up the language of a novel, a multiplicity of cultures makes up a contemporary culture such as Ireland's. As Robert Parker (James M. Benson Professor of English at the University of Illinois) argues in *How to Interpret Literature*, today the borders between cultures are "porous transit points that sift and sort people as much as they separate them" and as such the cultures they inhabit are "hybrid and multiple" (281). Attempts to deny or destroy this hybridity frequently result in historical revisionism, oppression, and even genocide, as dominant forces try to silence subaltern voices and assert authoritarian control over the culture. Inevitably these attempts (see Bosnia, India, Israel, Ireland, etc.) fail, even after having inflicted irrevocable psychological damage and loss of life. In his thoughtful work *Literature, Partition and the Nation State*, Joe Cleary alludes to the real-world application of the more literary notion of heteroglossia, pointing to the illogic of both "sides" (i.e. nationalist/unionist) of a post-partition state like Ireland claiming to be the true inheritors of the traditions and boundaries of the pre-colonial territory, asserting that they "embody the best traditions of the older pre-partitioned unit" (19). The reality is expressed in the heterogeneity and polyvocality of society, not in one side "winning out" over another as the rightful inheritor of the nation.

### At Swim-Two-Birds

*At Swim-Two-Birds* masterfully illustrates and makes plain the realities of heteroglossia within its pages. In her article titled "Culture as Colloquy: Flann O'Brien's Postmodern Dialogue with Irish Tradition" Kim McMullen notes that O'Brien does more than simply try to set himself apart from his contemporary James Joyce: "to reduce *At-*

*Swim-Two-Bird's* [sic] flamboyant intertextuality to a struggle with a single literary father is to miss precisely those qualities that make it a pioneering postmodern postcolonial text" (62). This attention to heteroglossia – a persistent “violat[ion of] conventional frametale ontology...draws into intertextual colloquy texts framed by the discourses of various ranks and professions, shaped by multiple ideologies, and spanning pre-, post-, and colonial Irish history” (62). After achieving its independence from Britain, official public discourse began to diminish into monologism in Ireland (now without a direct foreign antagonist), and as McMullen posits, “This increasingly isolated, xenophobic, and essentialized Ireland was the narrow green field onto which Flann O’Brien’s generation emerged, the first to achieve adulthood in the Free State” (64). O’Brien’s work reflects a desire to “de-essentialize” Ireland and locate its voice within a plurality of voices that would otherwise be suppressed or coopted by cultural hegemonic controls.

Within the vast frametale (tale-within-a-tale) structure of *At Swim-Two-Birds* O’Brien frequently comments – often through his unnamed narrator – on the polyvocality of any given novel. He introduces the text in the very beginning by positing the inadequacy of a single linear beginning, trajectory, and ending for a novel: “One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one hundred times as many endings” (1). From here O’Brien remains keenly self-aware and continually reminds the reader of the artificiality of what transpires on the pages. When Conán requests that Finn tell of the Bull Raid of Cooley, Finn refuses; the text later overrides his wishes as the Táin is retold in a genre-bending romp of cowboys speaking a Dublin/Wild West dialect, six-shooters, slaveys, “Red



Indians,” and the villainous Red Kiersay doing “the Brian Boru” by praying in his tent when the plagiarized characters Slug and Shorty<sup>5</sup> come to exact vengeance. Even this farcical treatment of the epic Irish tale gets a further dose of satire as immediately after this section, O’Brien inserts into the text a press release describing the raid as little more than a nuisance: “Accused were described by Superintendent Clohessy as a gang of corner-boys whose horse-play in the streets was the curse of the Ringsend district” (57-8). The text even refers to itself directly at several points, once redirecting the reader to a previous passage: “Before proceeding further, the Reader is respectfully advised to refer to the Synopsis or Summary of the Argument on Page 59” (109).

O’Brien also uses his illustration of heteroglossia to satirize the efforts of the government of Ireland’s attempts to moderate and censor texts available to its citizenry. His narrator’s fictional author, Dermot Trellis, only reads “green” books: “All colours except green he regarded as symbols of evil and he confined his reading to books attired in green covers. Although a man of wide learning and culture, this arbitrary rule caused serious chasms in his erudition” (104). Finn exhibits a similar tendency to censor what stories are told, refusing to tell any of a satirical nature or that paint him or the Fianna in an unflattering light – calling them “evil for telling” – when requested to do so. In her *Unauthorized Versions: Irish Menippean Satire, 1919-1952*, José Lanfers (professor of English at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee) claims that this act of censorship mirrors the political reality of O’Brien’s day, in which “the minister for justice

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<sup>5</sup> Plundered by Trellis (not O’Brien) from the American cowboy books he reads.

of the Irish Free State, who in 1926 had set up the Committee of Enquiry on Evil Literature that would eventually lead to the Censorship Bill” (184).<sup>6</sup>

As Laners also notes, however, Finn places the blame for “evil” stories not on the stories themselves, but on the storyteller. Finn considers himself to be not only an Irish hero, but the prototype of “every hero since the crack of time,” whether “an Ulsterman, a Connachtman, [or] a Greek” (13). As such, when Finn derides storytellers by rhetorically asking, “Who but a book-poet would dishonour the God-big Finn for the sake of a gap-worded story?” he in effect sneers at the efforts of literary and cultural authors to take any ancient legend and attempt to make it serve their own ends (13). These attempts ignore the realities of heteroglossia by trying to divorce the original text from its multitude of voices and absorb it into an author’s artificial and unitary voice. Trellis serves as a pointed representative of these kinds of authors, and McMullen notes that “Trellis decontextualizes his borrowed characters from the complex system of cultural, ideological, and aesthetic relations within which they were inscribed in the prior text, effectively disengaging their utterances from their particular world view” (70). Finn makes his opinion of the foolishness and dishonor of such an endeavor clear.

O’Brien reiterates the same opinion by using Trellis’s characters against him in a (literal) literary court of law where the jury and judges are the very characters he has attempted to co-opt for his purposes. They judge him harshly for his manipulations of their characters and speech: The cowboy Willard Slug (whom Trellis has plagiarized

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<sup>6</sup> Adding weight to Laners’s argument, until the Fifth Amendment was approved in 1972, the Constitution of Ireland even included a controversial reference to the “special position of the Holy Catholic Apostolic and Roman Church as the guardian of the Faith.” Separation of church and state, as such, was not the political reality in O’Brien’s time.

from a competing author) testifies against Trellis that he forced Slug to speak in “guttersnipe dialect, at all times repugnant to the instincts of a gentleman” (215). At Furriskey’s “birth” he finds himself surprised at the sound of the language that proceeds from his mouth: “His voice startled him. It had the accent and intonation usually associated with the Dublin lower or working classes” (47).

The narrator notes earlier that “[t]he novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic” (19), and the characters together decide to punish Trellis by submitting him to the same kind of despotism to which they have been submitted under his authorship. They employ Orlick Trellis (the unnatural son of Trellis and one of his characters) to write Trellis into numerous torments. These torments reflect the torments of Sweeny (the deepest story within the frames, and actually a reasonable translation from the real ancient Irish text<sup>7</sup>), as first the cleric Moling and then his replacement, the Pooka, causes him to fly about, alight in trees, and suffer great physical trauma. Just as the cleric curses Sweeny and puts “a malediction on Sweeny by the uttering of a lay of eleven melodious stanzas” (64) that forces him to never rest nor cease from reciting poetry, the Pooka condemns Trellis to never cease from reciting “[h]oney-words in torment, a growing urbanity against the sad extremities of human woe” (193). McMullen posits that O’Brien’s parodic adaptation of the Madness of Sweeny and other epic tales is to question them and thereby prevent their misuse, but also serves to engage historical literary works in dialogue and introduce them to modern readers. She asserts that:

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Seamus Heaney’s *Sweeney Astray: A Version from the Irish* (1983).

*At Swim-Two-Birds's* parodies interrogate inherited narratives to forestall their ossification into crippling cultural stereotypes. Yet these parodic citations simultaneously refigure the past, by introducing the modern reader to a traditional text such as the *Silva Gadelica* or *Buile Suibhne* [sic] that might otherwise have remained unknown, untranslated, or passé. Moreover, it recontextualizes these narratives by bringing them into dialogue with the critical needs and conditions of the present. "Culture" thus becomes an on-going process, as the Irish past is engaged in continual, critical and self-conscious, colloquy. (77)

Much of O'Brien's satire targets the strong nationalistic and even jingoistic culture of the Irish government of his day. He works to undermine this jingoism in part by connecting his narrator with the broader world of English letters and world cultures. For example, the narrator has in his collection "works ranging from those of Mr. Joyce to the widely-read books of Mr. A. Huxley, the eminent English writer" (O'Brien 3). He receives letters from "*V. Wright, Wyvern Cottage, Newmarket, Suffolk*" (5) indicating his participation in gambling on horse races through an English bookie. European languages and literatures frequently make their way into the narrator's conversations: "My dim room rang with the iron of fine words and the names of great Russian masters were articulated with fastidious intonation. Witticisms were canvassed, depending for their utility on a knowledge of the French language as spoken in medieval times" (19). "*Die Harzreise*, a German book" (28) is the only text the narrator actively seeks out. O'Brien also inserts two excerpts from real world British texts (plagiarized by the narrator), which causes McMullen to note: "By including two texts of British origin in the

general Irish colloquy, *At Swim* pointedly acknowledges the lingering effects of British colonial rule, particularly in eighteenth-century traces” (72). These traces cannot be expunged administratively. Curiously, even the dialogue of the legendary figures of the text incorporates English and Anglicizations. In one instance, Conán tells Finn the descriptions of various persons addressing Conán and names each one twice – first in Gaelic, and then in Anglicized form: “Diarmuid O’Diveney of Ui bhFailghe...it is Brown Dermot of Galway....Caolcrotha Mac Morna from Sliabh Riabhach...it is Calecroe MacMorney from Baltinglass” (9-10). The Good Fairy expresses a familiarity with English poetry, noting that its recital is called “[v]erse-speaking...in London” (129) and more specifically alludes to non-Irish poets as masters of the craft: “Poetry is a thing I am very fond of, said the Good Fairy. I always make a point of following the works of Mr. Eliot and Mr. Lewis and Mr. Devlin. A good pome is a tonic” (127). O’Brien also relates a tale through Lamont describing the amazing (and distinctly “Irish”) jumping abilities of a certain sergeant who when accused of not knowing his own language, replies: “I do, says the sergeant, I know plenty of English” (89). Though the sergeant cannot speak the language expected of him at the apparent GAA function, he exhibits the ability to perform in a distinctly “Irish” way nonetheless.

O’Brien also paints the dominant culture’s resistance to anything English or otherwise foreign in a rather frivolous light. In one passage, the narrator and his friends mock English letters outright, stating that they “talked together in a polished manner, utilizing with frequency words from the French language, discussing the primacy of America and Ireland in contemporary letters and commenting on the inferior work produced by writers of the English nationality” (42), but the critique of the work of the

English is thinned by the drunkenness of the critics and by the narrator's quite real respect for and enjoyment of English letters. Later, the narrator's uncle's committee rejects the suggestion to include a waltz at the upcoming *ceilidhe*, for example, because of its foreignness, with one committee member stating that "I don't agree with the old-time waltz at all. Nothing wrong with it, of course, Mr. Connors, nothing actually wrong with it..." (143). The passive-aggressive phrase heavily implies that there is in fact something wrong with it – it is not "Irish" enough.

The characters of Lamont, Shanahan, and Furriskey allow O'Brien to simultaneously lampoon popular culture and Irish nationalism's heavy emphasis on the epic poetry it claimed as its heritage. After a lengthy recital from Finn, Shanahan states that: "You can't beat it, of course, said Shanahan with a reddening of the features, the real old stuff of the native land...But the man in the street, where does he come in? By God he doesn't come in at all as far as I can see" (76). The ancient lays have no real relevance to the common Irishman, even if they can be appreciated from an aesthetic standpoint. On the other hand, the popular poetry of "the working man" – like that of the fictional Jem Casey, the "poet of the pick" – is comprised of little more than pub jingles and drinking songs. O'Brien carefully chooses not to necessarily favor one or the other, but rather leaves the question open-ended – the reader senses that Finn's tales are somewhat irrelevant to his bored listeners, but also readily detects the shallowness of the pub poetry. O'Brien gives them both an audience and room to speak in *At Swim- Two-Birds*; as Jem and the other characters begin to nurse the injured Sweeny back to health, O'Brien writes that Jem's attentions are that of "a bard unthorning a fellow-bard" (135). Sweeny himself gives voice to a certain frustration with human communication

entirely, recalling in verse that “There was a time when I preferred / to the low converse of humans / the accents of the turtle-dove / fluttering about a pool” (94). While perhaps in light of the frustrations facing O’Brien one might imagine his own frustration, O’Brien also perceives the need for the dialogic “low converse of humans” and the illumination of tyranny in letters in the fight against oppressive cultural conservatism and historical revisionism.

### At Swim, Two Boys

*At Swim, Two Boys* does more than simply rewrite or contemporize O’Brien’s work, but the careful reader notes many similarities between the texts beyond the title. Some critics have made comparisons between O’Neill’s work and that of Wilde and even Joyce. In her essay “New Ireland/Hidden Ireland: Reading Recent Irish Fiction” Kim McMullen writes that:

MacMurrough’s arch witticisms clearly mimic Oscar [Wilde]’s at times, without the wild liberatory excesses of the original. Perhaps anyone traversing the overdetermined literary and political terrain of Dublin in the first two decades of the twentieth century must wrestle ghosts, but O’Neill’s derivative characterizations seem deliberately to evoke earlier texts, not with the parodic intention of subverting them, but seemingly to capitalize upon their familiarity. (133)

At times, O’Neill clearly imitates O’Brien’s catalogic and at times stream-of-consciousness style: “Curls of smoke from the cottages nearby. Keeping the home fires burning. Back inside the shop. Clink, it’s only me” (19). The style appears infrequently

but notably, as when the reader encounters “A priest. A young priest, black-suited, with a black felt hat, one hand stiffly in his jacket pocket, thumb hooked outside, the other holding a black breviary, finger keeping the page” (77), reminiscent of the cleric and his psalter who curses Sweeny in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. A later exchange between MacMurrough and Scrotes – one of his inner voices – utilizes grammatical structure and word choice that immediately calls to mind the “honeywords” and “colloquy” exchanged between O’Brien’s Pooka and the Good Fairy:

It was a grievous fault and they immediately set about its rectification....Injunctions detained them: *Gnosce teipsum; Cogita ut sis*. Nor did the utilitarian ethic of the greatest happiness of the greatest number escape their attention....*Tabulae rasae* – these were not omitted.  
(232)

Other references are more oblique – Mack at one point criticizes Jim for his relationship with Doyler, complaining about how he is “palling up with agitating corner boys” (112) – association with corner boys being one of the many vices that Orlick Trellis writes that his father Dermot Trellis has.

Misunderstandings and the inability to understand or speak another’s language abound in both texts, as well. In an interview by Marc C. Conner, O’Neill asserts that “[t]he rendering of voice and consciousness is complex and tightly connected to the novels’ major theme of coming-of-age within and against the tide of historical crisis” (66). In *At Swim, Two Boys*, O’Neill gives frequent examples of the complexity of voice and the frustrations inherent in heteroglossia. Mr. Mack frequently fails to understand



the world around him, misinterpreting words and symbols like Doyler's socialist badge: "What's this, the Red Hand of Ulster? The Doyles is never northern folk" (39). Mack, who has spent many pages lost in Dublin, eventually finds himself on "[t]he great wide splendid thoroughfare – O'Connell Street was you a Catholic, Sackville Street was you at all in the Protestant way (was it any wonder if a man went astray in this town?)" (491). MacMurrough, arguably the only real literary individual in the novel, enjoys such wordplay and confusion and amuses himself by responding to his neighbors' greetings with his own "Gomorrhah," secretly taunting them in their ignorance of his figurative relationship with Sodom (176).

O'Neill also pays homage to O'Brien's awareness of class differences located in dialect. Eveline MacMurrough is a Francophile and class elitist, noting with disdain the way the lower classes speak. The skivvy (a female household servant) that she has "barely begun to civilise" still exhibits a "peasant insistence on interrogative response" (20-1). Eveline cannot speak the Irish of Father Taylor – Éamon O'Táighléir, as he introduces himself – and fails to comprehend even his name ("unless she misheard, [he called himself] Father Amen O'Toiler, which sounded a sermon in itself" [22]), but she tactfully navigates his implications and replies with appropriately nationalistic gestures and comments, taking care to smile and nod when the priest appears to be seeking collusion. Class concerns also preoccupy Mack, who self-consciously asserts that he and his family are always "on the up, Jim, never forget it" (31). Mack is deeply ashamed of his son Gordon's dalliance with the servant Nancy, not because he detects immorality (a reality with which he will in fact later need to come to grips), but because of her low class: "Damn silly child. Holy show she made of his parade. Marching with

Gordie in the ranks to the troopship. Son of mine stepping out with a slavey. Where's the up in that?" (19). Due in part to this class consciousness and in part because of the social stigma that his son Jim's social rank in school as a "scholarship boy" creates, Mack requires Jim to address him as "Papa" rather than as "Da," in imitation of the wealthier boys at school.

Often, O'Neill directly alludes to the oppression of the British government in place before the Rising and war to come. In one example, the pro-Home Rule, anti-"Larkinite" (a reference to Irish socialist and trade union leader James "Big Jim" Larkin, founder of the Irish Labour Party) Mack wonders why the newspaper headlines are "full of British gallantry, but did British include Irish? Why wouldn't they be done with it and say Irish gallantry?" (45). More frequently though, he depicts the hegemony imposed culturally (and later politically) by Irish nationalism. In her subtly revolutionary conversations with Father Taylor, Eveline pretends to have heard the sermon he had given earlier, calling it "A magnificent blow for Ireland.' 'And for the Church.' 'And for the Church, of course.' 'The two are inseparable'" (98). Taylor's assertion of the inseparability of Church and State points to the hegemony-to-come. Taylor goes on to deride the "paganized society" and the "feminine follies" represented by English rule and culture, ironically highlighting not British oppression but the religious and patriarchal system of repression Taylor himself represents (99). The inability of Mack and others to speak or even correctly pronounce words in Irish increases for the reader the sense that the Gaelic/Catholic brand of nationalism will remain exclusive and fail to concede to the realities of heteroglossia. This failure to communicate flusters Mack and entertains his listeners: "The priest had insisted the commands should be gave in Gaelic and his poor

father could never get his tongue round the alien sounds. Quick march came out: Gum on my shawl! Right turn was: Arrest young piggy!” (194). The nationalistic forces misinterpret Mack himself, a loyalist veteran of the Second Boer War<sup>8</sup>, as a staunch leader of the movement. Talk on the street even designates him as the “General of the Fenians” (210). MacMurrough finds similar difficulties communicating when he alludes the continuation of cultural authoritarianism under new political leaders, but his aunt misses his point entirely, instead seizing upon MacMurrough’s perceived suggestion to paint the postboxes a patriotic green: “I just wonder is any of this going to change that. Or is it just repainting the postboxes?’ ‘Postboxes?’ she said. ‘Yes, green – an inspired idea”” (392). O’Neill’s characters frequently end up talking past one another, unable to really listen to the voices of other characters that fail to conform to their paradigm, leaving those characters effectively silenced.

Denis Flannery (Senior Lecturer in American Literature at the University of Leeds) writes in a review of *At Swim, Two Boys* that one of the great “pleasures and strengths of Irish writing over the last few years” has been “its excavation of lost and silenced voices” (2). O’Neill directly endeavors to participate in this kind of excavation in this novel. One of the first ways a reader detects this sort of excavation is through the attention O’Neill gives to the irreligious socialist component of Irish nationalism in the early twentieth century. O’Neill acquaints the reader with Doyler’s socialist leanings early on, as MacMurrough finds him with a book early on: “He takes up the cheap cardboard cover. ‘Socialism Made Easy, what? By Mr. James Connolly. You don’t want the polis catch you reading likes of that. No, nor the priests”” (47). The police

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<sup>8</sup> 1899-1902. The British Empire fought against the two Boer (Afrikaner) republics of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State in southern Africa; the war ended with the conversion of the Boer republics into British colonies.

represent the oppressive British state hegemonic apparatus, while the priests represent the oppressive religious and Irish nationalist hegemonic apparatus. Socialism runs counter to both forces. As O'Brien hints in his novel, the nationalist adoption and blending of Catholic morality and legendary Irish epic tales and "Celtic" cultural heritage disregards the needs and understanding of the proletariat:

I tell you, it's a conspiracy against the working man. If you're at hurling and you curse in English they send you off the field. But they won't teach you to curse in Irish. They think our native tongue is good for nothing but praying in. (89)

Even Mack gets caught up in the symbolism of socialism, getting blamed as an agitator for taking down posters he sees defaced. A constable – a servant of the hegemonic state apparatus – arrests Mack as he takes one down, and later explains to the sergeant: "'Posters,' said the constable. 'If you'll allow me to explain,' began Mr. Mack. 'Red-handed?' asked the sergeant....'Scarlet at it'" (95). The police use the socialist image of the "red hand" to label Mack as a troublemaker and enemy to the establishment.<sup>9</sup>

Doyler, though a member of the Citizen Army and willing to take up arms against the British government, expresses solidarity with his class brethren on the adjacent island. He claims that he "felt a great tearful love for the people of England that they'd defy everyone, their union bosses even, and come to the aid of their Irish fellows" (416).

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<sup>9</sup> Notably, the "red hand of Ulster" (seen before in-text on 39) remains a frequently-appearing loyalist symbol in Northern Irish murals and other imagery. In this case, O'Neill creates an irony by using the "red-handed" image – Mack might identify with the red hand as a loyalist symbol, but not as a socialist; he has been caught tearing down posters, but as usual his intentions are misinterpreted by those around him.

Doyler believes the socialist forces to be fighting for the “real” Irish people and considers the Irish Volunteers to be cowards and pawns. O’Neill has MacMurrough observe Doyler’s burdened mother in a “Mother Ireland” moment earlier as she carries the wash and her baby: “Her feet were the color of boots and her shawl was black, but her skirt beneath showed a rich red which surprised, though he could not say why.... her singing held the sadness of Ireland. . . . Yes, this is Ireland” (182). For O’Neill – or at least for MacMurrough – Mother Ireland becomes associated with the color red instead of green, and is literally mother to a socialist child. Later the reader observes her speaking Irish and advocating peace instead of war, unexpectedly contrasting her ideals with those of the Sinn Fein political movement:

“Sinn féin,” she said, “sinn féin anseo.” Her wish for peace had her resort to her Irish. We’re ourselves here: no quarrels. “Do you know, Ma, you’re the true Sinn Feiner. The right patriot for peace, you are.” (188)

Though he explores and gives voice to socialism, O’Neill primarily focuses on the voices silenced by the hegemony of heteronormative and largely religious cultural powers. He pays much attention to the “queer” (non-normative) components of society, components that bend gender roles, redefine physical and romantic relationships, and even recast the concept of Ireland as a nation overall. From early on, O’Neill works to deconstruct normative ideals of gender roles. Mack – otherwise typically a force for conservatism – knits stockings for the troops abroad in Europe, and he assents that “[k]nitting by rights is women’s work” (10). Kilts, meant to function as symbols of a Celtic cultural heritage, instead create something of a gender anxiety in the ranks of the boy flute band (MacMurrough laughingly calls this “The breached masculinity of the

unbreached" [224]) as they mock each other in their skirts. The kilts also generate a kind of eroticism for Jim and others, as he notes: "it was curious to be wearing a kilt, to be clothed and to feel undressed inside" (76). O'Neill uses Eveline MacMurrough, through her assertiveness and command, to push female gender boundaries as well. MacMurrough notes that she "had been raised to a type of honorary male" (224) in the ranks of the nationalists.

O'Neill continues to "queer" the conservative and normative narratives of the historical Ireland he portrays by using the love story between Doyler and Jim to posit a new conception of nation, one contrary to that espoused by the dominant voices of the novel's world. MacMurrough's inner voices note that Pearse's country is something beyond the popular poetic conceptions of a feminine Ireland: "Ah, said Scrotes, but which is his country? It is scarcely the tired old hag of the songs, nor yet the beautiful woman of the prophecies" (283). "But what is Ireland that you should want to fight for it?" MacMurrough asks Jim at one point (378), if it is not Mother Ireland or Cathleen ní Houlihan to fight for. Jim replies that his country – his Ireland – is Doyler. "I don't hate the English and I don't know do I love the Irish. But I love him. I'm sure of that now. And he's my country....I don't know but it's like we have a language together" (379). Jim's country is the country with which he can share a language, a language rooted in a "queer" love both emotional and physical.

Finally, O'Neill uses three key words to signify meaning on multiple layers. "Queer," "gay," and "straight" have ostensibly different meanings in the historical period in which they appear than they do in contemporary usage; however, O'Neill employs all three of these words frequently throughout his text to connote not only the historical

sense of the word, but also to allude to its contemporary meaning. “Are you straight?” asks Doyler of Jim – and in the historical sense he is, but the rest of the line hints that in the contemporary sense he is not: “‘Straight?’ repeated Jim. ‘Hold on to these a crack.’ He thrust the tulips into Jim’s hand and Jim watched astonished as he tore at a poster on a letter-box they were passing” (58). In answer to Jim’s question, Doyler enacts a traditional courtship move and displays his resistance to state hegemony simultaneously, conflating heteroglossia and queerness in terms of sexuality. The sexually abusive Brother Polycarp deridingly describes Jim and Doyler later as a homosexual couple from Greek literature. “I see Corydon awaits his Alexis again” he says to Jim (80).<sup>10</sup> Shortly after, Doyler again ironically asserts that they are “[s]traight as a rush, so we are” (82). O’Neill utilizes vocabulary that is faithful to its historical usage, but in the context of Jim and Doyler’s relationship this vocabulary resonates ironically with the reader. O’Neill in a sense “winks” at the reader and (in a standard post-modern move) points directly to the deconstructive work he performs in this text.

O’Neill continues to use his double-meaning vocabulary in contexts outside of the central love story, and by doing so adds another shade of meaning to words like “gay” and “queer.” As the city begins to anticipate the Easter Rising, Mack finds himself “among the gay citizenry of Dublin’s fair city,” “tipping his how-d’ye-dos like a native-born” (483). The citizenry cannot be understood as “gay” in a contemporary sense, as such, but O’Neill has already established the double-meaning of this kind of encoded vocabulary. The citizenry is gay not because it is homosexual, but because it is about to rise – the “real” Irish of Ireland, found in the queer and subaltern voices of society

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<sup>10</sup> A reference to Virgil’s *Eclogue II*, in which the shepherd Corydon falls in love with Alexis, another male servant.

rather than the artificial and oppressive British or Irish nationalist forces, are about to have a revolution. Mack sees the Irish tricolor as a “queer flag, in equal divisions, green white and orange” (490). O’Neill brings the “working man” and all the common people under this queer flag, and even includes the heroes of nationalism like Wolfe Tone: “In the summer of long ago he had heard of Wolfe Tone who gallantly and gay had gone about his deed” (514), Jim remembers at one point, and later finds himself in imitation of Tone as he participates in the combat in Dublin, observing the “trees up above and he saw flashes between of returning fire. He wanted to cheer. He was gallant and gay” (541). As McMullen helpfully observes about the text, O’Neill engages in a kind of revisionism by revisiting historic moments and figures: “At times...the narrative returns to the public ‘street of statues’ to revise key moments of national emergence...as a way of constructing a more heterogeneous notion of Irish history than has yet prevailed” (127). O’Neill seems to be saying that Ireland and Irishness cannot be found in the dominant political and cultural voices or in the ancient literature, but ultimately in love between individuals and a sense of heterogeneity and queerness that resists being subsumed into the dominant culture. O’Neill illuminates this conflation pointedly in the passage in which MacMurrough replies to a horrified inquisitor who asks him, “are you telling me you are an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort?” with the retort: “If you mean am I Irish, the answer is yes” (268).

### Chapter 1: Conclusion

*At Swim-Two-Birds* puts voices in conversation (the word “colloquy” appears frequently throughout the text) with one another to illuminate the heteroglossic voices that compose Irish society, contrary to the goals of linear traditions and artificial



histories. *At Swim, Two Boys* imitates this to an extent (though somewhat more covertly), but also uses some of the tools of the nationalists and other mythmakers to create a new sort of mythology – one in which the “gay” citizenry ultimately successfully rebels under the “queer” flag of Ireland, and will only later be suppressed into constrictive monochrome hetero-norms after the Civil War.

While O’Brien engages freely in satirizing dominant groups and depicts a plurality of voices informing Irish culture and thought, he chooses not to favor any particular voice over another or otherwise make claims about any one voice’s importance or special role. O’Neill’s own satirical treatment of monovocal nationalistic forces frequently mocks them and their work to “Gaelicize” the nation during its move towards independence. In line with contemporary nationalistic appropriations of Irish epics from the Ulster and Fenian Cycles and elsewhere, O’Brien’s Trellis tries to use Finn MacCool to serve as a character and symbol of piety and parental wisdom and fails entirely; the lusty old hero behaves true to his ancient legendary character and wholly against Trellis’s “wholesome” intentions for him. Interestingly, while O’Neill uses the socialist Doyler to show the failure of the GAA and other nationalistic structures – with their built-in Catholic morality – to relate to “the working man” (a topic O’Brien hits on, but with a lighter and more humorous touch), also reemploys the heroes of Ireland’s past for his own ideological ends. He gives Pearse some “screen time” and other players some mention (most frequently socialists like O’Connell and Larkin), but the off-screen Irish heroes of *At Swim, Two Boys* are Wolfe Tone, Roger Casement, and Oscar Wilde. Eveline MacMurrough worships Casement, an activist who would later be executed for treason and undermined by the distribution of the so-called Black Diaries, which reveal

Casement as a practicing homosexual. Anthony MacMurrough frequently alludes to Wilde's homosexuality and trials for "gross indecency" and himself idolizes and parallels the famous author and playwright to an extent. O'Neill resists making inaccurate suggestions about the sexuality of Tone –the famed nationalist Protestant co-opted by nationalist Catholics in-text – but by describing Tone as "gay" O'Neill brings him under his "queer" tricolor banner and includes him in his favored canon of Irish heroes (514; 490). O'Neill takes O'Brien's project a step further by continuing to celebrate heteroglossia's non-dominant voices (particularly the non-heteronormative ones, which are wholly absent from O'Brien's text).

O'Brien deftly and humorously illustrates Ireland's literary and cultural heteroglossia, illustrating the inability of any oppressive authorial force to completely unify a history or elevate a dominant voice over the plethora of voices composing the threads of society's fabric. As McMullen observes: "None of these discourses [that O'Brien presents] is privileged; none has the last word" (62). If O'Neill lacks anything in his approach to the heteroglossia illuminated in *At Swim-Two-Birds*, it is subtlety. O'Neill effectively conflates queerness with "real" Irishness (a multi-faceted identity, rather than only Catholic or only Irish-speaking, etc.). At times his language (saturated with "queer," "gay," and "straight" references) detracts from the narrative (which is itself an unexpected and as such poignant critique of normativity), but he still remains able to add more voices to O'Brien's colloquy without silencing others. While I find O'Neill's approach to be aesthetically flawed in part, both *At Swim-Two-Birds* and *At Swim, Two Boys* are excellent examples of both literary and cultural heteroglossia at work in Irish

literature and will continue to serve to undermine efforts to oversimplify or artificially unite Ireland's complex identity under one homogenous banner of "truth."

## **CHAPTER 2: Heteroglossia in Contemporary Palestinian Literature**

### *The Irish-Palestinian Connection*

The Irish experience and the Palestinian experience of colonialism, diaspora, and the search for identity contain many parallels. Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God* – a novel that portrays the end of the British mandate and the formation of the modern state of Israel in 1948 through the eyes of Yousif, a young Christian Arab – alludes to this connection:

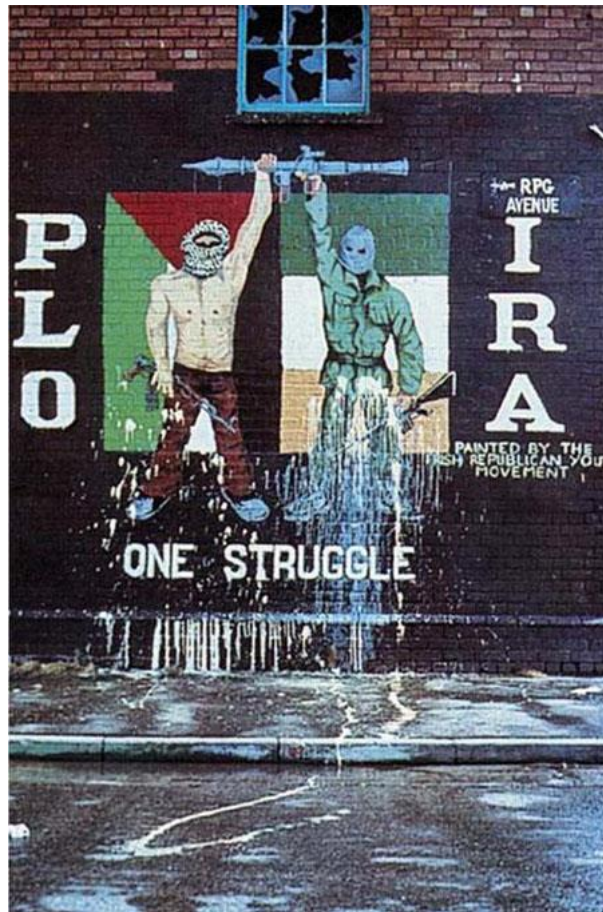
Just then two of Palestine's most famous athletes walked in. . . . They were an Arab and an Irishman: two of the country's best soccer players and also good friends, although they played on opposing teams. . . .

Yousif knew that George's popularity among the Arabs was due to more than his athletic prowess. An Irishman with a grudge of his own against the British, George was on the Arabs' side. Rumors had it that he had engaged in fist fights over his government's policy in Palestine. It was no secret that he had often disobeyed his superiors' orders not to mix with the natives. From the smiles and handshakes he saw, Yousif could tell how greatly the people in the cafe admired George. (174)

Fawal's work exhibits a strong nationalistic anti-Zionist (differentiated in the novel from anti-Jewish) and anti-British ideology. While this nationalistic voice plays its part in constructing the kind of cultural heteroglossia (in Palestinian terms) that I theorize earlier in this thesis concerning the Irish, I find this work most useful as a kind of "hinge" point between the Irish and Palestinian texts that I explore. Full accounts of the

histories of Ireland and Palestine are well beyond the scope of this limited thesis (though I have attempted to historicize when I have felt it necessary to do so).

However, a brief discussion of this Irish-Palestinian connection follows before I begin to delve into the actual literature of Palestine.



**Fig. 1.** A mural located on Beechmount Avenue in Belfast, Northern Ireland depicting solidarity between the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) and the IRA (Irish Republican Army), 1982. It was “paint-bombed by the British army within two days of being painted” (Rolston 23).

Source: <<http://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/plo-ira-one-struggle>>



**Fig. 2.** A mural found on Lower Falls Road in Belfast (2002). The English caption in the center reads, “Palestine... The largest concentration camp in the world!!! 3.3 million innocent people tortured, denied their... freedom!” Mirrored “V for victory” hands flank the mural, superimposed on the Palestinian flag (left) and the Irish (right). The Irish inscription reads, “Tiocfaidh ár lá!” (the Republican slogan meaning “Our day will come”).

Source: Tony Crowley, *Claremont Colleges Digital Library*.

In an online article for *Foreign Policy* titled “Why the Irish Support Palestine,” Rory Miller (professor in Middle East and Mediterranean Studies at King’s College London and author of *Ireland and the Palestine Question 1948-2004*) offers a succinct historical summary of the historical relationship between Ireland and Palestine, a relationship many might find surprising:

The Palestinian issue has long occupied a place in the Irish consciousness far greater than geographic, economic, or political considerations appear to merit. Perceived parallels with the Irish national experience, however, have inspired an emotional connection with Palestine that has inspired Irish activism in the region up to the present day. (Miller)

Miller goes on to discuss how the Irish first saw commonalities between themselves and the Zionist struggle for a land of their own, but then began to “switch sides” when they observed what they felt had become the actions of “a colony illegitimately established by British force of arms. . . intent on imposing itself on an indigenous population” (Miller). From this moment on, the people and government of Ireland continued to identify with and even champion the Palestinian cause in Europe. As Miller points out, in 1980 Ireland was the first member of the European Union to call for the establishment of a Palestinian state and in 2003, during the height of the Second Intifada (or “shaking off” – the second Palestinian uprising) Brian Cowen – then Ireland’s foreign minister and later its Taoiseach (Prime Minister) – visited Yasser Arafat. Regardless of the terror level and the lack of public “faith in Arafat’s capacity to lead the Palestinians to statehood” Miller claims that “Cowen spoke for many in Ireland when he described

Arafat as ‘the symbol of the hope of self-determination of the Palestinian people’ and praised him for his ‘outstanding work. . . tenacity and persistence’” (Miller). Even more recently, Irish politicians continue to vocally criticize the Israeli government for its treatment of the Palestinians.

In May of 2010 Aengus Ó Snodaigh, the international affairs and human rights spokesperson in the Dublin parliament for Sinn Fein (the IRA’s political wing), was “prevented by authorities from leaving Cyprus” to join a flotilla bound for the Gaza strip (Miller). According to *The New York Times*, this flotilla (one of many international flotillas launched in an attempt to break Israel and Egypt’s blockade of Gaza since its 2007 imposition) included the *Rachel Corrie*, which had been “named after an American activist killed in 2003 as she tried to prevent an Israeli bulldozer from razing a Palestinian home” (Bronner). Though Ó Snodaigh was prevented from joining the flotilla, the *Rachel Corrie*’s passengers did include Irish Nobel Peace laureate Mairead Maguire and Denis Halliday, a former UN Assistant Secretary General from Ireland. Regardless of the significant differences between the Irish and the Palestinians in terms of culture, geography, religion, etc., the Irish continue to identify and sympathize with the plight of the Palestinians and remain frequent participants in pro-Palestinian protest moves like the overtly political aid flotillas and in agitation for Palestinian rights to statehood and national determination.

Taking into account the historical and contemporary connections between Ireland and Palestine, I also argue that the literature of both peoples share similar projects and exhibit certain theoretical parallels, while also sharing significant cultural and political differences. Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/Postcolonialism* repeats Gayatri Spivak’s



question: “[C]an the voice of the subaltern be represented by the intellectual?” (231). I do not believe that any proposed textual excavation can yield the untainted “true voice” of the subaltern – after all, it is far too simplistic to try to posit the category of “the Irish” or “the Palestinians” as completely subaltern. Internal hegemonies within the “grand narratives” of Ireland/Palestine and Irish/Palestinian literature also work to suppress additional levels of subaltern voices. As Loomba writes, “in order to listen for subaltern voices we need to uncover the multiplicity of narratives that were hidden by the grand narratives, but we still need to think about how the former are woven together” (241). However, I do agree with Spivak that even in the face of inadequacy, it is the responsibility of the intellectual *to* represent the subaltern.

As I note earlier in this thesis, I am choosing to use Bakhtin’s unique approach to the voices within a novel (a kind of polyvocality “multiform in style and variform in speech and voice” [261] that he terms “heteroglossia”) to theorize the voices within a people (in this thesis expressed through various stories and novels). In a similar way to Bakhtin’s understanding that these voices “are subordinated to a higher stylistic unity of the work as a whole,” I argue that the various cultural voices embedded within the culture’s literature in turn create “a unity that cannot be identified with any single one of the unities subordinated to it” (262). By continuing to look at Palestinian literature and literature about Palestine through the lens of this heteroglossia, I hope to at least begin to shed light on the ways subaltern voices in this literature (voices that go beyond “pro-Israeli” or “pro-Palestinian”) may be heard and examine some of the hegemonic forces (restriction of movement, alienation, militant nationalism, etc.) that work to keep them silent.

The greater bulk of my analysis considers *Gate of the Sun*, a novel by Lebanese writer and activist Elias Khoury. Khoury – while not ethnically Palestinian as such<sup>11</sup> – draws from his deep experience with the Palestinian diaspora, the Lebanese civil war, and the ongoing political and social disputes surrounding the “Palestine question” to craft a novel told from the point of view of Khalil, a Palestinian “doctor” who works in the Shatila refugee camp on the outskirts of Beirut. Khalil addresses his sprawling, cyclical narrative to the comatose Yunes, whom Khalil cares for in the temporary hospital. As Khalil speaks, he takes on the personae and stories of dozens of friends, acquaintances, and strangers, telling their stories as though telling his own. Through Khalil’s (re)generative act of narration, Khoury is able to tell a story that acknowledges the constraints of linear storytelling and pushes against them. The reader knows that Khalil’s story is biased, incomplete, and at times suspect, but Khalil himself acknowledges all these things and tells not only his own stories but also stories he cannot possibly know from a strictly empirical standpoint. As I will explore below, Khoury establishes Khalil as a multi-tongued, polyvocal character, able to speak for dozens of other individuals (or perhaps they speak through him), which proves insightful for continuing the discussion of heteroglossia.

In a move made partly to connect his text with the classic Arabian literary tradition, Khoury adopts a rhetorical style mirroring *One Thousand and One Nights*: Khalil functions in as Scheherazade, telling embedded narratives “from the beginning”

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<sup>11</sup> In contemporary Western thinking, one may be tempted to assume that nationalistic identities are long-standing and sharply distinct from one another. However, the states making up the modern Middle East were for the most part created more or less artificially by the French and British governments following the dismantling of the Ottoman Empire after World War I. While the Lebanese and Palestinians (and Syrians, Iraqis, Jordanians, Saudis, etc.) are now separate and individualized peoples with different experiences and recent histories, they draw upon a shared Arab heritage and have diverged only recently relative to their ancient shared history. For further reading, see Goldschmidt and Davidson.

over and over again, frequently getting diverted from his initial task before beginning his task anew. At a superficial level, Khalil differs from Scheherazade in that he ostensibly tells stories to Yunes in order to keep his father figure alive and to wake him from his coma, but the reader comes to find that Khalil also uses his unending storytelling as a safety and escape from his own peril (he dreads the vengeance of his lover Shams's family, who may believe Khalil to be responsible for her murder). By employing the frame story narrative to allow a multitude of voices to "speak" through Khalil, Khoury creates a text that poignantly illustrates the kind of cultural heteroglossia I argue for in the first chapter and provides a medium through which variant and subaltern voices may be heard. Although Khoury draws upon a different pool of tradition than does Flann O'Brien, the net effect of this particular aspect of *Gate of the Sun* resonates with O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*. Both novels individually present a glut of stories and perspectives that contradict, play off, and enhance each other within their respective texts. Both novels work to show the inadequacy of a single narrative, the dishonesty of one loud claim to "truth" in story or history, and both exhibit a kind of humility in that both problematize oversimplification but neither offer a formulaic "solution" to the perceived problems of internal societal disunity. Instead, they help to illuminate contrasting and subaltern voices within the national dialogue and undermine notions of monovocal unity.

In order to more closely examine heteroglossia in the context of Palestine's literature (by seeking out and weighing other textual "voices"), I supplement my close reading of *Gate of the Sun* with passages primarily selected from the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti's autobiographical *I Saw Ramallah*, Emile Habiby's classic comedy *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist*, and Rula Jebreal's *Miral*, in addition to

occasional consultation of other primary sources. I rely on the theoretical work of several thinkers and writers to inform my own analysis, drawing heavily from Arjun Appadurai's seminal essay "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy," Valorie Thomas's "The Break," Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, and Ania Loomba's collection of key postcolonial thought *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, and useful passages from others as well.

### Heteroglossia and Diaspora

Bakhtin, as Holquist notes, senses the "immense plurality of experience" that leads to the expression of language within a novel; it is never "unitary, completely finished off, indubitably adequate language – it is represented precisely as a living mix of varied and opposing voices" (xxviii). Bakhtin calls this "living mix" heteroglossia. To foster an understanding of heteroglossia in a Palestinian context, attention must first be given to diaspora and its effect on a given population. While a discussion of diaspora applies to the experience of both the Irish and the Palestinians (as well as that of the Jews, black Africans, and others), I find it most useful here for considering Palestinian works because of the ongoing occupation of traditionally Palestinian Arab land. While an argument can be made that a similar situation exists in Northern Ireland today, the differences between the two are stark and should not be discounted. The greatest notable difference is that the Irish do in fact have a state (even though a very young one, relatively speaking), whereas most Palestinians live abroad in the diaspora or within the Occupied Territories inside the state of Israel (see figs. 2-4 below for more information on the physical and demographic development of this state).

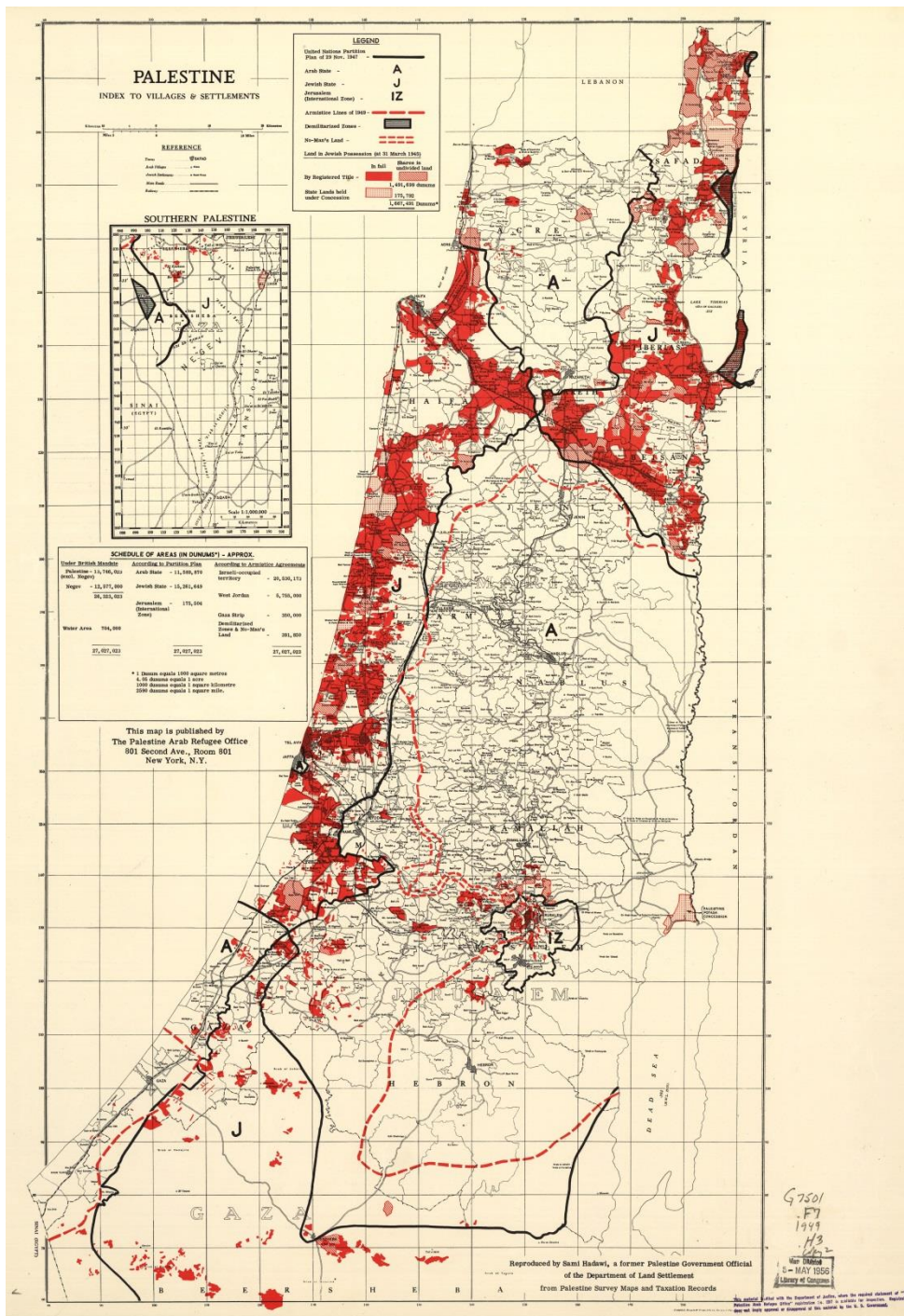
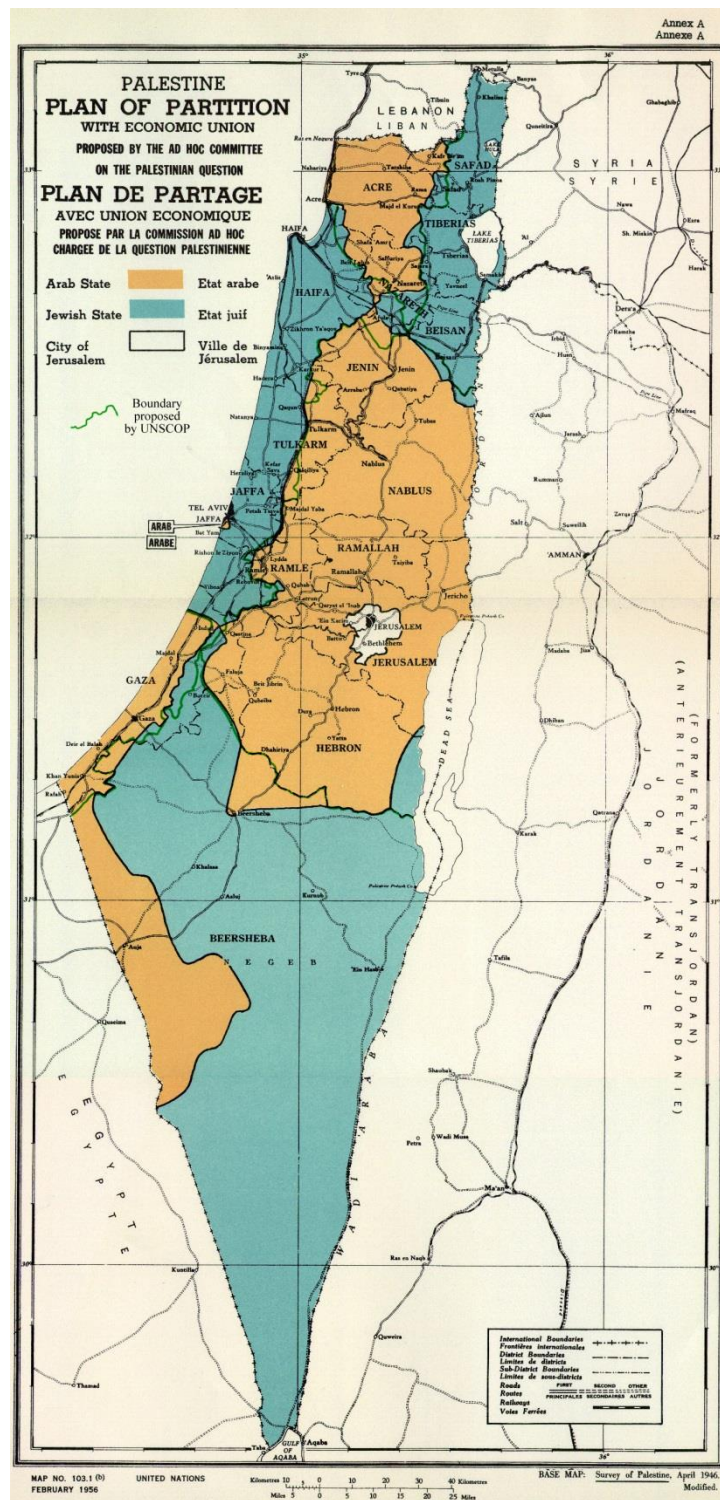


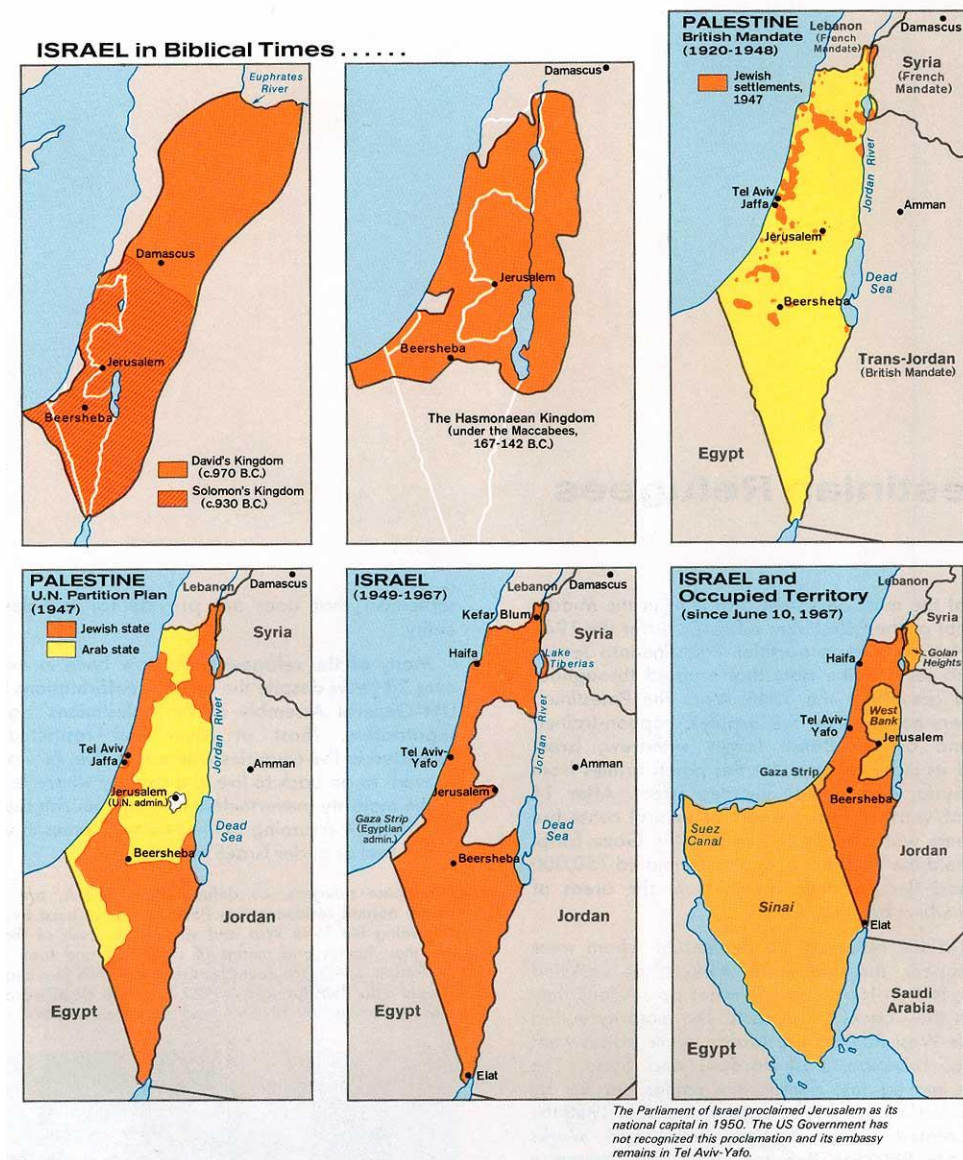
Fig. 3. A map showing Jewish-held lands (shaded) as of 31 March 1945.

Source: "Palestine: Index to Villages and Settlements." New York: Palestine Arab Refugee Office, 1949. Library of Congress.



**Fig. 4.** A map showing the 1947 United Nations Plan of Partition. The plan was rejected by the Arab leadership.

Source: "Palestine Plan of Partition with Economic Union." Map. New York: United Nations, 1956. *United Nations*.



**Fig. 5.** Six maps of ancient Israel and western Palestine. The bottom-center map shows the occupation of the Gaza strip by Egypt and the West Bank by Jordan. The bottom-right map shows Israel's occupation of the same areas in addition to the Sinai Peninsula following the Six Day War of 1967.

Source: *Issues in the Middle East*. Atlas. Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1973. *The University of Texas*.



Fig. 6. A map showing the modern state of Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank.

Source: United Nations (2004).



A diasporic community is made up of members that have been moved, one way or another, from their place of origin to another (usually to many others); a diaspora may be defined as any group that has been dispersed outside its traditional homeland, especially involuntarily. The reasons a significant portion of a population may have left their homeland vary widely, ranging from political or economic reasons to forced exile, but all diasporic communities have in common a fluid and dynamic relationship with the homeland and with the community's own self-identity. Gilroy argues that the diasporic condition moves and flows in frequently unpredictable ways, writing that

this diaspora multiplicity is a chaotic, living, disorganic formation. If it can be called a tradition at all, it is a tradition in ceaseless motion – a changing same that strives continually towards a state of self-realisation. (122)

For Gilroy, the diasporic condition is a condition of striving, “ceaseless motion.” To further understand this condition, I find it useful to explore Appadurai's theories of the flow and movement of people and ideas. Appadurai identifies five “dimensions of global cultural flow” to better theorize how diasporic communities – and world communities as a whole in a time of ever-increasing globalization – negotiate their worlds, positing: ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, finanscaples, and ideoscaples. Appadurai chooses to use these terms with a common suffix “scape” in order to “indicate. . . that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected very much” by the cultural, historical, linguistic, and political specifics of a given population (217). Briefly, “ethnoscaples” refer to the persons who actually make up the world; “mediascaples” refer to “narrative-based accounts of strips of reality” (whether privately or state-produced); “technoscaples” refer to the fluid, global configuration of technology; “finanscaples” refer to the “disposition of

global capital”; and “ideoscapes” refer to collections of images similar to mediascapes but are “often directly political and frequently have to do with the ideologies of states and the counter-ideologies” of competing movements (217-20). While all of Appadurai’s “scapes” deserve attention in considering how communities around the globe relate within themselves and with one another, his term “ethnoscape” is particularly helpful for theorizing diaspora. He defines an ethnoscape as:

[T]he landscape of persons who constitute the shifting world in which we live: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guestworkers and other moving groups and persons constitute an essential feature of the world, and appear to affect the politics of and between nations to a hitherto unprecedented degree. . . it is to say that the warp of these stabilities is everywhere shot through with the woof of human motion, as more persons and groups deal with the realities of having to move. (218)

Like Gilroy, Appadurai asserts that *motion* is key to understanding modern populations. While immigration as a whole certainly predates Appadurai’s notion of ethnoscapes, the meaning of Palestinian immigration in the modern globalizing world becomes more nuanced. In the case of Palestine, the ethnoscape consists in great part of Palestinian exiles and immigrants – a diasporic community that is at once enabled by modern technoscapes and mediascapes to combat its displacement through international politics and literature and also disabled by the ways in which Israel and other governments have actively sought to hinder the motion of Palestinians (especially in terms of finances and human bodies).

In his foreword to Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*, Edward Said points to a specific difficulty faced by those Palestinians living in diaspora, that of an inescapable loss of an identity rooted in the real, physical world:

Every Palestinian today is. . . in the unusual position of knowing that there was once a Palestine and yet seeing that place with a new name, people, and identity that deny Palestine altogether. A 'return' to Palestine is therefore an unusual, not to say urgently fraught, occurrence. (viii)

According to Said, all Palestinians (including those living within the boundaries of the state of Israel) must wrestle with the fact that their ideal conceptualization of "Palestine" is no longer in sync with physical reality, and their movement into and through Palestine remains obstructed. There remains some "flow" of Palestinians into and out of the Occupied Territories (the West Bank and Gaza), but that flow is impeded – movement is heavily restricted, regulated, and policed, frequently in the name of security. Ian Bickerton and Carla Klausner's *A History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict* discusses some of these impediments to human flow: "On the West Bank, Israel continued to expropriate Palestinian land, expand settlements, extend the security barrier<sup>12</sup>, and, increasingly, establish a dual road network that greatly complicated Palestinian travel" (371). In addition to these complications, the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces) also "periodically prohibited residents of Tulkarm, Nablus, and Jenin, now controlled by Hamas [Palestine's major militant Islamist party] local governments, from traveling unhindered from the northern parts of the West Bank to points southward" (371). Arthur

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<sup>12</sup> The Israeli government began construction on this wall or "security fence" in the early 2000s "as a barrier to terrorism" (Goldschmidt and Davidson 406).

Goldschmidt Jr. and Lawrence Davidson assert in their *A Concise History of the Middle East* that Israel “has imposed prolonged curfews on whole towns and placed hundreds of checkpoints and roadblocks that impeded commerce and travel for Arabs within the occupied territories” (406). The wall “created a physical barrier that divided West Bank cities and villages into virtual cantons” (407). In doing so, it gerrymandered neighborhoods and districts into frustrating and constraining regions. Goldschmidt and Davidson use strong language to describe this division, claiming that the wall “compressed 4.3 million Palestinians into ghettos with the world’s highest unemployment figures (25 percent in the West Bank and 45 percent in Gaza as of July 2010), few resources for development, and indefinite poverty” (407). They add a further note that fear and harassment serve as additional psychological barriers to movement: “Palestinians are often harassed, not only by Israel’s soldiers, but also by well-armed settlers” (407).

In Gaza, where Hamas took control after “mid-June [of 2007], after fierce and bitter fighting against Fatah [Hamas’s main political rival] soldiers, in which over fifty-five people died” (Bickerton and Klausner 378), Israel restricted the movement of Palestinians even more severely than it had been. Bickerton and Klausner write that after the 2000 Intifada, “In Gaza, hardship and distress resulted from the vicious cycle of terrorism and Israeli closures, which virtually sealed the borders and prevented Palestinians from reaching their jobs in Israel” (398). After Hamas’s victory over Fatah in Gaza, Israel and Egypt imposed the naval blockade discussed earlier.

Further complicating Palestinian mobility, the reactions of Arab governments surrounding Israel and Palestine towards Palestinian migration have been mixed.

Historically most of these reactions have been negative – tolerant at best and hostile at worst. Today, Palestinians now comprise over 66 percent of the Jordanian population, according to Bickerton and Klausner, having been given the option of citizenship. Refugees in Syria and other countries have also been extended means to integrate into their host countries. However, the refugees in Lebanon “have largely been confined to camps, and the Lebanese government has continued to be hostile to their presence, denying them citizenship and economic opportunity” (395).

A more in-depth discussion of the scope and dimensions of a truly global Palestinian diaspora lies beyond the scope of this thesis, but it bears noting that for Palestinians, their “motion” through countries (whether their own or others) continues to be stymied (by the Israeli government and by governments of international neighbors less- or unwilling to take in more of these displaced people). The lives of many Palestinians have been scattered, often over great physical and emotional spaces. Khoury’s Khalil narrates the experience of his father figure, Yunes: “All of a sudden, Yunes saw his life as scattered fragments – from Palestine to Lebanon, to Lebanon to Syria, from one prison to another” (395-6). In *I Saw Ramallah*, Barghouti narrates his own experience. He and a group of Palestinians taking part in an international symposium for NGOs in Geneva attempt to cross the border from France to Switzerland and are faced with the missing documents of Palestinian citizenship:

We collected [our passports] and gave them to [the policeman], and he saw an amazing sight: in his hands were passports from all over the world – Jordan, Syria, the United States, Algeria, and even Belize – and the names in all of them showed that their holders were from one family: all

Barghoutis. Add to that Radwa's Egyptian passport and Emil Habibi's Israeli passport. . . (138-9)

Palestinians in the diaspora may live as far abroad as Belize, but refugees also continue to live nearby and within the borders of the state of Israel. Bickerton and Klausner assert that "According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, about 2.4 million [refugees] live on the West Bank and about 1.5 million in the Gaza strip, although these figures vary widely in different sources" (395). In neighboring countries, an additional "estimated 1.4 million refugees are still in camps run by international UNRWA and other international agencies in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria (395). The diaspora of Palestine exists internationally – exiles, refugees, and immigrants scattered among the nations of the world – as well as within the bounds of Israel; countless Palestinians fled or were moved from their homes and villages after the cessation of the British Mandate and the birth of the Israeli state, and the encroachment of Jewish settlements into lands assigned to Palestinians remains an ongoing political issue and physical reality. As such, the Palestinian diaspora has a particularly "fraught" relationship with the homeland, not to mention with the current Israeli government and with its own internal territorial governments.

### *The Effects of Diaspora on Diasporic Populations*

One of the primary effects of diaspora is the diasporic community's construction of an "imagined world." The creation of a (heterogeneous) "imagined world" shared (variously) among the members of a diaspora in contrast with the "real world" in turn creates a field of possibilities. In *Gate of the Sun*, Palestinians in the Shatila refugee

camp create “imagined villages” from the scraps of story and videotape they have retained from their previous lives and from stories they manufacture on the spot:

The videocassettes circulate among the houses, and people sit around their television sets, they remember and tell stories. They tell stories about what they see, and out of the glimpses of the villages they build villages. (103)

Gilroy writes that the construction of these kinds of worlds arises from the diasporic community’s desire to remap and relocate itself, its “need to locate cultural or ethnic roots and then to use the idea of being in touch with them as a means to refigure the cartography of dispersal and exile” (112). These “imagined worlds” form through stories that displaced persons tell each other, to themselves, and to the world, and through even more complex relations between the “scapes” Appadurai theorizes. Appadurai explains that these “scapes” function psychologically as “the building blocks of...‘imagined worlds’, that is, the multiple worlds which are constituted by the historically situated imaginations of persons and groups spread around the globe” (218). In the case of Palestine, according to Appadurai, this tendency to create an “imagined world” gets amplified due to the distance between the diaspora and the homeland:

The lines between the ‘realistic’ and the fictional landscapes they see are blurred, so that the further away these audiences are from the direct experiences of metropolitan life, the more likely they are to construct ‘imagined worlds’ which are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects. (219)

In Mourid Barghouti's *I Saw Ramallah*, the Israeli government allows Barghouti to return to Palestine after thirty years of exile. His first view of the homeland immediately brings to the poet's mind how the notion of "Palestine" has become an "imagined world" for so many:

Now here I am looking at it: at the west bank of the Jordan River. This then is the 'Occupied Territory'? . . . Who would dare make it into an abstraction now that it has declared its physical self to the senses? It is no longer 'the beloved' in the poetry of resistance, or an item on a political party program, it is not an argument or a metaphor. It stretches before me, as touchable as a scorpion, a bird, a well; visible as a field of chalk, as the prints of shoes. (6)

Barghouti acknowledges that Palestine has become a rhetorical and poetic object – something abstract and in some ways liminal, neither a territory nor a deterritorialized object – something separate from the real, physical world that stretches out before him.

This idea of Palestine as a liminal object, something made up of borders, thresholds, and uncertainty, is an idea that connects well with concepts illuminated by writers like Valorie Thomas. In her article "The Break" (contained within *Black Cool*, a collection of essays that describe, theorize, celebrate, and criticize concepts of "cool" within the African-American community) Thomas theorizes the effects of the diasporic trauma. She adds a nuance to Appadurai's understanding of imagined worlds, claiming that the "motion intrinsic to diaspora means that imaginative horizons are perpetually shifting. . . . Psychological landscapes of diasporas are all borderland, composed of



thresholds upon thresholds” (57-8). The “imagined worlds” created by diasporic Palestinians carry a great deal of weight – these worlds go beyond fantasy and “chimera” and actually function psychologically as meaningfully, and sometimes more so, than the realities of the material world. This place of disjuncture, for Thomas, elicits a mentality of anxious possibility: “The break. . . sets a condition of vertigo in motion that tests mastery and movement in all directions at once” (48). Barghouti imagines the “break” in literary terms and points to the sense of incompleteness it creates: “all displacement is a semi-sentence, a semi-everything” (74) – the vertigo exists in an unsatisfying and incomplete state within the “break.”

Barghouti writes compellingly about his own experience with this disjuncture between psychic and material worlds. He no longer knows his own relationship with the homeland: “Here I am walking toward the land of the poem. A visitor? A refugee? A citizen? A guest? I do not know” (11). His identity is in flux because, as he claims, he is “always without a place” (87). Similarly, Saeed in Habiby’s *The Pessoptimist*, squeezed between two guards in a truck taking him to jail, experiences the disjuncture between the homeland of his imagination and the renamed and re-scaped physical world around him as he gazes upon the plain of Ibn Amir/the Yizrael Plain: “It was useless to search out the anemones that once filled that plain because, I realized, *there was no room for the memories of childhood* cramped in that narrow seat scarcely large enough for the three of us” (42, emphasis mine).

This painful “break” between the “imagined worlds” and the “real world” allows for one significant possibility, according to Gilroy, something that W. E. B. Du Bois theorized as “double consciousness.” Du Bois writes that double consciousness

“emerges from the unhappy symbiosis between three modes of thinking, being, and seeing. The first is racially particularistic, the second nationalistic. . . . The third is diasporic or hemispheric, sometimes global and occasionally universalist” (127). Ancestry, memory, and the “imagined” or metaphysical connection to the homeland create a kind of psychic link between the members of a diasporic community; as Du Bois writes: “these ancestors of mine have had a common history, have suffered a common disaster, and have one long memory. . . this heritage binds together not simply the children of Africa” but also the peoples of many nations, including Palestine (126). Certainly there are significant differences between the experience of African slavery and diaspora and the Palestinian experience, but one can locate parallel (though different) stories of trauma, disaster, and suffering. The suffering and unhappiness associated with the “break” and the formation of double consciousness in turn lead to a new sense of unity and identity, which can become a useful vantage point from which to critique the modern world and the mechanisms which led to the suffering in the first place. Gilroy explains this concept in this way:

What was initially felt to be a curse – the curse of homelessness or the curse of enforced exile – gets repossessed. It becomes affirmed and is reconstructed as the basis of a privileged standpoint from which certain useful and critical perceptions about the modern world become more likely. . . . I want to suggest that [this perspective]. . . represents a response to the successive displacements, migrations, and journeys (forced and otherwise) which have come to constitute these. . . cultures’ special conditions of existence. (111)

The curse of suffering, displacement, and exile can be repossessed, Gilroy argues, and this repossession in turn can lead to a kind of unity among the members of the diasporic population and enable the population to see the world more clearly and advocate for its change.

Barghouti points to this sense of unity through diaspora in his text. At first, it is the international community that initially unifies the Palestinians in diaspora rhetorically: “Israel allows in hundreds of elderly people and forbids hundreds of thousands of young people to return. And the world finds a name for us. They called us *naziheen*, the displaced ones” (3). Beyond the kind of unity this abjecting appellation from the outside bestows, however, the diasporic Palestinians generate their own flows of ideas and beliefs (through their mediascapes and ideoscapes) and form their own “imagined worlds” – imagined Palestines. One might argue that this posited “unity of imagination” is more idealistic than realistic in light of actual internal conflicts between Hamas and Fatah, whose imaginations of Palestine have largely been unreconciled over the past several decades. However, I would argue that the mentality that the Arabs (Palestinian or otherwise) of the Middle East are “doomed” to remain turbulent and disunified is a fatalistic and arrogant relic of Western imperialism. In order to look forward to a future without mandates, occupation, or oppression, we as an international community must work towards Palestinian self-determination with patience and hope rather than cynicism or racism.

*The Problem/Opportunity Diaspora Creates*

As argued earlier, the creation of an “imagined world” shared among the members of a diaspora in contrast with the “real world” in turns creates a field of possibilities. Thomas writes that “[e]verything is possible in the break” (51). The sense of unity within double consciousness to which Du Bois refers, according to Thomas, is a revolutionary force. The “break” – the space between worlds in this case – “activates double voicing, double vision. . . that challenge[s] the status quo” (Thomas 48). Thomas asserts that successful navigation of “the break” with grace and skill “can restore. . . the balance of reason, sanity, and gentle character that provides ‘critical focus’ for human action” (49).

However, Thomas also writes that what the mental experience of the “break” – what she calls “vertigo” – may be defined as “an epistemology of undifferentiated space that holds strategies for negotiating cultural trauma, disruption, dislocation, and hybridity in pointed resistance to colonial erasure” (51). The strategies for “pointed resistance” obviously may take many forms, including violent ones. As Barghouti notes of his own experience, “The displaced person becomes a stranger to his memories and so he tries to cling to them” (131). Habiby’s text also points to this psychological act of self-preservation. The doubly- (or multiply-) conscious Saeed (“As he gazed at me, I could see two Saeeds looking back at me in wonder: one insistent, the other scared” [39]) recalls a poem of Tawfiq Zayyad:

*I shall carve the name of every stolen plot*

*And where my village boundaries lay;*

*What homes exploded,*

*What trees uprooted, what tiny wild flowers crushed.*

*All this to remember. And I'll keep on carving  
 Each act of this my tragedy, each phase of the catastrophe,  
 All things, minor and major,  
 On an olive tree in the courtyard of my home. (22)*

Saeed then asks, “How long must he continue carving? How soon will these years of oblivion pass, effacing all our memories? When will the words carved on the olive tree be read?” (22). This “clinging” to memory – in effect, to the “imagined world” the displaced person creates in place of the physical Palestine – comes from an anxiety (here evident in Saeed’s questioning) that makes his or her relationship with the homeland more volatile. The jarring of identity in the “break” may lead to a thoughtful place of restoration, as Thomas argues, but it can also lead to depression and alienation. Barghouti recounts an Iraqi friend’s wedding, held in Budapest, and comments on its ironic sadness: “Some weddings in exile are extravagant and showy to an extreme degree, but I’tiqal’s wedding was a lesson in loneliness and in the feeling that you are small, with no people, no traditions, and no history” (150). I’tiqal (whose name means “internment”), as an Iraqi refugee, must celebrate her wedding to a Hungarian lawyer without her family’s presence; her friend Barghouti serves as the sole witness to the ceremony. A moment of traditional celebration and joy becomes a moment of melancholy awareness of the trauma of diaspora for the author – in this instance, not only the Palestinian diaspora, but a larger diaspora shared by several Arab peoples.

Alienation may lead to melancholy, but it can also lead to stronger emotional reactions. Appadurai aptly notes: “Deterritorialization. . . brings laboring populations

into the lower-class sectors and spaces of relatively wealthy societies, while sometimes *creating exaggerated and intensified senses of criticism or attachment to politics in the home state*" (221, emphasis mine). He goes on to say that as a result of deterritorialization, those in the diaspora clinging to memory and inventing new "imagined worlds" are susceptible to radicalization:

[T]hese invented homelands, which constitute the mediascapes of deterritorialized groups, can often become sufficiently fantastic and one-sided that they provide the material for new ideoscapes in which ethnic conflicts can begin to erupt. (221)

These ideoscapes, formed amidst the trauma of disjuncture, can become more and more entrenched. Barghouti examines the effect of displacement on the worldviews of writers like him who participate in a similar kind of diasporic experience. He claims that because of diaspora, the artist, separated from his land and traditional means of expression, may be incurably displaced:

Writing is a displacement, a displacement from the normal social contract. . . . The poet strives to escape from the dominant used language, to a language that speaks itself for the first time. . . . If a person is touched by poetry or art or literature in general, his soul throngs with these displacements and cannot be cured by anything, not even the homeland. He clings to his own way of receiving the world and his own way of transmitting it. (132-3)

A key lesson I pull from these texts is that the vertiginous and fecund realm of possibility within the “break” may well lead to a restoration of sanity, but the harder that displaced persons and communities cling to their memories and to their “own way of receiving the world” the more easily the “break” can lead to a hardening of ideologies and the eruption of conflict. It is here that intellectual work can do more than just analyze and summarize. By questioning no-compromise ideologies (especially such ideologies as the militant nationalism and racism of some factions of both Israeli and Palestinian society) and showing their inability to account for the internal pluralities of their respective societies, scholarly and activist endeavors (which to be effective must be made with Thomas’s “grace and skill”) can aid international and local efforts to support ideologies of peace.

Heteroglossia in Palestinian literature cannot be separated from the effect of diaspora on Palestinians, in great part because diaspora actually amplifies heteroglossia. While double consciousness generates a certain kind of unity of experience within diasporic communities, the chaotic nature of the “break” (and the countless possibilities for identity formation in its wake) creates a situation in which not only do the voices of the community compete for dominance (as is the case in every community), but they do so also in loud and noticeable ways. Of course, the question remains – who listens, and who notices? Barghouti asks:

Why should our story, our particular story deserve to be listened to by the world? And who listens to the stories of those men, women, and children who are taken by their displacement to that other shore from which no one ever returns? (160-1).

His question speaks to the primary concerns of the discussion of diaspora above: Diaspora creates a disjuncture and a state of identity vertigo in its members. This “break” is irreparable – no one returns from it, for the physical landscape has changed even if the imaginative landscape has not. The possibilities for forward motion are several: a member of a diasporic community can choose to abandon old affiliations and attempt to integrate into their new country (whether Israel, Lebanon, Canada, the United States, Egypt, etc.), or perhaps remain in a state of vertigo and despair of identification. They may also choose to unite with others in their diaspora, as suggested by the theoreticians discussed above, to form a new identity that can work against the forces of colonialism and occupation. The form that this resistance takes is also highly dynamic. Resistance is polyvocal and multidirectional, and need not take the fixed stance of nationalism or nativism. The acknowledgment of the possibilities of finding cultural heteroglossia within the “break” may lead to societies and policies that work against repressive hegemonies, replace rhetorical and physical elisions, and begin allowing subaltern voices – voices from “that other shore” – to be heard.

### Heteroglossia

In Salma Khadra Jayyusi’s foreword to Habiby’s *The Pessoptimist*, she points to the hegemonic force of authorship. A writer has the ability to pick and choose the stories to which he or she gives voice and the authority to suppress others deemed artistically unnecessary or undesirable for the narrative to progress:



The writer of fiction, moreover, has the prerogative of being able to focus on certain aspects of a human experience without being seen as willfully ‘suppressing’ other details. . . . What one is dealing with in literature is not only or necessarily the recounting of events in their normal sequence, but the description of their *effect* on the characters of a fictional mode. In art, one can only focus on what happens to the limited number of protagonists in the particular literary work. Art, like memory, is never exhaustive; it is selective. (xi)

As I have noted, any authorial attempt to claim that their narrative speaks completely and truly for an entire people fails to acknowledge the realities of heteroglossia. Within any given narrative, as Jayyusi usefully notes, the author selects and privileges certain voices and abjects and deprivileges others; because the author makes these selections for the sake of art, readers often do not see the author as “willfully suppressing” anything. In the formation of a *cultural* narrative (as opposed to the artistic narrative of a single novel, for example), however, suppression works to silence undesirable voices. To locate the non-dominant voices within a culture and theorize any kind of cultural unity, one must work to locate the suppressed and subaltern voices. Gilroy argues that the only way to successfully locate any kind of connectedness within the narrative of a people is to first learn to appreciate the “inner asymmetry and differentiation” within this narrative (120). What stories are being told, and which untold? Which voices are louder than others, and why? Loomba agrees with Gilroy, claiming that this asymmetrical relationship of stories and cultures within the larger narratives contain the voices that have been suppressed: “in order to listen for subaltern voices we need to

uncover the multiplicity of narratives that were hidden by the grand narratives” (241). Grand narratives are typically forgivable in art, but in real life they hide and silence the voices of the subaltern.

Of the works on Palestine that I consider for this thesis, *Gate of the Sun* most successfully shows how a single subjective narration of events fails to account for uncounted alternate versions. *Gate of the Sun* weaves a tapestry of lives together, telling the polyvocal story of Palestinian experience in the Galilean borderlands with sometimes-dizzying complexity. This story effectively illustrates some of the ways in which *heteroglossia* complicates linear narratives and exhibits the unique powers of speech and language in Palestinian culture. I add another dimension to the discussion of *Gate of the Sun* by consulting the text of Habiby’s *The Pessoptimist*. This text does not layer identities like Khoury’s novel, but it does provide some useful commentary on the power (or lack thereof) of both imagination and speaking the language of the Other and the role of silence.

Firstly, the reader may see heteroglossia in action through the way that Khoury establishes Khalil as a person capable of speaking with the voices of dozens of individuals. In an early discussion with Umm Hassan (who is deceased in the present of the novel), Khalil asks her what he should do about his friend and patient Yunes, and her response points to the role Khalil will take on in this novel of a kind of interpreter and vessel for the speech of others: “‘Do what he tells you,’ she answered. ‘But he doesn’t speak,’ I said. ‘Oh yes, he does,’ she said, ‘and it’s up to you to hear his voice.’ And I don’t hear it, I swear I don’t, but I’m stuck to this chair, and I talk and talk” (6-7). Khalil makes it his project to revive Yunes by telling him endless stories, including stories

about Yunes himself: “I know you’re sick of my stories, so I’m going to tell you your own” (15). Khalil takes on an incredible number of personae in order to tell stories of the many individuals composing fragments of Khalil’s, Yunes’s, and others’ pasts. Khalil alludes to his self-awareness of this extreme version of double consciousness, telling Yunes, “With you I’ve discovered many selves within myself, selves with whom I can maintain an eternal dialogue” (15). Interestingly, Khalil seems to believe that this sense of identity fission results from the trauma of war: “Everything came apart during the years of the civil war; even I was split into innumerable personae” (144). Khalil consciously puts on these personae at times in order to effectively tell a particular story. While actually adopting another individual’s life strikes the reader as an impossible task, Khalil attempts to do precisely this. It is only by imagining and reliving the lives of others that Khalil can tell a story that generates life, instead of repeating the cycle of fear and death. In a similar way, those working for peace must be able to tell a new story by (in a sense) hearing the voices from many directions and resisting the urge to censor those that are difficult or unpleasant to understand. I find the real value of heteroglossia in this act of reimagining and reliving – in order to tell his story, Khalil must tell the stories of others, even though he cannot do so perfectly.

Even though he frequently points out his own dishonesty and failure to speak completely and coherently, Khalil also can tell complex and personal tales with layers of understanding that surpass those of a natural storyteller. At one point Khalil claims that in order to stay alive, he “would imitate [literature’s] heroes and would speak their language” (148), and believes himself to have a great deal in common with Hamlet – both, he reasons, live in a rotten state and Khalil also predicts that he will go mad like

Hamlet does (52). However, Khalil does not imitate his characters, he *becomes* them: “Let’s suppose now that I’m her son, by whose name she used to call me. I’m her son, and I’ll tell you the story” (307). To a degree reminiscent of *At Swim-Two-Birds* the layers of identity stack and overlap until one cannot know who tells whose tale. Khoury tells the story of Khalil, who tells Yunes the story of Khalil, who tells Catherine the story of Jamal, who tells the story of his life to Khalil, and by the time Khalil finishes the story even he knows his own identity has become malleable and uncertain: “The man who told the story of Jamal the Libyan wasn’t me. It was a man who resembled me” (429). This (at times anxious) malleability is the promising possibility of the “break.” Within this space – where amorphous identities are no longer hardened but instead potential and sympathetic – one can work to “restore. . . the balance of reason, sanity, and gentle character that provides ‘critical focus’ for human action” (Thomas 49).

Of course, this uncertainty can discomfort and disorient its participants. At times Khalil’s personalities shift at speeds disorienting to the reader. In one instance, Khalil begins to relate one story, but before he makes any headway, begins yet another:

Listen then to the story of another hero, a mixture of you and your father, a hero who didn’t fight. A man from a village called Mi’ar. It’s close to your new village. His name was Rakan Abboud. When Mi’ar fell, after the rest of his family had gone, the man refused to leave his village and stayed on with his wife. This is what Nadia told me. Do you know Nadia? (218)

The literary strategy mimics the ceaseless “beginnings” (embedded in the tales-within-tales structure) of *One Thousand and One Nights*, but there is a key

difference. Both Scheherazade and Khalil engage in myth creation and dispensing folklore, but while Scheherazade's storytelling effectively cures the king "of his hatred of women, teaches him to love, and by doing so saves her own life" (Haddawy x), Khoury uses Khalil to cobble together his fragmentary and supposedly factual tales to try to save not only Yunes's life and his own, but also to assemble a sprawling and multitudinous chorus of the voices of Palestine. Khalil occupies a unique location in *Gate of the Sun* as the frame story's narrator, but other characters (albeit through Khalil's narration) also take part in this identity generation. Nuha consumes fragments of the stories of others until they become a part of her own identity: "Nuha said she'd pieced the story of their return together from scraps of stories. She could picture the scene as though she were remembering it herself" (202). Umm Hassan and Khalil psychically explore "imagined worlds" that exist only in memory and fantasy together, though Khalil's "memory" is actually that of another man and Umm Hassan's memory apparently contains flaws:

And after about twenty years, along comes Umm Hassan and tells me the same story, which makes me see the man's words as though I'd actually been there. I see the village square and its narrow streets, and I follow the words of Umm Hassan in my memory, interrupting her to say, "No. The Bubbler isn't near the mosque, Umm Hassan. The Bubbler's near the orchards." She'd respond: "How foolish I am! I'm getting al-Ghabsiyyeh mixed up with al-Kweikat." (321)

Khalil and his characters engage in continuous acts of creation and regeneration through story and remembering – Appadurai’s “imagined worlds” and the building thereof on full display.

Similarly to Khalil, Saeed, while a coward and a “fool” of sorts, seemingly possesses a special (relative) mobility in Israel because of a *literal* mastery of tongues in *The Pessoptimist*. Gilroy points to this ability to speak in different tongues and dialects as a frequent tool of escape or progress for the individual in diaspora, noting that “[Frederick] Douglass. . . escaped from bondage disguised as a sailor and put this success down to his ability to ‘talk sailor like an old salt’” (13). Saeed has some limited success in this vein: while being beaten as his bosses cart him off to jail, Saeed appeals to his captors in their language: “when they pounced on me and began kicking and beating me, I yelled, ‘Help! Help, O, big man!’ I pronounced this phrase in high Hebrew to convince them of my status and to get them to stop. The van did stop” (123). Now moved to the van’s front seat, Saeed first causes his boss’s displeasure by failing to navigate languages correctly, missing the renaming of their location: “‘Oh, I see we’re in the plain of Ibn Amir.’ Obviously annoyed, he corrected me: ‘No, it’s the Yizrael plain!’” (123-4). This kind of renaming that which has already been renamed could arguably be seen as a kind of reclamation, but Saeed’s words are not enough to actually effect any kind of change in the reality of the situation or the thinking of the big man, and at this point in the narrative Saeed himself is a far cry from any kind of revolutionary. Saeed also alludes to the similar efforts of other Palestinians in his society, many of whom adopt languages or even different names for business reasons:

And don't forget Shlomo in one of Tel Aviv's very best hotels. Isn't he really Sulaiman, son of Munirah, from our own quarter? And "dudi," isn't he really Mahmud? "Moshe," too; isn't his proper name Musa, son of Abdel Massih? How could they earn a living in a hotel, restaurant, or filling station without help from their Oriental imagination...? (101).

Unfortunately for Saeed, at times his languages and his "Oriental imagination" fail him and those around him cannot understand his words at all: "How often I yelled at those about me, 'Please, everyone! . . . Please help me!' But all that came from beneath my moustache was a meowing sound, like that of a cat" (76). At other times, even when those around him understand Saeed, they misinterpret his intentions and punish him. When Saeed attempts to soothe his boss's ire by quoting Shakespeare in English, he only makes his problem worse: "I noticed that the big man was growling ominously under his breath. Had I known what this implied, I'd have been better off keeping my knowledge of Shakespeare within my heart" (124). Significantly, Habiby's text makes clear that simply being able to speak many languages, including the imperialist's English and the occupier's Hebrew, cannot result in real mobility and equality for Saeed. He remains Palestinian, which is to say, in the conversation of power and agency in *The Pessoptimist*, silent. The angelic beings Saeed encounters imply that this silence in fact is one adopted in order to survive. One (apparently projecting the critical voice of Habiby) tells Saeed that his failure to speak is like that of a displaced poet's. The angel seems to criticize the cowardice of the poet-in-absentia, comparing the poet's lack of efficacy to Saeed's own: "You each. . . suppress your words in order not to perish. Many adopt literature [because] they lack power for

anything more, while others avoid taking a stand by moving abroad” (77). Saeed must beg that another – the book’s anonymous narrator – tell his story: “In his letter to me, Saeed, the ill-fated Pessoptimist, pleaded. ‘Please tell my story’” (3). It is finally only through the divine intervention of mysterious extraterrestrials and the narrator’s willingness to allow Saeed to speak through them vicariously that Saeed has a voice at all; his own efforts to enhance his ability to speak so that the dominant forces can hear him fall flat. Silence features in *Gate of the Sun* as well, signifying that when no one listens, words become irrelevant: “The blind sheikh told his wife that words had lost their meaning, so he had decided to be silent. From day to day, he withdrew deeper into his silence, which was broken only by his morning mutterings while he’d recite Koranic verses” (78). For Habiby, as a village elder later makes clear, the language of the subaltern in Palestinian society may be found only by listening to the silences: “Our language is that of silence. We inherit it. . . . It is up to our friends, therefore, to learn to speak our language, that of the earth, of the animals, and of the plow – a determined silence” (146-7).

### *Heteroglossia and the Other*

I would like to consider one final point worthy of discussion concerning the many voices of the literature of Palestine. I contend that by taking several of the texts examined here and looking at them as a whole, the works speak to, against, and around another and work to expand the idea of what a true Palestinian voice might be. Arguably few of the character or narrative voices one encounters within the texts can be considered truly “subaltern,” but I find it useful to analyze them and try to listen for not only what the voices are saying, but what there are not, and by doing so attempt to



illuminate some of the tones heard outside of the mainstream. As with most literature, in these works there is almost always a dark, unknowable Other. While a text may veer away from some of the hegemonic forces of nationalism and embrace the plurality of Palestinian identity, it may also engage in classic nationalistic rhetoric. The Palestinian voices encountered in the texts analyzed in this paper are colorful and varied, but they are united in their opposition to the Other – the Israeli/Zionist/Jew. In an interview with Israel's *Yedioth Ahronoth* newspaper, Khoury states that one of his goals in writing *Gate of the Sun* was to illustrate not only the complexities of the Palestinian “side,” but also that of the Israeli “side”:

[W]hen I was working on this book, I discovered that the ‘other’ is the mirror of the ‘I.’ And given that I am writing about half a century of Palestinian experience, it is impossible to read this experience otherwise than in the mirror of the Israeli ‘other.’ Therefore, when I was writing this novel, I have put a lot of effort into trying to take apart not only the Palestinian stereotype but also the Israeli stereotype as it appears in Arab literature and especially in the Palestinian literature of Ghassan Kanafani, for example, or even of Emil Habibi. The Israeli is not only the policeman or the occupier, he is the ‘other,’ who also has a human experience, and we need to read this experience. Our reading of their experience is a mirror to our reading of the Palestinian experience. (“Struggle for Life, Not for Death”)

The Israelis of Kanafani's *Men in the Sun* are largely distant and faceless (in a literal and in a Levinasian sense)<sup>13</sup>. Characters (and by extension readers) feel their oppressive presence, but almost never encounter an actual Israeli individual except perhaps in passing, as when a character bursts into a "house occupied by a Jewish family" and frightens them in "The Land of Sad Oranges" (77). Habiby's Israelis, similarly, are monochromatic and literally uniformed and "thick-thighed" jailers that viciously beat Saeed in prison and nameless soldiers that hunt down his son Walaa.

However, Loomba argues that "there is no neat binary opposition between the coloniser and the colonised, both are caught up in the complex reciprocity and colonial subjects can negotiate the cracks of dominant discourses in a variety of ways" (232). Khoury complicates the picture and begins collapsing this "neat binary" by introducing a variety of Israeli characters, some of whom – like the general – more or less conform to stereotypical depictions of Israelis, but also others that defy the stereotypes and work to trouble simplistic "us versus them" dichotomies. Catherine is a French actress who seeks from Khalil better understanding of the lives of Palestinians for her art's sake. She asks Khalil about a book she has read concerning nine Jewish women who died during Operation Iron Brain (Moah Barzel), the massacre at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps carried out by Christian Lebanese militias (and permitted by Ariel Sharon's forces) in 1982, and Khalil responds with another tale. Khalil narrates the story of Jamal "the Libyan" Salim, whose mother was secretly a "German Jewess" named Sarah Rimsky who fell in love with a Palestinian (435). Jamal's mother tells her own story of how she learned to speak Arabic with a Gaza accent and lived as Muslim

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<sup>13</sup> Butler discusses Levinas's theory of ethics based on perceiving the "face" – not the literal face, *per se*, but something in the Other that conveys the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." See Butler 128-51.

Arab woman, and how she survived assassination attempts from her own family. Jamal then goes on to contact his maternal uncle Elie – a colonel in the Israeli army – to propose a family meeting, but the colonel refuses:

He said he didn't want to see his sister, had no interest in any family meeting, that it was up to us Palestinians to assimilate within the Arab countries. . . and that he didn't understand our insistence on living in the refugee camps, which had come to resemble Jewish ghettos. (439)

Sarah's life – one perhaps similar to Catherine's "nine Jewish women" – embodies a story seldom heard in the black-and-white dichotomies presented in either Palestinian or Israeli nationalist discourse. Loomba writes that "nations are communities created not simply by forging certain bonds but by fracturing or disallowing others; not merely by invoking and remembering certain versions of the past, but making sure that others are forgotten or repressed" (202), arguing that nationalism in any form (Palestinian, Israeli, or other) employs hegemonies that work to silence the voice of the subaltern. Khoury's presentation of these forgotten or repressed stories, like those of Sarah Rimsky and of the Jewish women slain during Operation Iron Brain, push back against the forces of nationalist hegemonies.

Similarly, Jebreal presents a Palestine in shades of grey. While the female protagonists of *Miral* share a Palestinian ethnic background, their individual ideologies contrast and shift over time. The relationship between Fatima and Israelis fits into a nationalistic mold. As she explains to Nadia, "I didn't think of them as men anymore. . . . I saw them as soldiers. They symbolized the injustice that was being inflicted on us"

(73). Nadia's hatred and rage, on the other hand, had been directed at her stepfather Nimer – "a precise individual, one she knew well and who had robbed her of childhood" (73). One of the ways in which Nadia processes her own childhood trauma (and to tell herself that she has overcome it) is to develop a romantic relationship with the Moroccan Jew Yossi, the owner of the nightclub in which she dances. When Yossi proposes to her, Nadia flees, and soon forgets about him. Nadia rarely considers her ethnicity or the conflicts surrounding her world, until someone else's racist remark forces her to do so. After the jealous girlfriend of another Israeli ("with whom, not long before, she'd had a brief fling" [82]) calls Nadia an "Arab whore," Nadia attacks the young woman and later considers her situation as a Palestinian in her jail cell, "Maybe Fatima is right when she says that no one can be free if her own people are not. No Arab is free in this country" (84). Nadia's daughter, Miral, grows up acutely aware of her second-class citizenship as a Palestinian in Israel, and at first heads down a path that begins to emulate Fatima's violent and nationalistic one, until Hind sends her to Haifa for protection. In Haifa, a friendship grows between Miral and an Israeli girl named Lisa. Through Lisa, the charismatic and sensual daughter of an Israeli general, Miral learns about different kinds of Israelis than the ones she has grown up hating, and through Miral, Lisa learns that the country she has learned about is darker and more complex than she had known. After a visit with Miral to Ramallah, she struggles with the implications of the city's revelations: "She repeated to herself over and over, 'How can places like this exist? This can't be my country'" (260). Notably, unlike Khoury, Jebreal successfully avoids any stereotypical "Romeo and Juliet"-style unification of the Palestinian Montagues and Israeli Capulets – the romances between Yossi and Nadia

and between Samer and Lisa fail, but the friendship between Miral and Lisa creates a bridge for understanding that falls outside of the usual hetero-normative “love conquers all” narrative.

In *Precarious Life*, Judith Butler’s collection of essays on post-9/11 America, perpetual war, mourning, and Levinas, Butler states that images of the Palestinians and Israelis often go oversimplified and unexamined: “So many important distinctions are elided by the mainstream press when it assumes that there are only two positions on the Middle East, and that they can be adequately described by the terms ‘pro-Israel’ and ‘pro-Palestinian’” (122). No truly honest portrayal (whether in the “press” or in any other media) can make these elisions; Khoury and Jebreal attempt to show how when the complexities of human realities “on the ground” in Palestine are elided, so too are countless individuals. Their voices are abjected because they trouble the hegemonies of competing nationalistic projects.

### Chapter 2: Conclusion

The above analysis can really only begin to scratch the surface in terms of the treasure trove of Palestinian literature, but I do believe that it effectively shows how significant elements of Bakhtin’s theory of heteroglossia appear in these texts. The significance of this appearance, as I have attempted to show, goes beyond mere “playing with words” and academic theorizing; such theorizing is its own kind of “imagined world” divorced from the lived realities of a modern world rife with repression and violence. I have examined how diaspora (a state of displacement and disjuncture affecting millions around the globe to significant and various degrees) creates what

Thomas terms a “break” in individual and community consciousness, which in turn leads to the generation of “imagined worlds” within the widely diverse ethnoscape. It is within this creative place of possibility that one can most easily begin to plumb the depths of the heteroglossia of not only the novel of Bakhtin’s model, but that of the community itself. By considering the literature of the Palestinian diaspora, one can better listen for the voices of the subaltern. As even some of the passages addressed in this thesis show, some Palestinian literature responds to the “break” by engaging in militancy or other loaded rhetoric, but some (like *Gate of the Sun*) respond by questioning, exploring, and listening. By working to expose these voices, one engages not only in a desirable social morality, but can more effectively work towards real-world political solutions. The topic of how best to politically address the current political and territorial situation in Israel and Palestine cannot be discussed at any practical length in this document. However, it is my hope that this thesis, by drawing attention to the real multiplicity of lives and voices in Palestine, may add momentum to the movement towards unity over divisiveness, understanding over rhetoric, and compassion over hatred.

## **CONCLUSION**

At the time of this writing, news from Palestine continues to give cause for both optimism and pessimism. Hamas and Fatah appear to be attempting to bury the hatchet and are beginning discussions to form a unity government. In response, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has suspended peace talks with the Palestinian Authority; Israeli monitoring group Peace Now is also reporting that during the last nine months of peace talks, the Netanyahu government has promoted plans and tenders for at least 13,851 housing units in the Jewish settlements on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem (deemed illegal by the United Nations) – an average of 50 units per day (*PeaceNow.org*). Al Jazeera describes this rate as “a record-setting Israeli settlement campaign” (Pizzi). Reminders of Ireland's troubled past have surfaced as well: according to the Associated Press, the British government decided against ordering “a fact-finding inquiry into the 1971 killing of 10 Belfast Catholics. . . by British troops during a three-day street confrontation, a decision that infuriated relatives of the dead” who had hoped to see an investigation similar to the one that explored the Bloody Sunday killings of 1972 (a 12-year probe which found that British soldiers had killed unarmed civilians, not armed IRA members as the soldiers claimed) (Pogatchnik). Just a day later (only weeks ahead of local and European elections), *The Irish Times* reported that Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams had been “arrested for questioning about the 1972 abduction, murder and disappearance of Jean McConville,” whom Provisional IRA forces had accused (wrongly) of spying for British security forces (Moriarty).

In Ireland and Northern Ireland, peace has not come totally or easily, and old wounds scar the Irish psyche. However, a level of peace has been attained – formerly militant Protestants and Catholics have hammered out agreements, and governments and sectarian killings (while still not unheard-of) in the North have significantly ebbed since the “Troubles” of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In Israel and Palestine, peace has remained elusive. Secretary of State John Kerry’s failed attempts to facilitate peace between the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority point to a lack of American clout in the region, unlike the influence American diplomats wielded in Northern Ireland during the peace process of the 1990s. There does not yet appear to be another third party who can effectively mediate between the sides. Even if there were, the prospects of a one-state solution seem bleak (how could the Jewish state remain a Jewish state with an Arab majority population?) and a two-state solution seem more and more complicated, especially as Jewish settlement continues unabated on the West Bank.

Though peace may be defined as the absence of conflict, I agree with the assessment of Goldschmidt and Davidson: real peace is “a condition of harmony within and between every person, every group, and every nation in the world. . . . There can be no peace without security. There can be no peace without justice” (331-32). International law, third-party mediation, and armed struggle have all failed to produce a lasting peace. This is not to say that these methods will not be tried again, but it *is* to say that history indicates that by themselves such methods will fail again. In my view, an effective movement towards this kind of peace – whatever its ultimate political and territorial manifestation – must be one that has strong grassroots support among both



Jews and Arabs in Israel/Palestine. Such a grassroots movement will necessarily acknowledge the kinds of realities discussed in this thesis: society is polyvocal, and peace – real peace – can be found not by shouting down or ignoring or repressing voices of opposition or difference, but by practicing dialogue, by practicing listening, by practicing love, care, and acknowledgement of the Other. To foster such a grassroots movement will require the continued, combined efforts of many: artists (including novelists, poets, musicians, visual artists, and others who can work to bridge differences between individuals through their respective art forms), activists able and willing to promote non-violent strategies such as employing “Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions” (especially through the use of social media networking and other expanding technologies) against oppressive regimes, educators determined to influence a younger generation towards an unpopular path, and anyone else dissatisfied with the status quo.

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