Becoming PALESTINE

TOWARD AN ARCHIVAL IMAGINATION OF THE FUTURE

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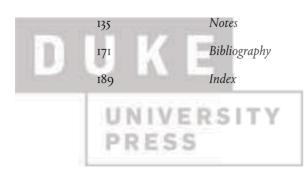Might we understand ourselves as always in the
process of becoming Palestinian? | SOPHIA AZEB,
"Who Will We Be When We Are Free?"

Becoming Palestine is a book about archival imagination *of* and *for*
the future. While much has been written about Palestine and
archives, the investment in the archive has been past-oriented—
centered on quests to open a gateway to the past (*or the past before
the past*) to discover "proof" or to recover "the stuff" with which
to heal the present (or at least identify the sites of loss to initiate
just reparation). Some look to the archives to prove that the *Nakba*
(Catastrophe) happened, and provide us with details of the atroci-
ties (this is the "New Historians" line of inquiry as practiced by
Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and others).[1] Others turn to the archive
to show that Israel looted Palestinian archival material; like detec-
tives, they scour the Israeli archives to find the stolen goods.[2] Then
there are those who create their own alternative archives to prove
that there were better times and options in the past, in which Jews
and Arabs lived—or *could have potentially lived*—peacefully and hap-
pily together. This last type of archival work I call looking for "the
moment before the moment."[3] While these and others comprise
important archival efforts,[4] I fear that so long as the archive re-
mains a portal to pasts both known and unknown, both actual
and potential, the sensation of discovery is bound to fade quickly
and the political impact of the intervention will be short-lived. In
Becoming Palestine, archival returns are oriented more toward the
present and the future, and less so the past.

The book suggests that little remains that is redemptive or
promising about the archive as a source of historical knowledge.
There is nothing left to find or prove. Secrets have been exposed
and more will still be unveiled, but these archival efforts, impor-
tant as they are, result in little political change and bring about
minimal if any new configurations of future potentiality. "It is

striking to see how little our understanding has changed following the re-lease of state documents," writes historian Efraim Karsh in his review of the work of the New Historians.[5] Karsh does not deny the archival findings, but rather simply argues that they reveal nothing new, nothing previously unknown.

Historians look for historical facts in archives, and we have all grown accustomed to the promise of the archive in revealing and affirming truths. The idea, the illusion, is that if only we find a record (a written document, perhaps some photographs), we will then *know* the truth (what *really* hap-pened) and can finally set the record clear. We continue to believe that archival knowledge of who did what—who are the perpetrators; who are the victims; and what were the deeds—can be transformative. *Becoming Pal-estine* is significantly less optimistic about this perception of the archive's promise. While I restrain from making a general observation about the role of archival findings in providing justice in other historical cases, I feel quite confident to suggest that in the case of Israel/Palestine, archival findings (if they are approached in a limited historical manner, which is to say, as long as the archive is considered a gate to the past) make little to no impact on the shaping of the present and future. At this point in time, we are already saturated with archival information about "what happened," and there is hardly any denial of Palestinian expulsion and ruination. The historical facts are all known, documented, and publicized. Since the Israel State Ar-chives were opened in the 1980s (or perhaps even earlier), there have been no more secrets to be found there—historians were able to document the full range of atrocities involved in the Nakba, yet the revelations amount to little ethical and political change. The problem we face is one of denial on the part of Israel and its allies, of course, but *not* a denial of "facts" (hence no additional archival revelations are necessary)—it is rather a denial of the moral, ethical, and political implications and significance *of* these facts. This particular problem of the archive cannot be solved with a historical methodology that continues to see in the archive a source of historical facts, data, and information. A different approach to the archive is needed here. It is indeed time to realize that archives hide very little, and that the secrets of the archive are usually *open secrets*, and hence hardly secrets at all. Thus, for example, sixteen years and two Palestinian Intifadas after Benny Mor-ris first published his groundbreaking account of the horrors of the Nakba based entirely on findings from the Israeli state and military archive,[6] he stated:

In certain conditions, expulsion is not a war crime. I don't think that the expulsions of 1948 were war crimes. You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs. You have to dirty your hands. . . . A society that aims to kill you forces you to destroy it. When the choice is between destroying or being destroyed, it's better to destroy. . . . *There are circumstances in history that justify ethnic cleansing.* I know that this term is completely negative in the discourse of the 21st century, but when the choice is between ethnic cleansing and genocide—the annihilation of your people—I prefer ethnic cleansing.[7]

Archival findings may prove guilt beyond all doubt, but they easily lose their political impact when reread through and into a pregiven Darwinian ideology (call it a meta-archive) of "us versus them," which shamelessly justifies even the crime of ethnic cleansing.

This ethical collapse is further aggravated by what I call "archive fatigue": the fact that what is found in the archive, despite its claim to novelty, is never actually "new." Palestinians have been testifying to this violence and ethnic cleansing since 1948. In short, there was never a real breakthrough; nothing truly "new" has ever been revealed. What the archives "revealed" is what Palestinians already knew, and what most Israelis knew but chose to deny. Archival findings in this context, and perhaps in many others too, are less about new findings and more about the repeated affirmation of already known historical information. Finding, exposing, sharing the same information and the same facts, time and time again—the same atrocities, the same numbers (more or less), the same unveiling of open secrets—can be numbing. To fight this archival fatigue and make archives actually matter, we need to develop an altogether different approach—one that builds on imagination, future vision, playfulness, creativity, speculation, and *fabulation*, to borrow Saidiya Hartman's term.[8]

The archival imagination I find in the artworks I engage with throughout the book is no longer about providing proofs of past deeds, documenting loss, or witnessing past trauma. This archival imagination upturns the temporality of the archive to find traces of the future in the present. When reading the present itself as an archive, the point is not only or mainly to look backward to find traces of the past, but also, and perhaps more significantly, to find traces of the future "not as a promise to come but as immanent within the setter colonial present."[9]

I find this future-oriented archival imagination at the heart of many contemporary Palestinian artistic projects. This archival imagination underlines the recognition of the fact that historical Palestine has already been

destroyed and that whatever this means for any future claim of repair, re-
turn, and change is something that needs to be invented and constructed—
quite literally beyond the limits imposed by the archive as a historical
source of factual information to which we owe our future. Documentation
and witnessing are thus replaced in these artistic works with the incentive
to approach the present as an archive for imagining otherwise. In a broader
sense, I think this archival imagination has to do with many Palestinian
artists and writers' movement away from a historical investment in the
archive (searching for facts, documenting atrocities) and toward a more
experimental approach. This approach reflects a shift from earlier modes
of expression, following Edward Said's call for the "permission to narrate,"[10]
to a new mode of artistic expression and political intervention that can
be described as a permission to *refuse narrative*. This refusal of narrative is
largely a refusal of familiar discursive frames (for example, "the nation,"
"the people") and genealogical narratives of origins, loss, and recovery, in
which the future is tautologically predestined. There are some good his-
torical reasons for why we may be witnessing this shift as an aesthetic re-
sponse to the teleology of revolution (loss, return, and recovery).[11] Most of
the artists I interviewed during the process of writing this book expressed
discomfort with national politics; some even spoke about "the collapse of
the national project" and the need to move away from aesthetic modes of
expression that suggest nostalgic, even romantic, frames of narrative that
link future to past, and link revolution to retreating to a time in history
before the rupture of 1948. But another aspect of this new trend or aesthetic
lingo conversely has to do with the move away from the "permission" as-
pect of the initial mode of expression. The works I discuss in this book,
like many other works of young Palestinian artists, are less concerned with
the need to make the case of Palestine known (that work has already been
achieved) and accordingly seem also less concerned with appearing in leg-
ible ways, or being recognized and transposed into preexisting narrative
forms, not least of which is the nation.[12]

This new archival imagination approaches the archive not by following the
imperial desire to unearth hidden moments (there are no such hidden things
or histories, only open secrets), but by challenging the very identification
of the archive with the past. The archive's assumed role as the past guard-
ian is replaced with an understanding of the archive as the guardian of the
present as we know it. My focus on artworks and artistic imagination aims
at highlighting the critical potential involved in activating the archive in
experimental and playful ways that defy the monopoly and power of the

more common and authoritative historical engagements. Artistic activizations of the archive thus provide, among other things, alternatives to the tendency of historical engagements to separate past from present, and facts from imagination and to leave future out of the equation. Art, in its artistic engagement with the *figure of the archive* as a structure of thought and a mode of knowledge production, is particularly productive in helping us (1) break apart the teleological view of history and open up unpredicted configurations of the future; and (2) expand our experience of the present to remind us that there is always more than one present.

Becoming Palestine thus joins the call to move away from the main downfall of today's Left, as Wendy Brown, following Walter Benjamin's original critique of "Left-Wing Melancholy" (1931), identifies it: "It is a Left that has become more attached to its impossibility than to its potential fruitfulness . . . [it is] caught in a structure of melancholic attachment to a strain of its own dead past" (26).[13] To move away from wounded attachments, loss, and impossibility, and toward a politics invested in future potentiality, is the ability to imagine otherwise—to take a risk and let go of the investment in predefined collectives configured in familiar political categories (nation-state, ethnicity, nativity, etc.), and in favor of new and still unrecognizable collectives of/for the future.

The book critically engages *both* the politics of archival knowledge production in Israel/Palestine *and* the general tendency of most theories of the archive to follow a Benjaminian messianic logic of material historicity. I claim that to archive for the future we must abandon our attachment to history and the redemptive hopes of messianic delivery in favor of a more radical imagination that breaks away from the past toward new becomings: unknown, uncertain, but potentially more just. I find such radical imagination in artistic activations of the archive. Through them, I show how the archive can be activated to rethink the concept of potentiality. Liberated from the grips of history, the archive can join, in turn, a future-oriented social force connected to a moment of political becoming. As long as we approach archives in search of "what really happened" or "what could have happened," we will continue to deal with closed frameworks and even dead ends. The archive should instead become a platform for building a just society as a process of becoming rather than as a stagnant rearticulation of past collectivities, victories, losses, atrocities, and gains. *Becoming Palestine* suggests that the political potentiality of the archive depends on its ability to serve as a source of imagining a (still-unknown) future by returning to the present with all its visible and invisible potentialities.

Becoming Palestine is a labor of love and deep personal and political investment. It is a book about culture, imagination, and politics—about imaginary configurations of the political and about the politics of imagination. The artworks are my main theoretical informants and inspiration, following a similar methodology of close readings that informed my earlier two books. Only very late in the process of completing this book did I realize that *Becoming Palestine* was a third installation in a trilogy about Palestine. This trilogy follows an unplanned sequential order. My first book, *In Spite of Partition* (2007), is about the past and about what we have lost to history (the Arab-Jew "we were"). My second book, *Visual Occupations* (2015), focuses on the political contours of the present and studies the visual politics that allow for present Palestine to appear as it does. With *Becoming Palestine*, I shift my attention to the future. This is a book about a future that may be—a future that we must first learn to imagine.

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Archival Imagination
of/for the Future

To turn the archive into something living is to
fundamentally connect to a moment of political
becoming. | **BASAL ABBAS AND RUANNE ABOU-
RAHEM**, "The Archival Multitude"

And if there was no past? And if the past was
the invention of the imperial archive? And if the
keepers at its gate are guarding something else?
| **ARIELLA AZOULAY**, *Potential History*

In 2013 Umar al-Ghubari and Tomer Gardi edited and published a
bilingual (Arabic and Hebrew) book of twelve short stories, writ-
ten by various Palestinian and Israeli writers, under the title *Awda*
(Arabic for "return") and the subtitle "Imagined Testimonies from
Potential Futures." Each story weaves an imagined future set after
the return of the Palestinian refugees and the replacement of the
Zionist regime with a new sociopolitical arrangement. Each story
imagines a different future, with some portraying a democratic
postnational society; some depicting a Palestinian revival without
a historical trace of Zionists; some describing a Palestinian Arab
society with a well-integrated Jewish minority; and still others set
in a metahistorical time where "return as a dream" freely flows
as "the eternity of return," unfettered by state bureaucracy. No
political agenda is outlined or advanced in the book as a whole;
rather, these fictional testimonies come together as opening *the
very possibility* of envisioning different futures in a current reality

hemmed down by ongoing violence, stagnation, and hopelessness. The reader is invited to witness testimonies that are ahead of time—that help her imagine the unimaginable *as already* a possible reality.

These *parafictions*, to borrow Carrie Lambert-Beatty's term,[1] amount to a new archive: an archive of/for the future. These imagined testimonies for potential futures maintain a plurality invested in the very possibility to imagine, thereby avoiding a restricted and dogmatic utopian vision of the future. Dogma and doctrine are replaced with what Avery Gordon has recently called "utopian margins"—"a poetic knowledge: ex-centric, queer, and scandalous . . . in which ideas and actions in the-yet-to-come are articulated in the present tense, as if they [had already] acquired the power of a narrated story told urgently."[2] *Awda* demands of us to witness "a yet-to-come" that the present has not yet caught up with, and to read this potential future (urgently!) in the present tense.

The introduction to *Awda* is written by Umar Al-Ghubari. It is dated a decade *after* the book's publication, when the imagined testimonies have become reality, and when the time gap between imagination and realization has already closed. The Palestinian refugees have long returned, and the introduction describes the twelve writers taking a train together to Beirut for a conference. They are invited to discuss their project and talk about how they were able to imagine and predict the future at a time when it was still an unthinkable possibility: "You were like prophets, you foresaw the impossible," the host from Beirut comments. "We want to understand how you came up with such an idea and what were the responses to your book at the time."[3] The introduction to *Awda* functions as a metacommentary on both the potentiality and the limits of the poetic knowledge produced by the project. Al-Ghubari's words, which frame the book as a whole, achieve two things at once: first, they demand we continue to imagine and project into an unrealized future (in which the imagined futures accounted for in the twelve stories collected in the book have already become part of a political reality and a verified past), and second they authoritatively guide us in understanding "how to read the book" not as a dreamy utopian recovery or political plan but as a *disturbance*: an archive of unarchivable speculative testimonies of/for the future that the present keeps failing to catch up with.

Like several other artistic engagements with archives, this alternative collection (a book of imagination presented to us as an already existing archive of testimonies) draws political inspiration from defying the limits that the present political order places on what can and cannot be foreseen,

عودة עוֹדָה

شَهَادَات مُتَخَيَّلَة من مُسْتَقْبَلَات مُمكنَة
עדויות מדומיינות מעתידים אפשריים

1.1 Cover of the book
*Awda: Imagined Testimonies
from Potential Futures* (Tel
Aviv: Zochrot, 2013), ed-
ited by Umar al-Ghubari
and Tomer Gardi.

and what can or cannot be imagined as a possible future. This archive of tes-
timonies opens up an alternative future not dominated by Zionism and its
aftermath (occupation, apartheid, refugees) by positing a fictional future as
already a past. We are invited on a time leap journey—first entering a future
(presented in the introduction) in which the speculations collected in the
book have already and miraculously come true. This future, attested to as
reality, never forms a coherent vision. Rather, we are continuously reading
ahead of ourselves, catching up, as it were, with the past and with a future
that is becoming the present as we read, becoming and unbecoming as we
move from one story to another.

I open with *Awda* because the collection of stories exemplifies what I
mean by an archival imagination that operates in the service of the future
and advances a temporality that exceeds historical causality. The archival
imagination I trace throughout this book blurs the distinction between of-
ficial archives and recognized archival documents on the one hand, and
alternative, impossible, or imaginary archives on the other. If *Awda* has

one imperative message, it is that future aspirations, communities, and solidarities cannot be found in preexisting archives and must be created through speculative ones.[4] It is worth mentioning in this regard other important speculative interventions that increasingly have been taking place in Palestine/Israel since the early 2000s. The first is the ongoing project by DAAR, "Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency,"[5] while the second is a related ongoing online project called "Arena of Speculation."[6] In both cases, architectural and spatial imagination serve as key elements for creating a new speculative political space that derives its force from imagination just as much as from the "factual." These are projects that focus on finding practical solutions to the ongoing Palestinian refugee problem, but do so by searching for radically creative and speculative ways for rethinking the ontology of the present and the relationship between history and futurity, as well as the factual and the imaginary.[7] In *Awda*, the act of return is featured in all these projects as both the most urgent act of restoration and the most important component for imagining a radically different, better future that goes beyond the knee-jerk solution of limiting our political imagination to the framework of the nation-state.

In a moving personal account, Marianne Hirsch describes the terror of being a "stateless" refugee after she and her parents left communist Romania in 1961, lost their citizenship, and decided not to accept the Israeli agency's invitation to become Israeli citizens. Instead, they stayed paperless in Australia, and "the term *stateless* came to encompass this sense of dispossession and negation, this loss of identity. It connects the hiding and lying, the fear of discovery, the feeling . . . of being tolerated but unwanted, of being other . . . and it brings back yearning for belonging, for the legitimation of citizenship and a passport."[8] Having lived as a refugee and a stateless person, Hirsch is not shy about finding comfort in her American citizenship: "Every time I open my US passport at an immigration counter, my body relaxes and I am so grateful to have a valid one."[9] Hirsch is writing her memories at a time when the number of refugees and stateless people across the globe is multiplying—in Palestine, across the Mediterranean in South Asia, Mexico, the United States, across Africa, across Europe. No one could possibly think these stateless people should remain in this state of un-belonging, without rights, without even "the right to have rights" to borrow Hannah Arendt's famous expression.

And yet, as Hirsch writes, "Statelessness could be claimed as a space of openness and potentiality, rather than merely a blockage to be overcome."[10] Consider in this regard DAAR's innovative *Refugee Heritage* project from 2017.

DAAR carefully followed the criteria of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to nominate the Dheisheh Refugee Camp in the West Bank as a heritage site for the UNESCO World Heritage List.[11] The act of compliance itself calls upon us to revisit the idea of cultural heritage as centered on the nation-state. *Refugee Heritage* entails more than the idea of turning a refugee camp into a heritage site, which is a proposition already radical insofar as it dramatically alters the way we think about refugee-ness. The proposal requires that we also rethink the concept of heritage, in terms that are not dominated by the geopolitics of the modern nation-state. Nominating the Dheisheh Refugee Camp to the UNESCO World Heritage List, DAAR maps heritage onto an "illegitimate" site: a Palestinian refugee camp that is meant to be temporary, and a site that is an outcome of political failure and a mark of political crisis. In marking the refugee camp as a heritage site, the temporality of the camp as a state that must be overcome is replaced with the idea of the camp as an ongoing state of being. The project further invites us to consider the state of refugee-ness and statelessness not only as a humanitarian crisis but also as a productive possibility and a position from which to rethink the dominance of nation-state order as the only legitimate and desired political horizon.

In nominating Dheisheh for the UNESCO World Heritage List and providing all the required criteria in the application, *Refugee Heritage* renders the trauma of refugee-ness an important, legitimate part of Palestinian heritage. Refugee-ness thus becomes not just a condition of crisis and loss but also an opportunity for rethinking cultural heritage, or what counts as such. In short: it is an attempt to move the burden of crisis from the refugee to heritage. *Refugee Heritage* is heritage in crisis. I read it as a refusal to "take refuge" in current modalities of heritage (pregiven and static notions of cultural possession, authenticity, ownership, national identity) and as an effort to rethink cultural heritage beyond the nation-state, beyond narratives of victory and glory, and beyond melancholic attachments, but also beyond the fictive and inherently colonial ideas of "mankind heritage" and "cultural heritage of universal value."[12]

What does it mean to think about the space of a refugee camp in terms of heritage? To think of the temporality of the refugee camp in terms of heritage? In the case of Palestine, this is a particularly tricky question, as it involves recognizing refugee-ness as an ongoing state and historical condition—a permanent condition that threatens to override the demand of Palestinian refugees to return to their original stolen lands, refusing their current living conditions as the basis for a future solution. As

Alessandro Petti of DAAR writes, "Refugee camps should not exist in the first place: they represent a crime and a political failure."[13] What does it mean, then, to claim political failure as cultural heritage?

Perhaps the most important aspect of DAAR's project is found in shifting the locality of failure from the refugees themselves to the political circumstances that brought Palestinians into refugee camps. *Refugee Heritage*, at least as I understand it, is preoccupied neither with celebrating refugeeness nor with the refugees' success in building a life under the hard conditions of exile. It is not a project that seeks to create a new site for "heritage tourism." What would the tourists see when they visit the camp? There are no tents or fragile structures in the camps, which look like many other urban centers and small cities. In short, the project is not invested in heritage as a source of generating capital or celebrating national legacies. In what then is it invested? I believe it is about finding a way to frame historical injustice, resistance, and perseverance as heritage to bring the concept of heritage itself (and the civil game of UNESCO's nomination) into crisis.

As stated by DAAR, the point of the project is not to actually convince UNESCO to add the Dheisheh refugee camp to the World Heritage List (a very unlikely scenario). More than anything, *Refuge Heritage* is a performative intervention, like earlier projects by DAAR. It is a provocation as a way to begin a conversation about both the "permanent temporariness of camps"[14] and the criteria by which heritage sites are selected, nominated, and registered as carrying universal value.

Dheisheh refugee camp is not a holy site, nor a site of great archaeological importance. It is not in Hebron or in Jerusalem, nor is it particularly old or made of interesting architectural structures. It hosts no natural wonders, lakes, waterfalls, or canyons. It is not, in short, made of the stuff of heritage. The camp was established in 1949 with 3,400 people. By now, seven decades later, it has a population of approximately fifteen thousand residents. Tents have been replaced with cement urban structures. The camp hardly even looks like a camp. It doesn't carry the aura of an unchangeable past. It is fairly modern. *Refugee Heritage* is not a fetishization of the past, of exile, of the refugee. It celebrates the mundane: daily life in a refugee camp that is already seventy years old. The project suggests that refugee history, the history of this camp, for example, is important and cannot be written out of history as temporary or as only a humanitarian crisis. It suggests that refugees are part of our cultural heritage and that if heritage wants to remain relevant as a concept and a practice, it needs to find articulation in new modalities and new understandings of our times.

UNESCO's World Heritage List may be fiction, nothing but a diplomatic Monopoly board game, but DAAR's *Refugee Heritage* quite seriously engages with this fiction. Playing by the rules and making its own nomination to UNESCO, DAAR's proposal affirms UNESCO's position and status as the authority on all things heritage, but also undermines it by turning the application itself into an exhibit and part of an art show: a political nomination that takes the form of an art exhibit. Politics or art? Reality or fiction? These are some of the questions DAAR's project raises in its unique format, but these are also the questions we can direct back at UNESCO's World Heritage Project: is this real or fictional?

Refugee Heritage is not simply an attempt to "take refuge in heritage" by joining an already powerful, if fictional, apparatus of the symbolic international distribution of power and recognition. It is, rather, an attempt to destabilize this mechanism while taking it seriously—an attempt to alter the conditions of the game called cultural heritage by asking: what constitutes heritage? Is there really a point in having UNESCO continue to map World Heritage Sites nominated by, and attributed to, nation-states in a world where millions of people live as refugees? Is it not time to rethink the logic and criteria by which we identify, classify, nominate, and locate sites of heritage? Is it not time for refugees to replace the nation-state as the central agency through which we distribute the "spiritual heritage of mankind"?

The performative and strategic nature of the *Refugee Heritage* project ties to other attempts by artists and scholars who use art, writing, and architecture as a platform for rethinking history-as-crime and for investigating the often complex and messy relationship between memorialization, archivization, responsibility, and complicity. "An intellectual must try to restore memory, restore some sense of the landscapes of destruction," Edward Said tells us.[15] Restoring some sense of a landscape of destruction is not an easy task. It is not the same as restoring the memory of something *before* it is lost or destroyed. Nor is it the same as restoring the destruction or proving a crime has taken place (the work of forensic architecture, for example). The task presented before us is to restore the magnitude of a historical event of destruction, and the long-lasting impact of such an event on the present, where visible or audio traces of violence are not necessarily immediately or accessibly present. The refugee camp as a site of heritage is precisely such an attempt at restoring a landscape of destruction: restoring a history of crime, not as an event of the past, but as a feature of the present. DAAR's political and artistic intervention reminds us of other projects. I am thinking in particular about Emily Jacir's installation "ex libris"

(2010–12), a documentation of the thirty thousand books looted from Pal-
estinian homes, libraries, and institutions by Israeli authorities in 1948. Six
thousand of these books were archived in the National Library of Israel in
Jerusalem, where over a span of two years Jacir photographed them using
her cell phone. Presenting the images alongside some books, Jacir draws
attention to the absence of the books, which are visible before us only as
digital copies. These are the traces of stolen objects. Their present-absence
stands for a history of destruction and erasure. But at least the photographs
prevent the erasure of the erasure. They document the absence, the detrac-
tion, the loss. And this documentation in turn becomes a presence in its
own right. A book, a scrap of paper, a photograph, a building. These are the
making of refugee heritage. Whether or not UNESCO will change its crite-
ria for nominating World Heritage Sites to include the Dheisheh refugee
camp is a different question, but certainly not the most important one.

   Becoming Palestine is a book about such artistic speculative political inter-
ventions. I use the term *becoming* to account for such open-ended futures,
invoking Gilles Deleuze's distinction between poetic-political intervention
on the one hand and a mode of historical investigation on the other. For
Deleuze, art captures possible universes as pure events that escape history:
"What History grasps of the event is its effectuation in states of affairs or in
lived experience, but the event in its becoming, in its specific consistency,
in its self-positing as concept, escapes History."[16] Becoming requires a cer-
tain "leaving behind" of historical preconditions "in order to become, that
is, to create something new." It requires speculating beyond the narrative
comfort zone of history's "actuality," which is held in place by preexisting,
recognizable political terms (state, empire, nation, or people). This is where
art comes in. Art creates possible universes that escape the limits of history:
"The artist intervenes in the possible universe in ways resistant to time . . .
art opens history onto the ahistorical, and resistant to space, art opens the
actual universe onto new universes or lands."[17]

   The bulk of this book, then, turns to recent artistic interventions—
essay film, video art, dance, literature, performance—to open history to
potentiality, imagination, and speculation. I search for ways that both his-
torical Palestine and today's Israel might undergo a process of "becoming":
to cease to be in their actuality and become something radically new.
I nevertheless call this "becoming Palestine" because the name *Palestine*
marks more than a place or a history. It carries within it a certain produc-
tive ambiguity and uncertainty. Patrick William and Anna Ball ask, "Where
is Palestine?" in their introduction to a special issue about the (missing)

place of Palestine in postcolonial studies.[18] This seemingly straightforward question cannot simply be answered with "nowhere." While the nowhere of Palestine is affirmed time and time again (it prevented Elia Suleiman's film *Divine Intervention* from being nominated for an Academy Award in 2004, citing its lack of an acknowledged nominating nation-state),[19] this "no-where" takes a much more complex form, given that even though it is not a current nation-state, "Palestine" exists in cultural memory, both as a past and as a desired future. It also exists as a "question,"[20] and as a metaphor, as the late poet Mahmoud Darwish frequently has reminded us.[21] As a concrete political vision, some consider Palestine to be "the idea of a secular democratic state in Palestine for Arabs and Jews."[22] Whether this particular political vision or another is the answer goes beyond the scope of my interests here. While this book is about potentiality, it refrains from promoting any concrete "solution" (one state, two state, no state) or outlining a specific political vision for the future. In the spirit of the texts I analyze, the book follows a "pessoptimist" approach, advancing a pessimistic optimism: pessimistic about current politics, it remains optimistic about the power of imagination.[23]

In a political reality dominated by the incentive to be realistic, I advocate for the place of imagination. While "dreaming is often suppressed and policed not only by our enemies but by leaders of social moments themselves,"[24] it is important to remember that significant political change has never been possible without imagination. "Palestine" as a horizon of change and potentiality is an explosive term because it is the biggest threat to Zionism and Israel (as a place, an idea, an ethno-national movement, a settler colonial paradigm) but also to the broader understanding of politics as a "realistic response" and a dismissal of the emancipatory potential of imagination.

Becoming Palestine obviously requires the un-becoming of Israel as we know it, but it must also be distinguished from Palestine as a preexisting territorial, historical, spatial, and national configuration. Becoming Palestine, in this sense, is not becoming Palestine *again*. It is not a move backward toward a fantastic vision of past revival, nor is it an anachronistic call to do away with the tremendous historical and political impact of the past seventy years of Israeli existence on local, regional, and global politics. It is not a resurrection of Palestinian nationhood before the fact, nor a flexing of Jewish nationalism after the fact. At stake is not a utopic vision of justice, either, as "becoming" can only suggest potentiality as a direction, not a predetermined end result. Rather, it is an attempt to imagine a livable life

made of new collectives yet to become: beyond the limits of national imagination; beyond partition; beyond Zionism; and beyond any other ethnic, religious, national, or territorial divisions.

Archival imagination is central to the process of becoming precisely because its temporality exceeds that of the historical causal narrative. "Something is wrong with the temporality of the archive and with its announced mission to serve as a guardian of the past," Ariella Azoulay writes.[25] Archives are charged with creating a clear and archived past from which to understand the present as a logical and inevitable outcome and the future as a projected extension of this teleological order. But the archive nevertheless holds a potentiality that refuses the closure of historical time. It can always be read, as Jacques Derrida reminds us, as "a promise" and "a responsibility for tomorrow."[26] Unlike Derrida and his followers, however, I do not think the archive intrinsically generates such a promise. On the contrary, I find nothing promising in the archive as such. Accordingly, *Becoming Palestine* does not join the efforts to define the nature of the archive per se, or to advance a theory of the archive's emancipatory qualities. Instead I argue that there are multiple, diverse, and variously productive archival imaginations—only some of which successfully challenge the limits of historical reasoning in activating the archive as a future-oriented social force ("a responsibility for tomorrow") that is "fundamentally connected to a moment of political becoming."[27] In short, there is nothing intrinsically promising about the archive, only in various activizations of the archive.

Perhaps precisely because archives, particularly state archives, tend to arrest sociopolitical potentialities, limiting political imagination by ordering facts, narratives, identities, and time along preexisting borders and within the time frame of the nation, many artists, filmmakers, performers, and writers are drawn to them. They turn to the archive not simply as a gateway to the past or as a way to uncover what "really happened," but rather, as *Becoming Palestine* suggests, as a means for setting free potential elements of the present that are held hostage behind the archives' gates and guarded by gatekeepers of the past. "To succumb to realism is to give up hope"[28] because "reality" is never the sum of our present; rather, it is politics that make some elements of the present visible ("reality") while rendering others unseen ("fiction"). *Awda*, for example, advances an archival imagination that shakes up the present's suffocating political contours by staging several meeting points where the recorded past (pre-1948, the Nakba, the years following the Nakba) and the projected future (after the return of the Palestinian refugees) meet in new figurations. The collection

of stories situates its impetus to archive (to collect witness accounts of a future-past) as a force of imagination that works not in the service of history, but in the service of potentiality, in turn producing future memories. *Becoming Palestine* is a process of activating archives that returns us to the present, reminding us that the fictive, imaginative, utopian vision for the future is in fact *already* part of our present, albeit well guarded and hidden behind the politics of the status quo.

What Is an Archive?

The archive has long been the center of critical investigation. Since Michel Foucault's early writings in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), the archive has been approached with great analytical suspicion. No longer, if ever, considered simply as a source of scholarship and knowledge, the archive has gradually become a subject of investigation, to paraphrase Ann Stoler.[29] With particular intensity since the mid-1990s, scholars, artists, archivists, curators, and data specialists have been defining, condemning, rescuing, defending, performing, questioning, queering, creating, negating, restaging, reclaiming, and debating the archive. What was once an underinvestigated source of historical authority has become a tantalizing enigma. "Nothing is less clear today than the word 'archive,'" Derrida wrote in 1995.[30] In many ways, academic discourse, beginning with historians, and leading up to anthropologists and critical theorists, invented the fiction we call "the archive." It is an entity or term open to critical speculations and debates in the most universal and general terms. We read that the archive dies in this or that way, or that we should read the archive in this or that manner. But the very idea that there is a thing we can call "the archive" is itself a fiction. There are only, and always already, many different kinds of archives, and as many different potential archival imaginations.

Today, more than in past decades, we can surely agree that the institution we call "the archive" has undergone a vital process of democratization—as partial as it may be. We can no longer say that the archive only, or mainly, consolidates power (the power of the archons, the state, the scholars). Archives also contest power, as in the case of nonnational/nonstate archives, including refugee archives, diaspora archives, queer archives, etc.[31] While in many places archives are still hard to enter and documents are guarded under tight surveillance, digitalization means that we are living in, and are part of, an *archive-saturated era*. Everyone everywhere is archiving. Everyone everywhere is questioning the impetus to archive and its value.[32] What

once was the territory of the state, and before that of the masters and mega-
stars (the archons of ancient Greece), and what once was the "stuff" of
official history written by trained historians, has slowly been undone and
redone. Many more individuals are creating archives as well as questioning
the authority of preexisting ones.

This relative democratization also means that we have today many dif-
ferent *kinds of archives:* state archives, private archives, museum archives,
"archives of feelings."[33] The importance of this expansion of the archive
from a relatively hegemonic and centralized site of power with limited ac-
cess and great supervision to a reality in which even private photo collec-
tions or collections of ephemeral objects "count" as an archive is not to
be underestimated. Digitalization has eased how documents, material, im-
ages, and footage are collected and stored, but even more significantly how
they are shared, circulated, and manipulated. One is reminded of Walter
Benjamin's ambivalent relationship to film and the technological advan-
tages of mechanical reproduction, which he considered as an important
democratization of art, but harmful to art's auratic status: "That which
withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of
art."[34] Along the same lines, we can say that the "archive in the age of *digi-
tal* reproduction" is both more democratic, and less auratic. This loss in
aura also means that earlier theoretical concerns with the authoritative
status of the archive and its policing nature, beginning with Foucault and
developed by Derrida, must be replaced with more nuanced accounts that
consider how those in marginal positions can use the power of the archive
differently—to build, create, and express alternative collectivities, inter-
ests, and desires.

Along these lines, Arjun Appadurai argues that the archive's *generative
power* for counterhegemonic future aspirations is oft overlooked. Com-
mending Foucault for his early intervention and critical account of the
archive as a state-policing apparatus and a gatekeeper of knowledge pro-
duction, Appadurai notes that while Foucault successfully "destroyed the
innocence of the archive," he nevertheless "had too dark a vision of the pan-
optical functions of the archive, of its roles as an accessory to policing, sur-
veillance, and governmentality."[35] Appadurai emphasizes in his short essay
that "the archive" cannot possibly be analyzed only or mainly as a policing
device, and certainly not in this day and age when archives are everywhere.
Given its multiplicities, the archive can be activated in many ways, and, as
we shall see in the following chapters, what I call "archival imagination"
often takes the form and content of social anticipation. Archives for the

future are, in this sense, counterhegemonic meta-interventions into the political status quo.

For Foucault, the archive is "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events";[36] that is to say, it is the law that frames that which can be articulated or even thought. More recently, Ariella Azoulay has called this "the archival condition."[37] But, as Appadurai makes clear, the archive is also a practice of everyday life and a tool open to imagination, manipulation, and future creation. Without overlooking the disciplinary dangers of the archive, we must also recognize its potential to anticipate and advance social change.

To activate the archive as a future-oriented social force that is still firmly grounded in the present is to "fundamentally connect to a moment of political becoming," write the Palestinian artists and collaborators Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme,[38] whose work I explore in the fourth chapter. For Abbas and Abou-Rahme the archive offers an opportunity to access the present as a juncture—a tensed configuration of time that holds within it access to possibilities of unattainable pasts and glimpses of potential futures. Their own engagement with various archives is never "historical" in the sense of using archives to study the past or past events. Archives that are approached as documents of "what really happened," they argue, remain "closed, static, even dead."[39] Such an approach to archives can yield nothing but already familiar narratives. The political promise of the archive depends on the ability to make the archive an integral part of the present, rather than a record of the past. To borrow Walter Benjamin's seductive words, I would rephrase this proposal as one that associates the political significance of the archive with its ability to *crystalize* "the time of the now."[40]

In Walter Benjamin's compelling and poetic rendition of dialectic material historical time, the linear progression of time from past to present to future is interrupted by the various densities of the present in relation to the past. The past as chronology carries little meaning or political significance. The past matters when it manifests in the present: "For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably."[41] The only historical time that matters, then, is the present—a "time filled by the presence of the now [*jetztzeit*]." This dense present marks the collapse of the linear progress between the past and the present, given that the present already includes within it the "tiger's leap into the past."[42] For Benjamin, it is from this dense present, this "time of the now," that an opening toward a (messianic) future is enabled—not as a

predicted agenda or a planned futurity or progress, but as a messianic leap: "Every second of time was the strait gate through which Messiah might enter."[43]

While I am less invested in messianic arrivals (Derrida's writings on the archive's futurity, following Benjamin, are steeped in this rhetoric of messianism),[44] I nevertheless find productive the move away from thinking about the past (and the archive) as the cause, origin, or key for understanding the present in tautological terms. Here and throughout the book, the archive is used as a source of a *yet-to-come* future, and not as an explanation of the present (how we have arrived at where we are). In this sense, the archive is never "found." It is always made and remade. This making and remaking, this activization, tells us something about the present in relation to both potential histories (histories that did not come about, but could have) and potential futures (becomings that *in the present* exist only in the form of a fantasy or science fiction). These potential futures are the mark of collective aspirations to live otherwise.

In their "10 Theses on the Archive," the collective Pad.ma suggest that there are two approaches to the archive: the first involves minorities, whether ethnic, sexual, religious, or otherwise, who are "waiting for the archive," by which they mean: waiting to become part of the hegemonic, usually state, archive and the legitimate narrative. The second involves a riskier position, which replaces the "waiting" with a "making": this approach replaces the plea for recognition and inclusion with an effort to create alternative archives for often still "radically incomplete" collectivities.[45] There remains today a strong discursive preoccupation with redemption and recovery as the incentive to find or enter the archive. But, subjecting archival imagination to this task of recovery does little in terms of generating new (if radically incomplete) collectivities or new potential futures. On the contrary, these recovery projects tend to reinforce the status of the archive as a tomb—a temple of the past and a source for cultivating limited and highly restricted identities based on a "shared past." As convincingly argued by Stephen Best, the "repeated returns to [the archive as] the scene of a crime, a crime imagined as the archive itself, in practice have mirrored the orientation that Sigmund Freud called 'melancholy.'"[46] If recovery projects suffer from melancholic historicism,[47] the center of this melancholic attachment is the lost object of a predetermined "we" that is continually lost and found in the archive. It is also the center of the plea "to be found" in the archive and of the quest to take one's (historically predetermined) place.

Indeed, to borrow Best's words again, "Forensic imagination is directed toward *the recovery of a 'we' at the point of 'our' violent origins.*"[48] This does not mean that archival imagination, which is directed at a future, turns its back onto the past. Nor does it mean that archival imagination contains no elements of recovery or an engagement with a lost (unarchivable) past toward the building of a new cultural memory and collective. But it means that such engagement must be based more on speculation than on a factual historical methodology. Saidiya Hartman's methodology of engaging with the archive of the Atlantic slave trade offers a useful example:

> I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done. By throwing into crisis "what happened when" and by exploiting the "transparency of sources" as fictions of history, I wanted to make visible the production of disposable lives (in the Atlantic slave trade and, as well, in the discipline of history), to describe "the resistance of the object."[49]

The "archival imagination" I describe and promote in this book is based on fabulation, manipulation, reproduction, and often experimental and playful alterations of pregiven state and personal archives. The works I engage with advance a futuristic imagination by replacing the impulse to trace evidence of familiar historical narratives with the impetus to imagine potentialities not yet fully identifiable. As Appadurai reminds us, "The archive is itself an aspiration rather than a recollection," a "work of imagination," and a "conscious site of debate and desire."[50] *Awda* demonstrates this by breaking down the division between fiction (imagination) and history, the past and the future, and testimony and aspiration. The story collection suggests that the act of imagination ("imagined testimonies") and the production of "memories for the future" can bring about political change. "How is it possible to foresee the impossible?" *Awda* asks in its first pages. Its answer appears unequivocal: it is not possible, and yet it remains a necessity. Imagination must always precede political change. Our task is to imagine.

The Art of Imagining Otherwise

> Ghosts are hovering all over towns. Refugee ghosts, returning to claim their homes. | YEHUDA SHENHAV-SHA'HARABANI, "Reference" in *Awda: Imagined Testimonies from Potential Futures*

Archival imagination involves imagined archives: imagining existing archives differently as well as creating new archival effects and affects.[51] It is archival in that it is citational, mimetic, intertextual, and often mobilized by archival fever: it cites, recites, and revisits archives new and old, creating new archival sites and undoing others. It is often playful and mischievous, but it never takes the archive lightly. It is drawn to footage, documents, and photographs of the past, but it mixes and remixes toward potential futures. Archival imagination returns to the archival drive to preserve, collect, store, and document, but also to the equally powerful drive to destroy, displace, manipulate, and radically alter.[52] The archival imagination I am speaking about blurs the distinction between "archival" and "found" documents as well as between "official archive" and "private collection." With the spread of online archives and increasingly open access to a multitude of archival documentation, the distinctions between "archive," "collection," "data," and "footage" begin to dissolve. Holding onto them would be theoretically anachronistic and politically not particularly useful. Following film theorist and media scholar Jaimie Baron, I refer to "archives" and "archival" primarily in terms of their *effect*. The archival is constituted only insofar as it is experienced as such: "As coming from another time or from another context of use or intended use . . . the archival depends on the effects it produces."[53]

A remarkable short film by the Ramallah-based director Shuruq Harb, entitled *The White Elephant* (2018, 12 min.), demonstrates what I mean by archival effects. The film is made entirely from recycled video footage that Harb found online in various Israeli sources during the "golden days" of the Oslo peace negotiations in the early to mid-1990s. Posted and reposted, the video footage appears in Harb's film without any framing, explanation, or archival annotations. The film begins with a mishmash of images: signs in Hebrew announcing the first Gulf war "alert," footage of Palestinian youth demonstrating during the First Intifada, a young man with a gas mask, and panoramic images of Tel Aviv. Soon after, the narrator's voiceover and background music begin. The narrator, a young Palestinian woman, recounts her personal story of growing up as a teen in Ramallah: she talks about dating a young guy who participated in the First Intifada and died after throwing a Molotov bottle on an Israeli bus; sneaking out to dance parties in Tel Aviv; "passing" as an Israeli girl; attending rave parties on Tel Aviv beaches; meeting a new boyfriend who steals Israeli cars; and loving Dana International, the Israeli singer of Yemeni origin who was the first trans person to win the Eurovision contest. This semi-

autobiographical narrative about a young Palestinian teen who "just wants to have fun" is visualized in its entirety through Israeli footage collected by browsing social media—youth dancing and drinking and Israeli soldiers praising trance music ("Trance music makes me high!" "This is the biggest ever historical event!").

As this mix of vivid images and upbeat music passes by us, the narrator's memories unfold like a stream of consciousness. She too was there at the raves, but her images are not found in the archive: "We were making history [but] you couldn't guess who we are." The narrator's absent-presence in the online archive is haunting. She is there, she tells us, but we cannot see her. She escapes the archive. Bringing the footage and her voice together, the narrator creates an alternative archive: one in which her "absence" is marked and visualized. The last sequence of images, with which the film closes, mixes footage from the Israeli pop star Dana International's first recorded performance with video-recorded images of the narrator's sister dressed like Dana and imitating her singing and dancing. Dana International is singing her first hit in broken Arabic, "My name is not Saida," in which she first "came out" as both a trans woman and an Arab-Jew. The narrator's sister is imitating Dana's performance and her broken Arabic. The images of the two women overlap to produce a new montage. This layered footage makes for a personal archive of memories. What kind of an archive is this? It is an archive made of online "found footage," circulating on social media. This footage, belonging to the public domain, is activated, however, through its use to tell a personal coming-of-age narrative. This diverse footage becomes an archive precisely thanks to its archival effect, which depends, here and elsewhere, on the viewer's recognition of the contrast between the original context of the footage (the Israeli raves, Dana International's performance and her status as an Israeli pop icon) and the context in which the footage is now used to tell a personal Palestinian narrative. Between the original context and the new one, the archival effect is produced.[54] In this case the effect is profound: a young Palestinian woman tells her personal story by mixing and rearranging video footage she finds in Israeli sources. To choose to tell the story of the self this way requires both imagination and the willingness to look in less obvious archives, not simply to find one's missing image, but to tell one's own story through and in relation to the other.

By speaking of archival effects, I am referring to a practice of working with and in relation to the figure of the archive perceived as *first and foremost* a political force that depends on activization: citation, repetition, mimicry,

I.2 Still from Shuruq Harb's *The White Elephant* (2018). Courtesy of Shuruq Harb.

and revisitation, for its archival affectivity and effectiveness. Such archival imagination works through the assumption that, as Derrida writes, "There is no political power without control of the archive," but it attributes more flexibility and mobility to the archive and assumes a more democratic distribution of its potential effects.[55]

....

One of the most original and influential critical engagements with the figure of the archive in the context of the modern Middle East is the decades-long project by the Lebanese artist Walid Raad, "The Atlas Group Project."[56] The project, a product of Raad's imagination that also includes actual historical documents such as newspapers and images documenting the Lebanese Civil War, is presented as an "official archive" created between 1975 and 1996 by cofounders Maha Traboulsi and Zeinab Fakhouri. Both are figures of Raad's imagination. Raad thus created the archive and the archivists, and then went a step further, using his own imaginary archive both as an art display in museums and as part of a performance in which he plays the part of the scholar lecturing about the archival materials. The rich archive made of found documents Raad collected (press photographs, interview

transcripts, video footage, graphics, texts, and video art) is available online, but also serves as the raw data for Raad's artistic projects presented in various museums over several years. The archival effect achieved here has to do with the blurring of the line between real (serious, scientific, rigorous) academic presentations about real historical archives and mock presentation (performance) that nods to the self-importance of both the archive and the academic presentations about it.[57]

The center of Raad's artistic intervention is his mimetic presentation of the conventional archival display *both* as a historical document *and* as a collection of artistic artifacts. The collection is similar to those often captured in the conventional museum setting. The circulation of the archive or of "archival goods" in museums and academic presentations is the reference doubled and revisited in Raad's creation of an archive that feeds itself, doubles itself, and produces and reproduces its own archival effects.

Raad's maverick work has influenced many artists, particularly in the Middle East. Among them is the Lebanese artist Akram Zaatari, whose work engages photographic archives and who is best known for his series of photographs titled "Hashem El Madani: Studio Practice." Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah, creator of (the imaginary) "Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind," is another. If the first engages in the creation

1.3 From Walid Raad's "The Atlas Group Project" (1989–2004).

of what Gayatri Gopinath, following artists Chitra Ganesh and Mariam Ghani, calls a "parasitic archive"[58]—the curatorial reframing and restaging of historical archives in radically new ways—the latter constructs an altogether fictive museum with a fictive editorial board, publications, and sponsors.[59]

These examples (and many others) are suggestive of the wide range of artistic practices and modalities of archival imagination. Some of these works emphasize recontextualizing and restaging historical documents (footage, photographs, texts) in new settings. Others focus on creating para-fictions as alternative archives. And still others center on generating archival affects and effects by mobilizing an archival aesthetic and/or opening the figure of the archive to include *more than* the familiar term by directing attention to archival drives, principles, and aspirations. The model of artistic intervention that has gained the most critical recognition and has come to be most closely identified with what we call "archivist art" today involves, as in the case of Raad or Rabah, the construction of an (imaginary) archive.[60] However, this represents just one artistic approach and preoccupation with "the question of the archive." Archival imagination does not necessarily produce imaginary archives or try "to make historical information [physically] present" in order to restore historical loss.[61] Indeed, most of the works

I.4 From Khalil Rabah's fictive museum project, "Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind" (2003).

I discuss in the book have a more complex relation to the archive as an apparatus of selective remembering and forgetting, preserving and destroying. Work such as Emily Jacir's artistic oeuvre has greatly contributed to the creation of an alternative counterdominant Palestinian archive. Jacir repeatedly uses art to ensure the archivization of oral history, common memory, and the salvation of otherwise lost, damaged, or stolen archival material, which was confiscated by the Israeli state. Jacir's work often takes on the autobiographic form to assert an "I" (the "I" of the artist who is also an archivist and an information transmitter) that speaks from *within* and *for* a collective. Her 2001 *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israeli in 1948*, for example, is emblematic of her artistic and political commitment to preserving and creating the otherwise missing centralized archive of Palestinian modern history. Working with Walid Khalidi's book *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*, Jacir erected a refugee tent in her New York studio and invited friends and colleagues to embroider the names of the villages that Khalidi researched to create an artistic, communal, and affective archive of this historical loss. In this early work, as in many that followed, Jacir incorporated elements of activism and sociohistorical reconstruction to transmit the otherwise disappearing Palestinian archive. A related act of salvation, transmission, and repair is found in her 2005 work *Material for a Film*, and in her 2010–12 projects "ex libris." Both are dedicated to the transmission and documentation of otherwise looted, erased, and destroyed Palestinian property, history, and cultural memory.[62] But the majority of the works I discuss in the following chapters do something quite different. Less invested in the creation of archives, or even in the act of recovery and salvation of archival material, these works, I suggest, are engaged in an explicitly *theoretical* meta-artistic commentary about what it means to create an archive. They ask, what does it mean to be invested in archives? What does it mean to draw on archival material to generate (historical or otherwise) knowledge? Immanently speculative and self-reflexive, these works engage with archives, create alternative archives, but above all, they invite a critical preoccupation with the archive by raising questions about the relationship between archives, narratives of origins, points of departure, points of arrival, temporality, and collectivity. For example: when we create an archive, alternative as it may be to state politics, do we assume a point of origin? Do we start with a pregiven "we" whose collective past, memory, and history we seek to revive or restore? Or, can the "we" serve as the "end goal" of archival creation? Can we create archives not only or

mainly of past communities but also for a collective *in becoming* and for a future to-be-archived? These are the questions that read with and through the artworks in the following chapters. Reading these works together can indeed create an archive in and of itself, with each of these works referencing and citing other sources and works, gestures, images, affects, sounds; however, the outcome of this archive and my own goal is less about creating a new stable and recognizable (alternative) archive. My engagement with artistic activizations of archives is in close dialogue with structural and poststructural theories of intertextuality and citationality.

Roland Barthes, who developed Julia Kristeva's theory of intertextuality, distinguishes between two types of readers: there are "consumers" who read the work for stable meaning (we can equate them to those who read the archive for historical indexicality), and there are readers who are "writers of the text" and engage in intertextual activity, breaking open the closeness of any given text to a larger web of citations and intertextual references. "Any text is a new tissue of past citations," Barthes reminds us, as "there is always language before and around the text."[63] To think of the archive in terms of intertextuality, then, is to think about it as a *tissue of citations*, rather than a source of direct and unmediated indexicality or a window to a better understanding of "reality." If we understand the working of archives as Barthes understood the working of texts, and realize that at least in *certain textual traditions* (Hebrew and Arabic literatures most notably) citationality and intertextuality function as *the* archival modality, we arrive at a much more elastic definition of the archive as, above all, a mode of reading, writing, rereading, and rewriting. "Archives are made, not found."[64] This is the premise of my own investment in the archive as a figure of political change modeled on citationality, recontextualization, and the generated visions of potential futures based on old-new collectivities. The following concrete example I provide is a literary one.

In 2005, the Israeli writer of Iraqi descent Sami Michael (born Kamal Salah) wrote his sixth novel *Yonim be'Trafalgar* (*Doves in Trafalgar*). At this point, Michael was already well known for his writings about the plight of Arab Jews in Israel and about Israel's internal racism. There was nothing surprising, therefore, to find in his new novel a protagonist struggling between his "Israeli Jewish part" and his "Arab part." This time, however, the "Arab part" was not an Arab Jew but a Palestinian adopted and raised as a Jewish-Israeli by a Holocaust survivor who was given the house of his biological parents—a Palestinian couple that fled Haifa in 1948, leaving behind a baby. This plot undoubtedly sounds familiar to some readers, and not to

others. Evidently it was not immediately recognized by many Israeli readers, including the editor and publisher of the novel, who simply failed to recognize its overt intertextuality. Moreover, once this intertextuality was "revealed," it was read by some as a "literary scandal." Michael was even accused of dishonesty for not acknowledging his main textual inspiration: Ghassan Kanafani's celebrated novella *'Ā'id ilā Ḥayfā* (*The Return*[*ed*] *to Haifa,* 1969).[65]

In his defense, Michael has claimed that Kanafani's text was never hidden; quite on the contrary, it was openly and explicitly displayed in his novel, which not only includes direct allusions to the novella but also models the Palestinian father of the protagonist on Kanafani's own well-known public life as the spokesperson for George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). Michael's character, like Kanafani himself, is said to be killed in a car bomb in Beirut in 1972, allegedly set up by the Israeli Mossad. These allusions to Kanafani's biography and text are so overt and easily recognizable in the novel, Michael suggested, that disclosing this intertextuality seems not just unnecessary, but altogether ludicrous.[66]

By the second edition of Michael's novel, the publisher already included a line, under the title: "A dialogue with Ghassan Kanafani." But calling this textual intertextuality "a dialogue" is already undoing the archival effects of Michael's text. Intertextuality is not simply a dialogue, but rather, and more accurately, as Daniel Boyarin suggests, "the way that history, understood as cultural and ideological change and conflict, records itself within textuality. . . . The fragments of the previous system and the fissures they create on the surface of the text reveal conflictual dynamics which led to the present textual system."[67] Michael's narrative, I argue, is not "in dialogue with" Kanafani's, but rather is enmeshed with it; intertwined such that it creates a new archival imagination in which the impact of past traumatic events, to paraphrase Wendy Chun, finds its force not only from recalling the event itself, but from "the citation of other such events." This citationality exposes the "larger social implications" of trauma as an archive of intertextual references.[68]

Some may consider such intertextuality a form of colonial appropriation, but a more careful reading of Michael's text suggests a much more nuanced engagement not only with Kanafani's text, but also with the figure of the Arab Jew as a key figure around which to produce a new archival imagination (we shall see a similar investment in the Arab Jew in Jumana Manna's film discussed in detail in the following chapter). Responding to a question by an Israeli interviewer about why he chose Kanafani's novella

as a pretext to his own, Michael responded: "The idea fascinated me. If I look at myself, I am like [Kanafani's] abandoned boy. I grew up in an Arab country, my mother tongue is Arabic, and after a flight that lasted a few hours, I found myself in Israel with a different identity. I belong here, and the Arabs regard me as an Israeli Zionist, whereas the Israelis regard me as someone who comes from there—with the heritage, language and customs of the enemy. So I saw myself in his story."[69]

A Palestinian literary narrative of return and resistance, Kanafani's novel is written after the 1967 war (the *Naksa*), at a moment of great defeat for Arab states and as the hopes of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes in Palestine became the heart of the forming revolution. But the narrative "of return" in this case is in fact a narrative of a failed return: at best a "visit" and a vow to continue the fight for a future return. Return, impossible return, failed return, promise of return, future return, fight for return—these are all positions outlined in Kanafani's novella. To enter an intertextual relationship with Kanafani's text is to open anew the question of return. And, in the context of the Second Palestinian Intifada, which is when Michael's novel is written, it is to encourage Israeli readers not only to become familiar with Kanafani's text (translated into Hebrew just four years earlier), but also to confront the question of return that unsettles the well-guarded borders of Israeli Zionist cultural imagination.

To read *Doves at Trafalgar* as a product of new archival imagination, then, is to realize that one cannot simply read Kanafani's novella as a pretext to Michael's novel, or Michael's novel as an expansion of the novella. The reading of the text requires an intertextual activity of reading back and forth, together and apart as a multilayered reality made of intertextual connections that undermine the radical separation of Israeli and Palestinian, past and present, Jewish and Arab, Kanafani and Michael. It is this reading back and forth that amounts to a new archive that breaks the political contours that allow "for collectivities and narratives to appear and be recognized as a *fait accompli*."[70]

Hannah Arendt has famously written that "refugees [would become] the most symptomatic group in contemporary politics."[71] Kanafani's texts ask us to consider this seriously in reimagining Palestine as a site of symptomatic agony, where one refugee (Jewish) finds a home in the home lost to another (Palestinian). Michael returns to Kanafani, reminding us that a home made through the creation of new refugees can never really be a home. It alerts us to the urgency of breaking the chain of ongoing trauma. If Kanafani's novella asks us to imagine Palestine in view of the trauma (the 1948 Nakba,

the 1967 Naksa), Michael's novel asks us to revisit Kanafani's narrative of return and read it as a promise: an archive of/for the future.

Between *Awda*, as a project that seeks to create an archive of a future in which the return of Palestinian refugees *already* took place, and *Doves in Trafalgar*, in which the vision of such return remains (as it travels from Kanafani's text to Michael's), the core element of a new shared Israeli and Palestinian literary archive of mourning and loss, there are many other articulations of future-oriented archival imaginations and archival practices, some of which I will analyze in depth in the following chapters. While some of the projects discussed in this book are more overtly optimistic than others, all of them, in their multiplicities, take part in the poetic and political drive I call *Becoming Palestine*.

The Question of Palestine as a Question of the Archive

"What archives are or should be in this case of a dispersed people with no state archive, no less a state, a majority of whom live in exile or under occupation and have had their 'proper' archive destroyed, seized, or sealed in inaccessible colonial archives belonging to those who dispossessed them and still rule over them with force, are tough questions."[72]

Palestine "as a question," seen through the framework of Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine*, is not only a matter of land ownership, national self-determination, colonial violence, and historical injustice. It is also a question of narrative and memory—the stuff of archives. Whose memories gain the status of a recognizable historical narrative? Whose memories, in turn, are unarchived, deleted, erased from the global stage? Raising these questions, Said's *Question of Palestine* makes it clear that the political role played by the archive and archivization in this contested context is key.

What violence, what memories, and what histories escape the archive—are written out of it in line with the archive's internal logic of order, selection, collection, and classification? Who has access to the archive and who has the right and ability to archive? Said emphasizes the right to narrate and highlights the question of Palestine as one of dispossessed memory.[73] Such questions address the archive as a site of power—often state power. Israel has notoriously, and from very early on, seized the power of the archive: collecting, documenting, and archiving the modern history of the newly established state. It simultaneously invested in creating an elaborate archive of archaeological findings meant to prove the historical ties of Jews to the land, and hence to affirm that the establishment of Israel was unlike

other cases of modern settler colonies. Rather, these findings aim to support a national narrative of *return* and nativity: a modern revival of an ancient people reuniting with their long-lost native land. With a frenzy that matches perhaps only modern Greece, Israel set up well-organized national state archives and classified military archives hosting generations of historians dedicated to telling the story of the nation. Meanwhile, as more recent studies have shown, Israel has also confiscated, looted, and absorbed into its various archives collections of Palestinian books, films, photographs, and other documents, further subjecting them to the logic of the Zionist archive and rendering Palestinian archives invisible, "missing," or nonexistent. Stolen books found in private Palestinian homes after 1948 were archived under the "AP" ("abandoned property") section in the Israel State Archive, thus serving not only as worthy, authentic historical documents (mostly in Arabic), but more significantly as items that reinforce the uncritical (and by now hardly believable even among Zionists) historical account that Palestinians were not expelled in 1948, but rather voluntarily abandoned their homes and property in the haste of an escape.

Thanks to the historical research of Gish Amit, we have recently learned about the scope of such looting, which included books, newspapers, and textbooks from Palestinian homes in Jerusalem, Jaffa, Haifa, Tiberius, Nazareth, and other places. This looting and archiving demonstrates, as Amit puts it, "how occupation and colonization is not limited to the taking over of physical space. Rather, it achieves its fulfillment by occupying cultural space as well, and by turning the cultural artifacts of the victims into ownerless objects with no past that can therefore become new items in the Israeli national archive."[74] Other scholars, among them Rona Sela, Ariella Azoulay, and Aron Shai, have documented the Israeli looting of Palestinian photography, film, and antiquities, creating together a vast and detailed account of historical erasure and colonial depletion.[75]

In essence, the question of the archive in the context of Palestine is similar to other colonial contexts where looting and transforming living aspects of the colonized society into archival (dead) objects is a common feature.[76] The work of Palestinian artists is often in direct dialogue with that of indigenous artists and activists across the globe, whose fights to alter national archives and inscribe the memory of their ancestral past result in significant changes in teaching curricula and commemoration ceremonies, and lead to important conversations about reparation and collective memory. The shared underlying goal is decolonization—a radical shift in political formation and collective way of life that undoes the settler colonial na-

tion. I would venture to say that what may offer Palestine an advantage
in this regard is the fact that the colonial reality we face here is a belated
one, emerging, as it did, in a global postcolonial era. "The Zionist project
is anachronistic" to paraphrase Tony Judt. Perhaps this makes the Zionist
settler colonial project more vulnerable,[77] presenting us with an opportunity
to enact here something seemingly impossible: a full political *undoing* of the
colonial order and its replacement with an altogether different future.

The question of the archive in this context, then, is a question of phan-
tasmal power. Remarking on Palestine's unique position in today's world
politics, Sophia Azeb notes, "If there is anything unusual about Palestine
or the Palestinian case, it is the fact that Palestine presents a potential to
introduce new ideas about sovereignty and liberation into practice. This
is why imagination is so important here."[78] I share this conviction, which is
why *Becoming Palestine* is above all an urgent call to imagine. What future
aspirations, communities, and solidarities the archive holds are a matter of
engagement: our job is to imagine.

....

In general, the artistic interventions I discuss in the following chapters are
less concerned with questions of historical liability or acts of repair, such
as the return of archival goods to their lawful owners or the centralization
of scattered and looted Palestinian archival materials and documents. In-
stead, I read them as attempts to rewrite, expand, circulate, and alter the
archival conditions that currently limit our political imagination. While
not the focus of this study, there is a recent important and influential
development in the creation of new Palestinian archives aiming to battle his-
torical amnesia and the Israeli singular control over the historical narrative
of Palestine. Among these important initiatives are the Palestinian Archive
at the Ibrahim Abu-Lughod Institute of International Studies (IALIIS) at
Birzeit University and the more recently initiated Palestinian Museum
Digital Archive (PMDA) at the Palestinian Museum in Birzeit. Another sig-
nificant online archival initiative has recently become available through
the Palestinian Museum, entitled "Palestinian Journeys." Smaller and
lesser-known archival projects include Dor Guez, Christian Palestinian Ar-
chive (CPA), and Emily Jacir's inspirational transformation of her family's
house in Bethlehem into an art institution and an archive of rare visual
and textual documents from late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries'
Ottoman Palestine.[79] Finally, the grassroots project, Khazaaen, centered in
East Jerusalem, has created a societal archive (operating since 2016) through

gathering ephemeral material such as newspapers, magazines, films, photographs, posters, brochures, commercial and cultural ads, business cards, and wedding invitations.[80]

Such actualization and institutionalization of alternative archives through which Palestinian history becomes visible and expandable *beyond* the tragic encounter with Zionism and its aftermaths in 1948 certainly opens the possibility for imagining the past differently. Yet, even these interventions risk not advancing a flexible enough archival imagination from which one could eventually revisit the question of Palestine *as* a question of the future. To do so we must go beyond questions of possessions (who owns the archive, who are the archive's patrons, who has the right to narrate) and matters of inclusion (whose stories do the archives tell) to invite and encourage the creation of archival imagination that fosters "new solidarities" and "new memories."[81] This is the additional and necessary aspect of archival imagination on which this book focuses. It centers on certain artistic activations of the archive that both scrutinize the archive as an authoritative source of knowledge production and at the same time take advantage of the archival drive to preserve, collect, trace, store, and classify in order to generate new remixes, new intertextual connections, and new reencounters with the past toward the anticipation of still becoming and of not-yet-determined potential futures.

The idea, however, is not to establish a neutral "ground zero" from which to create new solidarities out of nowhere and imagine new futures out of a fantastic archival imagination. Far from it, *Becoming Palestine* situates future potentiality from *within* the archival condition of state violence. The works discussed in the book all operate *within and under* the inescapable current hegemonic archive, that is to say, *already within* the economy of partition, colonial appropriation, and erasure. In this sense, potentiality, while directed at the future, is also a matter of how we read the past—discovering traces of potentiality in the archive. But this is not the same as seeking to fill archival gaps. A good example that demonstrates the potentiality lost to the past, awaiting to be activated, is Ariella Azoulay's film *Civil Alliances* (2012, 52 min.), which centers on the transformative year of 1947, when historical Palestine *was becoming* Israel. The film is an attempt to overcome what Azoulay calls "the archival condition," by exposing a potentiality associated with "what [history] could have been" and what it could have looked like *if* the archival condition did not already dominate the ways we recognize history: one history for the Jews, another for the Arabs. The archival principle, she argues, condemns Jews and Arabs "to mutual en-

mity" and rests upon the "basic division of history, as though the history of the Jews and the state of Israel could be told apart from the history of the Palestinians."[82] *Civil Alliances,* then, seeks to restore the lost historical potentiality that cannot appear in the state archive, but that precedes *the becoming* of Israeli and the Palestinian subjects by exposing the violence of the archive itself: the making of the Israeli Jew and the Palestinian as two separate political agencies.

Staged and filmed as an overtly theatrical performance, the film depicts a group of Israelis and Palestinians gathered around a map of historical Palestine and reading out loud, in Arabic and Hebrew, archival cases that Azoulay describes as cases of "civil alliances." These cases took place from early 1947 until close to the declaration of the state of Israel in May 1948. The testimonies were collected from archival documents found in the Israel State Archive, but the reenactment of the documents—the reading in both languages and the performance of the collective united around the map—tells a different story from the one found in the archive. If the latter is at best a story of "collaboration" of Palestinians with the new Jewish forces, the reenactment and the creating of this alternative performative archive escapes the national archive: a story that chronicles a togetherness *before* the fact—before the (state) archive makes it disappear. The past is envisioned, performed, and filmed. This potentiality is not found in history as we know it, but in history as it could have been. This potentiality cannot be found in the (state) archive because the latter is already organized along the archival condition of partition, which divides the history of 1948 into two separate narratives: the history of the Jews (a history of victory) and the history of Palestinians (a history of loss). To imagine the past *outside of* or *before* the archival condition, then, is to think beyond "the perspective of the ruling discourse—sovereign nationality."[83]

The question of potentiality, then, is a question about the past (What could have been? What could have happened?) as much as it is about the future (What may become?). Above all, it is a question of imagination: How and what can we imagine? How and what are we *compelled* to imagine? I address these questions in the following chapters by engaging with various attempts by artists, writers, and filmmakers to imagine otherwise by reordering, restaging, remixing, expanding, revising, and rewriting existing archives. These attempts to generate new horizons of potential futures do not bypass the violent history of colonialism, partition, military occupation, and nationalism. They are by no means escapist. On the contrary, these attempts all spring from the site of violence, and as a response to it.

I.5   From Ariella Azoulay's *Civil Alliances* (2012). Courtesy of Ariella Azoulay.

Becoming

In an interview with Antonio Negri (1990), Gilles Deleuze provides a use-ful explanation for the difference between (his concept of) becoming as a political project/poetics and history or historical investigation. I find this distinction incredibly helpful. Deleuze notes that "what history grasps in an event is the way it's actualized in particular circumstances; the event's becoming is beyond the scope of history." The becoming of any given event, then, is never about an actualized event or even a "set of preconditions, how-ever recent." Becoming requires a certain "leaving behind" of such precondi-tions "in order to become, that is, to create something new."[84] Perhaps the simplest way to say this is to highlight the difference between actuality and potentiality. If we understand history as a narrative, we can recognize it as actual because it is rendered in already recognizable political terms (state, empire, nation, a people, etc.); becoming, or thinking in terms of becom-ing, requires thinking in terms of potentiality, beyond the comfort zone of preexisting (political) terms and modalities. This difference maintains a gap between potentiality as we know it (from history) and potentiality as still unknown, still in becoming. There is, no doubt, a danger in using such open-ended terms that enjoy (at least in theory) relative freedom from historical confinement and preexisting political arrangements. One could already hear the expected critique: "Everything can be *becoming*." Yes. And no.

   In an essay published in 2006, Laurence J. Silberstein, professor of Jew-ish Studies and an expert on "post-Zionism," engages Deleuze's philosophy

to defend post-Zionists' refusal to "provide a detailed programme for the future." He thus writes: "Postzionism cannot but refrain from proposing specific programmes. Instead it invests its energies in making visible the on-going processes of deterritorialisation and the lines of flight that continue to redefine and transform Israel socius."[85] Silberstein applies Deleuze's concept of becoming to stretch open the horizon of Zionism, but not to do away with it. Hence, he concludes the essay with the following: "Postzion-ism helps to move these processes beyond the current majority imposed limits" (which, according to him, exclude Palestinian Israelis, Mizrahi Jews, women, and gay Jews) to "open new and productive avenues of *becoming Is-raeli, of Israeli Becoming*."[86] "Israeli becoming" is modeled on the expansion of the Zionist principle to include a broader population within it, but as such, it is not a rejection of the Zionist principle or a reversal of its settler colo-nial logic. "Israeli becoming" builds on Zionism and goes beyond it ("post") to include the state's minorities, but it avoids accountability for colonial violence or a radical change through future reparation and remodeling of society. This "becoming" remains confined to an extension of a preexisting political model: Zionism becomes post-Zionism. But "post" can never fully provide a radical alternative, only an expansion: more people, more minori-ties, will be included in the future nation-state. What has not yet become and still awaits *becoming* in the true sense is not a post-Zionist Israel, but an anti-Zionist (and anti- any other ethno-national separatist ideology, for that matter) society.

For Israel and for Palestine as we know them, pre- and post-1948, to go through a process of becoming, both entities must cease to be in their actuality and must become something radically different. I call it *becoming Palestine*. Becoming Palestine is not becoming Palestine *again*. At stake is not a break from the past or the present but a *return to the present*, with the recognition that the Nakba is not a traumatic rapture or "event" in the past, but an ongoing condition that still creates refugees.

Our task, politically and ethically, is to replace this actuality of becom-ing refugees with a different potentiality and a different political imagi-nation, which I call "becoming Palestine." This potential becoming does not involve a redistribution of suffering, expulsion, and uprooting, but a radical break from the economy of refugee-ness. Kanafani, in his novella mentioned above, warns us against any simplistic solution of replacing one refugee with another, reminding us of the importance to center the figure of the refugee at the heart of any political fight for justice. A solution for one refugee should never be the creation of a refugee condition for another.

At stake is not a utopic vision of justice either (and utopia is always about exclusion, Jameson reminds us),[87] but an attempt to institute justice and create a livable life by building new collectives that exist beyond the logistics of nationality and the naturalization of citizenship as the only ticket to belonging.

The chapters of this book highlight several different aspects of this potentiality by elaborating an alternative archival imagination. Some chapters (mainly the first two) are primarily preoccupied with the poetics of archival citationality and mimicry. Chapter 1, "Revisiting the Orientalist Archive: Jumana Manna's Re-Mapped Musical Archive of Palestine," explores the appeal and limits of the Orientalist archival impetus and reconsiders it as a source of articulating a potentiality for a future yet to come. The chapter follows the meeting between a young Palestinian artist and filmmaker (Jumana Manna) and a musical archive she finds, explores, follows, mimics, and takes apart: that of the once-famed German-Jewish ethnomusicologist and Orientalist, Robert Lachmann. Attending to Manna's film *A Magical Substance Flows into Me* (2015), in which she travels throughout Israel and the West Bank exploring various Palestinian musical traditions, modeling her cinematic journey on Lachmann's musical archive, this chapter looks closely at the frictions between the Orientalist archive Lachmann produced during his short years of living in Palestine (1936–1939) and the new archive Manna creates by circumventing his Orientalist modality. Finally, the chapter highlights *A Magical Substance*'s meta-cinematic *preoccupation* with questions of mastery and ownership over the archive. What might have been a naïve (if well-intended and certainly well-informed) Orientalist fantasy on the part of Lachmann, to "use music" to promote cultural understanding between local Jews and Arabs in Mandate Palestine, becomes in Manna's hands, I suggest, a much more subversive project of outlining a potential futurity. To paraphrase Manna's words: revisiting Lachmann's archive "provides a space from which another Palestine can be[come]."[88]

Chapter 2, "Lost and Found in Israeli Footage: Kamal Aljafari's 'Jaffa Trilogy' and the Productive Violation of the Colonial Visual Archive," is dedicated to the cinematic oeuvre of Palestinian director Kamal Aljafari. While the first chapter focuses on the ambiguities of the Orientalist archive, the second chapter draws attention to the structural and historical raptures of the Israeli visual colonial archive. The chapter explores Aljafari's mimetic archival imagination, focusing on the futuristic vision of his hometown, Jaffa. The "Jaffa Trilogy" is made almost in its entirety from footage he collected from various Israeli archival sources: films, videos,

and photographs. I explore Aljafari's unique cinematic endeavor and his insistence on *recycling* and manipulating Israeli footage rather than creating images of his own. I show how Aljafari's digital cinematic practices center on the ultimate failure of the Israeli settler colonial archive to do away with the Palestinian natives, or keep them outside of the cinematic frame. Aljafari's film trilogy highlights the potentiality inherent within the colonial archive, which inevitably already includes its failures. What his mesmerizing and ghostly films make visible is that even if the Israeli visual archive was partially successful in pushing Palestinians to the margins of the frame, their presence nevertheless is invasive and inescapable. A blurry face, a side vision of a turning body, a small figure hiding behind a closed window—Aljafari brings these images to the forefront, reminding us that every archive is haunted by its exclusions, and such hauntings are the visual testimony and reminder of a potential future to become.

The following two chapters, 3 and 4, share an interest in archaeology and specifically biblical-Israeli archaeology as the archive (understood in Foucault's terms as "the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events")[89] that dominates the local and international political discourse about Israel/Palestine. The metaphor and practice of archaeology enables a certain materialization of the archive and a certain imagination of materiality. Often this is the most important underlying archive of a nation and a people, which is so profound that it must not *appear* manmade but must emerge as a miracle: a past coming alive in the present. Naturalized as discovery, and emerged (actual, material, Real) traces of the past, archaeological findings form a base archive for national imagination by seeming to exceed the confining borders of any given institutionalized archive. Creating, marking, and guarding the counters of national imagination, archaeology provides both the logic and the content of presumably unachievable archives: the ethos, the evidence, the proof of peoplehood. If this is the case in general, it is most certainly and exceptionally so in the case of Zionism.[90] Chapter 3, "'Suspended between Past and Future': Larissa Sansour's Sci-Fi Archaeological Archive in the Past-Future Tense," is dedicated to Larissa Sansour's twenty-nine-minute-long essay film *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain* (2016). The film, a mesmerizing sci-fi tale, unfolds a story of a self-identified "narrator-terrorist" through a conversation between her and her psychoanalyst. Both narrator and therapist, I argue, speak the language of archaeology, but while the therapist seeks to heal her patient's scars of past traumas through the archaeological modality of psychoanalysis, the

narrator wishes to mobilize archaeology for "terror attacks" on history. This chapter explores the role of archaeology in the formation of national imagination and its function as a constituting apparatus of order that can nevertheless be defeated with similar means.[91] The seeming embrace of the archaeological drive in the film, I suggest, must be read as a radical critique of the archival aura of archaeology, which is mobilized by Zionism to argue for the historical rights of Jews to resettle in Palestine. But beyond this astute critique of Zionism and its reliance on the archaeological archive, *In the Future* advances a broader critique of archaeology as the modality for understanding peoplehood in terms of a shared historical legacy upon which rights of land ownership are established. Accordingly, my reading focuses on the replacement of "digging" (the archaeological defining activity) with "burying" in Sansour's film: the burial of fake archaeological findings for future discoveries. Such a reversal of activity and temporality offers a radical departure from myths of authenticity and origins along the lines outlined by Laura Marks in her definition of "cinematic archaeology": a mode of inquiry that replaces the search for an "authentic voice" with the evocation of "the myth of culture as a necessary fiction."[92]

Chapter 4, "'Face to Face with the Ancestors of Civilization': Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas's Archive of the Copy," is dedicated to the multimedia work of the duo Palestinian artists Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas, *And Yet My Mask Is Powerful* (2016–2019). The chapter returns to the status of archaeology as a national archive (in the Israeli case, *the* national archive) by exploring the use of archaeological findings (both artifact and ruins) in a new, counterarchaeological manner. I read Abou-Rahme and Abbas's work as a critique of archaeology that targets both the manipulative role it plays in Israeli politics and the methodology itself as a broader principle of historical reasoning. *And Yet My Mask Is Powerful* returns to sites of Palestinian ruins, where the artists perform tours and fictional rituals with groups of young Palestinians. These tours function not only as an act of reclaiming place but also as an act of reclaiming time: replacing the temporality of the colonial nation with a radically different temporality in which the "ruins" are no longer sites of destruction, or indexes of a long-gone past, but rather opportunities "from which to think about the incomplete nature of the colonial project" and through which "to activate a potentiality to become unbound from colonial time" to borrow the artists' own words. The critique of archaeology is further enhanced by the artists' creation of a 3D print of an original Neolithic mask housed in the Israeli Museum in Jerusalem. *And Yet My Mask Is Powerful* traces the logic of the

copy and the fake as a mimetic shadow of the colonial totem. While the latter carries the promise of originality, the former evokes an economy of becoming that is free from the fetish of any narrative of origins and hence of the aura associated with the archaeological archive.

The fifth and last chapter, "Gesturing toward Resistance: Farah Saleh's Archive of Gestures," centers on the role of the body-as-archive and the possibility of body movement—dance, particularly—to undo the archival focus on documentation and recording (the past) through enactment and speculative performative variations directed at a future imagination. The chapter engages with the work of Palestinian dancer, choreographer, performer, archivist, and activist Farah Saleh to suggest that her work, which bridges between the studio, the stage, and the street, as well as between art and activism and between preexisting archival materials and new embodied performances, successfully creates alternative "archives of gestures." Hers are archives that document gestures and that simultaneously also gesture toward the ability to revise, recirculate, and reinvigorate, as well as transform and deform, preexisting archives. If the archive is seductive by nature, as Derrida and many others have suggested, Saleh's work highlights the fact that the archive's seductive nature emanates not from the allure of power and authority, but rather from its ability to spark and elicit an *affective* reaction. Saleh's dance work often springs from her initial meeting with archival material, while the choreography centers on and explores the impact of *the meeting* between the past and the present, the archival document and the body of the dancer, and one's own body and the bodies of others. Indeed, her work foregrounds the archive's seductive propulsion but turns it from malice and fever (*mal d'archive*) to imaginative elaboration and *critical fabulation*, to borrow Saidiya Hartman's term.[93] Focusing on Saleh's videodance installation and film *C.I.E.* (2016, 12.29 min.), this chapter focuses on Saleh's *affective* archives to suggest that they transmit knowledge through a corporeal experience that reshapes archival material from their historical function as visual documentation toward political activism by exploring through the archive a question of great political importance: How can we learn to move politically?

....

In a short essay entitled "Palestine as Archive," Sherene Seikaly notes that the ongoing violence and destruction in Gaza must be understood as an "instance of the Palestinian condition," rather than as an exceptional state of emergency. "Gaza today belongs to the archive of colonialism," she

rightly comments, folding Gaza into a long history of imperial and colonial violence and rejecting the idea of it as an incident of rare, sudden, and exceptional atrocity. But "Palestine as archive" is not only made of records of colonialism. It is also an archive of decolonization.[94] Read together, the following chapters create an archive of sorts—an archive of decolonization that brings together a rich body of art that is already operating in a "time of becoming." Read it, if you will, as an archive of a collective endeavor to imagine what others insist is impossible: the becoming of Palestine.

PREFACE

Epigraph: "Who Will We Be When We Are Free? On Palestine and Futurity," *The Funambulist*, no. 24, "Futurisms" (July–August 2019): 22–27.

1 The New Historians (among them Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and Avi Shlaim) have claimed to provide revelations about the 1948 war and *Nakba* that were previously concealed by the Israeli archives. Earlier historians did not have access to an abundance of newly declassified documents, which became available in the 1980s. But there have always been critics who questioned just how *new* these findings really were. Commenting on Benny Morris's "revelation" in particular, Efraim Karsh does not deny the facts revealed (expulsions, violence), but does challenge their newness: "This [accusation against Israeli forces] was made known decades earlier in such works as Jon and David Kimche's *Both Sides of the Hill*; Rony Gabbay's *A Political Study of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*; and Nadav Safran's *From War to War*." What is questioned here is the novelty provided by the archives as the "source" for hidden secret information. Efraim Karsh, *Rethinking the Middle East* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 175.

2 Gish Amit chronicles the theft of both Palestinian and Mizrahi artifacts and entire libraries in "Salvage or Plunder: Israel's 'Collection' of Private Palestinian Libraries in West Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2011): 6–23; "The Destruction of Palestinian Libraries," [in Hebrew] *Mita'am: A Review of Literature and Radical Thought* 12 (2007): 41–52; and "Ownerless Objects? The Story of the Books Palestinians Left Behind in 1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 33 (2008): 7–20. Rona Sela has exerted great effort to identify and locate missing Palestinian films and other visual archival objects in Israeli archives, where they are sealed away, while declared by Israeli authorities as lost or missing. See Sela's "The Genealogy of Colonial Plunder and Erasure—Israel's Control over Palestinian Archives," *Social Semiotics* 28, no. 2 (2018): 201–29. Sela also made a documentary film about the stolen films and photographs, tracing them back to their original Palestinian owners: *Looted and Hidden—Palestinian Archives in Israel* (2017, 46 min.). Also important in this regard are the artistic efforts of Emily Jacir, particularly her 2010–12 work "ex libris," which is based on Gish Amit's research. Informed by Amit's findings, Jacir made several visits to the National Library of Israel (*ha-sifrya ha-leumit*) in Jerusalem, where looted Palestinian books are held, and made photos of the books using her cell phone. The images were first presented during dOCUMNETA 13, which took place in Kessel, Germany, in the Offenbach Archival Depot, where the largest stolen book redistribution project in history took place, following the end of World War II. The display was thus also a political act of demanding similar restitution

of Palestinian books to their original owners. For details on this project, see Eva Sharrer, "Emily Jacir: ex libris," *Nafas, Universes in Universe*, 2012, accessed April 25, 2020, https://universes.art/en/nafas/articles/2012/emily-jacir-documenta.

3 Ariella Azoulay has created several archives in an attempt to foster alternative historical logic and change the political visual conditions through which the archival material is understood; among these are her photographic exhibitions: *From Palestine to Israel: A Photographic Record of Destruction and State Formation, 1947–1950* (London: Pluto, 2011); *Constituent Violence 1947–1950* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2009); and *Act of State: A Photographed History of the Occupation 1967–2007*, held at the Minshar Art Gallery in Tel Aviv in June 2007. Another impressive archive attempting to escape the dominant archival conditions in Israel/Palestine is her film *Civil Alliances*. Describing the motivation for making the film, Azoulay notes, "Documenting those civil alliances is an effort to return to that point zero, before the world shared by Arabs and Jews was halved almost irretrievably." See Ariella Azoulay, "Potential History: Thinking through Violence," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (2013): 554. This Ground Zero is what I call "the moment before the moment."

4 When the New Historians researched the previously closed Israeli military and government archives during the 1980s, they radically challenged the official Israeli historical narrative about the 1948 war. These scholars found evidence for the forced expulsion of Palestinians, who were previously said to have "fled" by their own free will. The impact of this and other findings that criminalized Israel had a major impact on the Israeli public throughout the 1990s. Publications such as Benny Morris's *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (1987) and later books by Ilan Pappé, Tom Segev, Hillel Cohen, and Idit Zertal, among others, have had a great influence on rendering the Nakba visible and reversing Israel's official and distorted narratives. Palestinian scholars, who have a much harder time accessing Israeli archives, have also continued to expose and document the Nakba through archival research. Among the most influential researchers in this regard are historians Salim Tamari, Adel Manna, and Rashid Khalidi. In addition to scholars struggling with the Israeli archives in search for evidence and details about the Nakba, there are several important *generative* projects that establish alternative and informative archives primarily based on collecting oral testimonies as a form of alternative historical documentation. Among those, I would mention the "Palestinian Oral History Archive (POHA)" at the American University in Beirut (AUB) and available on its website (https://www.aub.edu.lb/ifi/Pages/poha .aspx). *The Christian Palestinian Archive* by Dor Guez is another interesting archival source, comprising digital scans of historical images stored on hard drives; read more about it at https://www.visibleproject.org/blog/project/the-christian -palestinian-archive/.

5 Efraim Karsh, "Debating Israel's History," *Middle East Quarterly* 3, no. 2 (1996): 19.

6 Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

7 Emphasis added. Ari Shavit, "Survival of the Fittest: Ari Shavit Interviews Benny Morris," *Ha'aretz*, January 8, 2004. Morris's account of "destroy" or "be destroyed" ignores that the Arabs he accuses of "aim[ing] to kill" were fighting a growing settler colonial movement, not planning to commit genocide.

8 Saidiya Hartman uses the term *critical fabulation* to describe her approach to the archive of the Atlantic slave trade: "I have attempted to jeopardize the status of the event, to displace the received or authorized account, and to imagine what might have happened or might have been said or might have been done. By throwing into crisis 'what happened when' and by exploiting the 'transparency of sources' as fictions of history, I wanted to make visible the production of disposable lives (in the Atlantic slave trade and, as well, in the discipline of history), to describe 'the resistance of the object.'" "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism* 12, no. 2 (2008): 11. More recently, and following Hartman's steps, Tavia Nyong'o has highlighted the importance of mobilizing fabulation in keeping the tension and ambivalence between optimism and pessimism, as well as between fiction and history as sources of narrating resistance. See Tavia Nyong'o, *Afro-Fabulations: The Queer Drama of Black Life* (New York: NYU Press, 2019).

9 Kiven Strohm, "The Sensible Life of Return: Collaborative Experiments on Art and Anthropology in Palestine/Israel," *American Anthropologist* 121, no. 1 (2019): 249.

10 Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (1984): 27–48.

11 Jumana Manna, "As Told to Lara Atallah," *Artforum*, September 8, 2015, https://www.artforum.com/interviews/jumana-manna-speaks-about-her-latest-feature-length-film-54890.

12 I thank Nasser Abourahme for engaging in a very productive conversation with me about this matter. Reflecting on Palestinian literature, Abourahme (whose grandmother Salma Khadra Jayyusi edited and wrote the introduction to the 1992 *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*—one of the first, if not the first, anthologies of modern Palestinian literature) notes that "most of the critics, like Said, understood Palestinian literature in its heyday as something defined overwhelmingly, beyond genre or style, by a will to narrative: a kind of drive to tell the story over and over again until you are recognized" (e-mail exchange, February 29, 2020). A similar argument can surely be made about Palestinian art post-1948 and until more recently. As acclaimed artist and art critic Samia Halaby notes in her landmark book, *Liberation Art of Palestine: Palestinian Painting and Sculpture in the Second Half of the 20th Century* (New York: H.T.T.B. Publications, 2001), Palestinian art since 1948 labored to render visible and knowable a history of a people whose story was otherwise muted and silenced. For related arguments that trace recent shifts away from the documentary and witnessing and toward the experimental and performative in contemporary Palestinian literature and art, see Ihab Saloul, "'Performative Narrativity': Palestinian Identity and the

Performance of Catastrophe," *Cultural Analysis* 7 (2008): 5–39; Shir Alon, "No One to See Here: Genres of Neutralization and the Ongoing Nakba," *Arab Studies Journal* 27, no. 1 (2019): 91–117; and Esmail Nashif, "Mawt al-Nas" (Death of the People), [Arabic] *Majallat al-Dirasat al-Filastiniyya* 96 (2013): 96–117.

13 Wendy Brown, "Resisting Left Melancholy," *Boundary 2* 26, no. 3 (1999): 19–27.

INTRODUCTION: ARCHIVAL IMAGINATION OF/FOR THE FUTURE

Epigraphs: Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, in conversation with Tom Holert, "The Archival Multitude," *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 3 (December 2013): 353; Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (New York: Verso, 2019), 186.

1 Carrie Lambert-Beatty, "Make Believe: Parafiction and Plausibility," *October* 129 (2009): 51–84.

2 Avery Gordon, *The Hawthorn Archive: Letters from the Utopian Margins* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2017), x.

3 Umar al-Ghubari and Tomer Gardi, eds., *Awda: Imagined Testimonies from Potential Futures* (Tel Aviv: Zochrot, 2013), 5.

4 Also worth noting are two new literary publications about imagined futures for Palestine. The first is the critical dystopia, *The Book of Disappearance* (*Sifr al-Ikhifa'*) by Palestinian writer Ibtisam Azem. The book, depicting the sudden disappearance of all Palestinians from Israel and critically engaging with the Israeli failure to deal with this disappearance, was first published in Arabic in 2014 and has been translated into English by Sinan Antoon. Another book is *Palestine +100: Stories from a Century after the Nakba*, edited by Basma Ghalayini (Manchester, UK: Comma, 2019). This collection of twelve stories from Palestinian writers, like *Awda*, presents a noncoherent image of the future, but overall it seems significantly less optimistic. In the opening story by Saleem Haddad, "Song of the Birds," the narrator anguishes: "We're just another generation imprisoned by our parents' nostalgia" (11). The narrator of Emad El Din Aysha's story "Digital Nation" warns us: "Utopia is a dangerous thing. It had to be stamped out. Hope was contiguous" (81).

5 See their website at http://www.decolonizing.ps/site.

6 As stated on the introductory page of their website: "'Arena of speculation' refers to an intellectual space of critical debate on the spatial futures of Israel-Palestine. . . . This website was established by a group of architects and spatial thinkers with the intention of offering a doorway to this growing sphere of agency, defined here as 'spatial resistance,' by drawing in perspectives encompassing spatial analysis, advocacy, critical speculation and physical intervention. It is hoped that rather than simply offering an echo chamber for debate, this deliberate juxtaposition of speculation with practice may highlight fragments of possible spatial futures that already exist, and how—in the midst of the myriad forces continually reshaping Israel-Palestine—these might represent seeds of an alternative future." See https://arenaofspeculation.org/intro.

7 Over the past decade a number of initiatives began to grapple with the architectural, spatial, and speculative aspect of *awda* ("return"). Among these works are the works of geographer Salman Abu Sitta in his book *Palestinian Right of Return: Sacred, Legal, and Possible*, and DAAR's project "Returns" on their website: http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/site3-returns.

8 Marianne Hirsch, "Stateless Memory," *Critical Times* 2, no. 3 (2019): 417.

9 Hirsch, "Stateless Memory," 417.

10 Hirsch, "Stateless Memory," 419.

11 The full details of the project, the proposal to UNESCO, images of the camp submitted with the proposal, and the responses of various specialists as well as members of the refugee camp are available online on the DAAR website's *Refugee Heritage* section. The introduction section states: "The UNESCO nomination dossier was originally prepared by DAAR (Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, Sandy Rishmawi, Elsa Koehler, Isshaq Al Barbary, Mais Musleh) in consultation with Campus in Camps, Dheisheh Camp Popular Committee, Finiq Cultural Center, Ibdaa Cultural Center, Riwaq Center for Architectural Conservation and Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation in Bethlehem. Special thanks to the Odah and Al Saifi families. Produced with the support of the Foundation for Art Initiatives and 5th Riwaq Biennale." Alessandro Petti, "Introduction," *Refugee Heritage, Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency,* 2017, accessed April 15, 2020, http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/introduction-4/.

12 UNESCO, Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization meeting in Paris from October 17 to November 21, 1972, at its seventeenth session, https://whc.unesco.org/en/conventiontext.

13 Alessandro Petti, "Architecture of Exile IV.B," 2017, accessed April 10, 2020, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/refugee-heritage/99756/the-architecture-of-exile-iv-b.

14 Petti, "Architecture of Exile IV.B."

15 Joan Smith, "I Find Myself Instinctively on the Other Side of Power," interview with Edward Said, *The Guardian*, December 10, 2001, https://www.theguardian.com/books/departments/politicsphilosophyandsociety/story/0,6000,616545,00.html.

16 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What Is Philosophy*?, trans. Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 110.

17 Antoine L'Heureux, "Art's Utopia: The Geography of Art against (Its) History," in *Art History after Deleuze and Guattari*, ed. Van Tuinen Sjoerd and Zepke Stephen (Leuven, Belgium: Leuven University Press, 2017), 258. Also see Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1987], trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

18 Patrick Williams and Anna Ball, "Where Is Palestine?" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 50, no. 2 (2014): 127–33.

19 Burhan Wazir, "Palestinian Film Denied Oscars Entry," *The Guardian*, December 14, 2002, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/dec/15/film.filmnews.

20 Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage, 1992).

21 Mahmoud Darwish, *Palestine as Metaphor*, ed. and trans. Amira El-Zein and Carolyn Forche (London: Interlink, 2019).

22 Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 175.

23 *Pessoptimism* was coined by Palestinian writer Emile Habibi in his 1974 novel, *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist.* The term merges the Arabic words for pessimist (*al-mutasha'im*) and optimist (*al-mutafa'il*).

24 Robin Kelly, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon, 2002), 10.

25 Ariella Azoulay, "The Imperial Condition of Photography in Palestine: Archives, Looting, and the Figure of the Infiltrator," *Visual Anthropology Review* 33, no. 1 (2017): 10.

26 Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 36.

27 Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, in conversation with Tom Holert, "The Archival Multitude," *Journal of Visual Culture* 12, no. 3 (2014): 353.

28 Gregg Burris, *The Palestinian Idea: Film Media and the Radical Imagination* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2019), 18.

29 Ann Laura Stoler, "Colonial Archives and the Arts of Governance," in *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, ed. Francis X. Blouin and William G. Rosenberg (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 269–71.

30 Derrida, *Archive Fever*. The amount of writing about the nature of the archive after 1995 is tremendous, and I cannot possibly include all references here. The following list mentions just some of the most critical texts. In defense of the "actual archive" (dusty files in a dusty building), see Carolyn Steedman's beautifully written *Dust: The Archive and Cultural History* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002). For the sensuality of the archive and the importance of historical archival work, see Arlette Farge, *The Allure of the Archives* [1989, French], trans. Thomas Scott-Railton (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015). Also see Markus Friedrich, *The Birth of the Archive: A History of Knowledge Cultures of Knowledge in the Early Modern World*, trans. John Dillon (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2018). About colonial archives, see Antoinette M. Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Anjali Arondekar, *For the Record: On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009). About Affect Theory and archives, see Ann Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham, NC: Duke Univer-

sity Press, 2012). For the importance of archival fabulation, see Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2019) and Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey along the Atlantic Slave Road* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008). Finally, for a broad survey of the different meanings "the archive" carries in different disciplines, see Marlene Manoff, "Theories of the Archive from across the Disciplines," *Portal: Libraries and the Academy* 4, no. 1 (2004): 9–25; Harriet Bradley, "The Seductions of the Archive: Voices Lost and Found," *History of the Human Sciences* 12, no. 2 (1999): 107–22; Achille Mbembe, "The Power of the Archive and Its Limits," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2002), 19–27; Bhekizizwe Peterson, "The Archives and the Political Imaginary," in *Refiguring the Archive*, ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, and Razia Saleh (Norwell, MA: Kluwer Academic Publisher, 2002), 28–35. Also see Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Photography* (New York: International Center of Photography, 2008).

31 Also, see Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (2014): 3–22.

32 A less productive example, but surely widespread and similar in structure, is the feverish archiving of "present moments" on social media (Instagram is a perfect case), where every event posted and archived is generated as *already* a memory.

33 Cvetkovich, *An Archive of Feelings*.

34 Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 215.

35 Arjun Appadurai, "The Archive and Aspiration," in *Information Is Alive*, ed. Joke Brouwer and Arjen Mulder (Rotterdam: V_2 Publications, 2003), 15.

36 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972).

37 See Ariella Azoulay, "Potential History: Thinking through Violence," *Critical Inquiry* 39, no. 3 (2013): 548–74.

38 Abbas and Abou-Rahme, "The Archival Multitude," 353.

39 Abbas and Abou-Rahme, "The Archival Multitude," 353.

40 Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1968), 253–64.

41 Benjamin, "Theses," 255.

42 Benjamin, "Theses," 261.

43 Benjamin, "Theses," 255.

44 Derrida writes, "A spectral messianicity works in the concept of the archive and ties it, like religion, like history, like science itself, to a very singular experience of the promise" (*Archive Fever,* 27).

45 Pad.ma, "10 Theses on the Archive," April 2010, accessed April 25, 2020, https://pad.ma/documents/OH.

46 Stephen Best, *None Like Us: Blackness, Belonging, Aesthetic Life* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018), 15. For more on the significance of "recovery" as the main goal of scholarly engagements with the archive, particularly in the context of Atlantic slavery, see especially pages 13–22.

47 Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia," *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914–1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works* (London: Hogarth, 1917), 243–58.

48 Best, *None Like Us*, 21. Emphasis in original.

49 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," 11.

50 Appadurai, "The Archive and Aspiration," 16, 24.

51 Yehuda Shenhav-Sha'harabani, "Reference," in *Awda: Imagined Testimonies from Potential Futures*, ed. Umar al-Ghubari and Tomer Gardi (Tel Aviv: Zochrot, 2013).

52 Derrida's definition of the archive already includes this destructive element *within* the archive itself. The archive is sustained by two opposed forces, he notes, following Freud's theory of drives; by the preservation drive (to keep, maintain, save from erasure) and its death drive (eliminate, do away with traces, forgetting). Thus, when the archive preserves, it also destroys; when it destroys, it also saves. The very drive that enables archivization to begin with "works to destroy the archive: on the condition of effacing but also with a view of effacing its own 'proper' traces—which consequently cannot be called proper" (*Archive Fever*, 10).

53 Jaimie Baron, "The Archive Effect: Archival Footage," *Projections* 6, no. 2 (2012): 103.

54 In this regard Baron writes: "The archival effect . . . depends on the individual viewer, who may respond to a variety of cues within the appropriated footage as well as to his or her extra textual knowledge about why this footage was made and for who it was originally indented" ("The Archive Effect," 112). In this case, a viewer who doesn't know Dana International or her cultural status within Israel and the pop global scene, or anything about the rave dances in Israel during the 1990s, is unlikely to experience an archival effect by watching the film.

55 Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 4.

56 For research on the centrality of the figure of the archive in modern art, see Ingrid Schaffner and Matthias Winzen, eds., *Deep Storage: Collecting, Storing, and Archiving in Art* (Munich: Prestel, 1998); Rebecca Comay, ed., *Lost in the Archives* (Toronto: Alphabet City Media, 2002); Charles Merewether, ed., *The Archive* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006); and Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever*.

57 Featuring as a key figure in the archive is Dr. Fadl Fakhouri, a preeminent historian of Lebanon's Civil War, who is Raad's fantastic creation. Through him, and his authority as a "learned historian" and "archivist," Raad has generated multimedia works such as the photographic series *Missing Lebanese Wars, Linguistic* (1996–2002) and *Notebook, Volume 38: Already Been in a Lake of Fire* (1991) and the inkjet print series *My Neck Is Thinner Than a Hair: Engines* (2001). Together, the online archive, the fictional historian, and the fictional collection of videotapes,

-%D8%AC%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%83%D8%AB%
D9%8A%D8%B1-%D9%85%D9%86-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9
%8A%D9%86; Roy Dib, "Emily Jacir Breaches Colonial Discourse," *Al-Akhbar*,
November 25, 2014, https://al-akhbar.com/Literature_Arts/41961.

63 Roland Barthes, "Theory of the Text," in *Untying the Text*, ed. Robert J. C. Young
(London: Routledge, 1981), 39.

64 Niamh Moore, Andrea Salter, Liz Stanley, and Maria Tamboukou, *The Archive
Project: Archival Research in the Social Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2016), 153.

65 See Dalia Karpel, "With Thanks to Ghassan Kanafani," *Ha'aretz*, April 14, 2005.
The review was followed by an official apology from *Ha'aretz*, but the reviewer
herself refused to admit fault or apologize.

66 One must note in this regard that Kanafani's novella is among the most canoni-
cal Palestinian narratives, widely read and globally circulated (the novella is
translated into English, French, Spanish, Italian, German, Danish, Swedish,
Norwegian, Hungarian, Polish, Dutch, Czech, Russian, Japanese, and Hebrew).
It is, without doubt, one of the most cited (and staged!) Palestinian literary
narratives of return and resistance, and hardly a text that can be "hidden" in an-
other. The novella has also become well known through several global stage adap-
tations: first a film by Kassem Hawal (1982), then in 2011 a play directed by Israeli
playwright Boaz Gaon and director Sini Patar (with permission from Kanafani's
widow and his son), and more recently a new theatrical version by Ismail Khalidi
and Naomi Wallace (2018).

67 Daniel Boyarin, "The Sea Resists: Midrash and the (Psycho)Dynamics of Inter-
textuality," *Poetics Today* 10, no. 4 (1989): 662.

68 Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, "Unbearable Witness: Towards a Politics of Listening,"
in *Extremities: Trauma, Testimony, and Community*, ed. Nancy K. Miller and Jason
Tougaw (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 159.

69 Quoted in Karpel, "With Thanks to Ghassan Kanafani."

70 Azoulay, "Potential History," 565.

71 Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jova-
novich, 1973), 277.

72 Lila Abu-Lughod, "Palestine: Doing Things with Archives," 2018, 3.

73 Edward Said, "Permission to Narrate," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 13, no. 3 (1984):
27–48.

74 Gish Amit, "Ownerless Objects? The Story of the Books Palestinians Left Behind
in 1948," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 33 (2008): 8.

75 See Gish Amit, "Salvage or Plunder: Israel's 'Collection' of Private Palestinian
Libraries in West Jerusalem," *Journal of Palestinian Studies* 40, no. 4 (2011): 6–23. Also
see the film based on Gish's research: Benny Brunner, dir., *The Great Book Robbery*
(Xela Films, Al Jazeera English, 2011). Also see the exhibition and book created
by Palestinian artist Emily Jacir after she learned about the stolen books from
Amit's research. Emily Jacir, "ex libris," originally shown June 9–September 16,
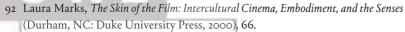
2012, in Kassel, Germany, at dOCUMENTA (13), https://universes.art/en/nafas
/articles/2012/emily-jacir-documenta/. Regarding the looting of Palestinian
photography, see Ariella Azoulay, "Photographic Conditions: Looting, Ar-
chives, and the Figure of the 'Infiltrator,'" *Jerusalem Quarterly* 61 (2015): 6–22;
Rona Sela, *Photography in Palestine/Eretz Israel in the Thirties and Forties* [Hebrew]
(Tel Aviv: Muze'on Hertzliya le-omanut and Hakibutz Hameuchad, 2009); Rona
Sela, *Made Public: Palestinian Photographs in Military Archives in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Hel-
ena Publishing House, 2010). Also see Rona Sela's documentary *Looted and Hidden:
Palestinian Archives in Israel* (2017, 46 min.); Wahid Gdoura, "The Violation of Librar-
ies and Books in Occupied Palestine: For the Safeguard of the Palestinian People's
Cultural Heritage," in *Libraries of Jerusalem* (Tunis: AFLI, 2003): 36–38; and Aron
Shai, "The Fate of Abandoned Arab Villages in Israel on the Eve of the Six-Day War
and Its Immediate Aftermath," [Hebrew] *Cathedra* 105 (September 2002): 151–70.

76 See Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Com-
   mon Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); James Lowry, ed.,
   Displaced Archives (New York: Routledge, 2017); Esther Lezra, *The Colonial Art of
   Demonizing Others: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Routledge, 2014).

77 Zionism, Judt writes, "arrived too late" and "has imported a characteristically
   late nineteenth century separatist project into a world that has moved on . . .
   the very idea of a 'Jewish state' is rooted in another time and place." Tony Judt,
   "Israel: The Alternative," *New York Review of Books*, October 23, 2003.

78 Sophia Azeb, "The No State Solution: Power of Imagination for the Palestinian
   Struggle." Interview recorded with Sophia Azeb in Los Angeles on April 27, 2014,
   https://thefunambulist.net.

79 On the Birzeit archive collection, see Roger Heacock and Caroline Mall-Dibiasi,
   "Liberating the Phantom Elephant: The Digitization of Oral Archives," Work-
   ing Paper Series, Migration and Refugee Studies Module, 2011; and Ann Laura
   Stoler, "On Archiving as Dissensus," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and
   the Middle East* 38, no. 1 (2018): 43–56. Also see Ahmad Melhem, "Palestinian Mu-
   seum's Digital Archive Project to Preserve Heritage," *Al-Monitor*, March 11, 2018;
   and Naima Morelli, "New Directions for the Palestinian Museum: Interview
   with Director Dr. Adila Laïdi Hanieh," *Middle East Monitor*, June 26, 2019. Infor-
   mation about Guez's Christian Palestinian Archive can be found at https://www
   .dorguez.com/copy-of-the-architect-1, accessed April 15, 2020. Information about
   Jacir's project can be found at https://darjacir.com/News-and-Mag, accessed
   April 15, 2020.

80 See Khazaaen's website at https://www.khazaaen.org.

81 Appadurai, "The Archive and Aspiration," 25.

82 Azoulay, "Potential History," 558. Emphasis added.

83 Azoulay, "Potential History," 565.

84 "Control and Becoming: Gilles Deleuze in Conversation with Antonio Negri,"
   Funambulist (1990), accessed April 15, 2020, https://thefunambulist.net/law

/philosophy-control-and-becoming-a-conversation-between-toni-negri-and
-gilles-deleuze.

85 Laurence J. Silberstein, "Becoming Israel, Israeli Becomings," in *Deleuze and the Contemporary World*, ed. Ian Buchanan and Adrian Parr (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 156.

86 Silberstein, "Becoming Israel," 156. Emphasis added.

87 Frederic Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions* (London: Verso, 2005), 205.

88 Jumana Manna, "As Told to Lara Atallah," *Artforum*, September 8, 2015, artforum .com/words/id=54890.

89 Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 128–29.

90 Philip Kohl notes that "the association between the development of archaeology and nation-building was so obvious as to remain largely unquestioned throughout the nineteenth century and most of the twentieth century; the roots of countries were extended back into the mists of the prehistoric past" (228). He gives several examples, among them that archaeology helped turn "peasants into Frenchmen," and propel the German reaction against the universalist ideals of the Enlightenment: "Germany's pronounced 'cultural obsession' with philhellenism, the glories of ancient Greece, and their subsequent establishment of exacting standards of scholarship in allied disciplines, such as comparative philology and Altertumskunde" (229). While nationalist archaeology in Germany developed largely beyond the borders of Germany, it led to an expanding national imagination into ancient times. Archaeology fits in differently in different national contexts (the cases examined by Kohl are Spain, Greece, and Italy in addition to France and Germany, Mexico, the Soviet Union, and China), but in all of them it serves to solidify, expand, and ground national imagination. See Philip L. Kohl, "Nationalism and Archaeology: On the Constructions of Nations and the Reconstructions of the Remote Past," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 27 (1998): 223–46.

91 In *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Knowledge on Language* (1969), Michel Foucault famously compares the study of archives to archaeological practice. For Foucault the archive is above all an ordering system: The "law of what can be said" and "the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events" (145). Archaeology, according to Foucault, is the discipline that best "describes discourses as practices specified in the element of the archive" (148). One could say that archaeology is the method that Foucault adopts for understanding how the archive operates. Above all, "an archaeology of the archive will disclose how we sculpt and resculpt the materiality of history. The shovel is also part of the apparatus of social memory creation," to borrow Gabriella Giannachi's words in *Archive Everything: Mapping the Everyday* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015), 35.

92 Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000), 66.

93 Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts."

94 Sherene Seikaly, "Palestine as Archive," *Stanford University Press Blog*, August 1, 2014, https://stanfordpress.typepad.com/blog/2014/08/palestine-as-archive.html.

CHAPTER 1: REVISITING THE ORIENTALIST ARCHIVE

Epigraphs: Beshara Doumani, "Archiving Palestine and the Palestinians: The Patrimony of Ihsan Nimr," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 36 (2009): 312; Omar Kholeif, "Focus Interview: Jumana Manna," *Frieze*, May 30, 2014, https://frieze.com/article/focus-interview-jumana-manna.

1 Born in New Jersey in 1987 and raised in Jerusalem, Manna is a sculptor and a video filmmaker currently residing in Berlin, Germany.

2 The Robert Lachmann collection includes 960 ethnographic records and 167 early commercial records of Oriental music recorded in North Africa and in Palestine. The archive also includes Lachmann's lectures about Oriental music, which were aired on the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS) between 1936 and 1939.

3 Ruth Katz's *The Lachmann Problem* (2003) is the only published manuscript to date dedicated to Lachmann's work as a musicologist in both Germany and Palestine. The book includes Lachmann's personal and professional letters, as well as a CD with his original recordings in North Africa, including Egypt and Palestine. A more recent publication by Ruth Davis, *Robert Lachmann: The Oriental Music Broadcasts, 1936–1937: A Musical Ethnography of Mandatory Palestine*, introduces Lachmann's radio lectures to readers.

4 According to Ruth Davis, "Lachmann was convinced that it was the inclusiveness of his vision and, in particular, his refusal to focus specifically on Jewish music, that underlay the reluctance of the Hebrew University to support his project" (*Robert Lachmann,* 7).

5 Andrea L. Stanton, *"This Is Jerusalem Calling": State Radio in Mandate Palestine* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 20.

6 Personal interview with artist, Berlin, July 6, 2016.

7 Robert Lachmann wrote and presented twelve radio programs entitled *Oriental Music*, which were transmitted by the Palestine Broadcasting Service between November 1936 and April 1937.

8 "Interviews: Jumana Manna, as Told to Lara Atallah," *Art Forum*, September 18, 2015, https://www.artforum.com/interviews/jumana-manna-speaks-about-her-latest-feature-length-film-54890.

9 Ruth Davis, "Ethnomusicology and Political Ideology in Mandatory Palestine: Robert Lachmann's 'Oriental Music' Projects," *Music and Politics* 4, no. 2 (2010), 3, accessed April 20, 2020, https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/mp/9460447.0004.205/—ethnomusicology-and-political-ideology-in-mandatory?rgn=main;view=fulltext.