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My Home is Over Jordan: River as Border in Israeli and Palestinian National Mythology

Rachel Havrelock

'From the River to the Sea' rings the refrain that defines the terrain of desire for Zionist and Palestinian national movements and promises both circumscription and distinction. Since the Mediterranean operates as a different sort of frontier, the Jordan River figures as the border where both Palestinian and Israeli identities are constructed, contested and mythologised. In national myth, the Jordan is a site of beginning and transition where collective character undergoes transformation through changing modes of encountering the enemy. This article surveys Israeli and Palestinian Jordan narratives and the synecdochic process through which the River comes to signify the nation.

Keywords: Jordan River; Israeli-Palestinian Conflict; Borders/Borderlands; National Mythology; Migration

Introduction

The utopian borders of the imagined Israel and the imagined Palestine overlap, spanning from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. These aquatic borders signify territory and identity alike, and render the map a highly charged and

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emotional symbol whose limits suggest distinction and separation.¹ The very map that signifies the respective homelands of the Palestinian and Israeli nations corresponds with an internally divided space where the two peoples engage in an armed contest with arenas of demographics, media representation and international legitimacy. The dreamt whole of sovereign territory somewhat incongruously results in numerous invisible and pronounced barriers and blockades erected by the Israeli government to contain the Palestinians and carve out zones of a distinctly Jewish Israel. This article focuses on the Jordan River as the eastern border of utopian conceptions and as the political border between the State of Israel and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan as well as the Palestinian West Bank and the Jordanian East Bank. It argues that the narratives ascribed to the Jordan bolster collective identification with a fixed territory through reiterations of difference and contest. Palestinian and Israeli discourse projects a sense of necessity that the Jordan be the border and qualifies its east and west banks in opposition.² While such valuations certainly result from the competition for water in an arid region and the imprint of the River as border from the time of the British Mandate,³ they are articulated in national terms as stemming from the fact that the Jordan is a natural divide that bifurcates homeland and exile and periods of dormancy and revival.

Homeland

The conception of the Israeli and Palestinian nations coincides with the fact that 'the land is not yet fully acquired as a stable given' (Attias & Benbassa, 2003, p. 219) and that the borders remain undeclared, unofficial and unstable. With such uncertainty in the background, mythologies of the border are deployed to hallow specific sites as stable, sacred frontiers that irrevocably define the nation. While counterbalancing political fluidity with claims of stability and perpetuity, the border mythologies perform another mediating role. Above and beyond the key territorial ingredient of nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Carter, 1987), a circumscribed terrain facilitates the formulation of national identities that overlap with religious and ethnic designations. As national identities are neither natural nor unitary, the discourse of the border encompasses their instability and fluctuation. Not only do border stories emplace the nation, but they also index who belongs and who is excluded from it. Indeed there are Jews, Arabs and Muslims deeply invested in the respective national projects, but unless they claim genealogical origins or reside in the land, they are affiliates, not members, of the nation. Palestinian and Israeli identities are territorialised despite their wide-reaching diasporas and the twentieth-century nomadism of both groups (Schultz, 2003, p. 14; Boyarin & Boyarin, 2002, p. 11); as the identities shift and morph, continued competition for spatial determination sustains their territorial dimension (Bisharat, 1997, 205). Even in the absence of politically definitive state territory, border stories define geography as object of desire and constitutive of the national subject.

The symbolic codes at work in Palestinian and Israeli Jordan stories exhibit structural similarities and parallel themes, pointing toward the homologous rhetoric employed by competing groups. The shared images that evoke common landscapes will be highlighted throughout. At the same time, the asymmetrical experiences of Israeli colonisation and Palestinian displacement are not elided in the comparative enterprise. Binary formulations of symbolic codes like 'home'/'exile' exert a powerful unifying force within Palestinian and Israeli societies that crosses the lines of class, political party, ethnicity and religion by promoting putative nationalist underpinnings. The invocation of a bounded homeland rouses disparate factions to a common cause while the symbolism at play, however thematically parallel and internally unifying, mobilises contention and motivates the clash at borders. Experiences in the Jordan borderlands are enshrined in national myth as moments of inception or transition when the national character underwent a transformation due to engagement with the enemy. In the narratives considered below, a group construed as paradigmatic breaks with previous behaviours of accommodation or capitulation and redefines its environment through heroic acts. The Jordan figures as a site of beginnings that gives birth to the projects of collective struggle and where pioneers, refugees and freedom fighters articulate the very character of the nation. In nationalist myth, the Jordan River demarcates a stark contrast between the past and the present that facilitates the construction of essentialised self-conceptions and definitive opposition.

Pioneers

The city of Ramallah's founding narrative involves a Jordan River crossing by the Haddadins, an Arab Christian clan that resided east of the Jordan during Ottoman rule in the sixteenth century. Ramallah, interim capital of the Palestinian state, hosts the governing bodies of the Palestinian Authority and other important political, social and cultural institutions. Cosmopolitan and six miles north of Jerusalem, Ramallah has the status of a centre in Palestine, although the movement of its residents and the sphere of its influence are restricted by the Kalandia checkpoint and Israeli wall. The account of Ramallah's founding is transmitted through various means. As it extols their ancestors and explains their interconnection, the story is a staple of Ramallah's Palestinian Christian culture.⁴ In interviews conducted with multiple generations present, members of the youngest generation told me: 'We were first in Ramallah', 'We are descended from the seven brothers' or 'We are descended from the Haddadin.' Yet they used the occasion of my interview as an opportunity to brush up on the story by querying older relatives who narrated with detail and animation. Genealogical records of Ramallah Christians are meticulously maintained and available in historical studies, posters and websites. The Haddad clan division according to seven families continues to organise Ramallah Christians who host annual reunions in the West Bank and abroad. The importance of the narrative, however, is not restricted to Christians as the Haddadin migration across the Jordan

opens accounts of Ramallah's history as narrated in monographs and websites (*Ramallahonline*, *Ramallah.com*, *Wikipedia* and various Palestine blogs). Palestinians from Ramallah as well as from other regions cherish the origin of a purely Palestinian Arab city whose rise predates the colonial reinvention of the Middle East and, in certain instances, marshal it as a counterclaim to the Israeli pioneer myth.

The story begins east of the Jordan in the region of Kerak and Shobak in 1550. The Haddadins settled in the area farming and increasing their wealth by shepherding cattle and sheep. Although they live 'with al-Qayasilmah Bedouins around them', they gain 'the trust and love of the Bedouins because of their kindness and charity' (Abu Rayya, 1980, pp. 12–13). The balance of power is tenuous as the Haddadins, along with the other tribes in the region, are ruled by the despotic Bedouin prince, Dhiab Ibn Qaysum. One day when Rashid Haddadin, chief of his clan, hosts Ibn Qaysum, news reaches him of the birth of a daughter. Ibn Qaysum proposes that after the girl matures, she be wed to his son. Rashid, not wanting to offend his guest and assuming the arrangement to be either false formality or a joke, agrees. From the Christian perspective, such intermarriage is anathema to the point of being a profound impossibility; as one narrator explained: 'He thought that it was just a joke because, no way, do Christians and Muslims marry.'⁵

For Ibn Qaysum, the arrangement is no joke; when Rashid's daughter reaches marriageable age, he calls for the girl to be brought forward and the marriage to be consummated. When Rashid initially resists, the Prince responds with violence. The nature of this violence differs in the versions. In one account, Ibn Qaysum kidnaps two Haddadin children and kills them by rolling them down a mountain beneath a stone (Abu Rayya, 1980, p. 12). In another, hostilities erupt between the tribes, two Haddadins are killed and, upon prevailing, Ibn Qaysum threatens to kill all the men and take the girl (Shaheen, 1992, p. 10). Whatever the nature of the threat, it motivates Rashid to employ a different strategy. He requests that Ibn Qaysum grant the family some time to prepare his daughter for marriage and, having bought himself a few days, alerts all Haddadins to pack what they can and prepare for flight. Under the veil of darkness, they load their possessions on animals and head in the direction of the Dead Sea. Crossing a narrow bend in the Jordan, they reach safety and secure themselves through a clever ruse. Rashid and his brothers scatter sharp shards of metal at the crossing point so when Ibn Qaysum and his men pursue them on horseback, the horses' legs are cut rendering them unable to reach the Jordan's other side. Free of threat, the West Bank opens to the Haddadins as a pristine sanctuary distant from the dangers that lurk in the more familiar East Bank. The Haddadins tame the imposing landscape by felling trees, building homes on steep inclines and establishing agriculture.

Here the Jordan operates as a spatial border whose traversal entails a break with a past in which the proximity of neighbours leads to inevitable tensions. When the tensions flare into hostilities, the Haddadins exhibit intrepid resolve and a pioneering spirit. To a certain degree, the recitation of the story has the effect of conferring these qualities on Ramallah itself in the sense that stories of founding fathers are used as a

means of making space meaningful by endowing it with personal qualities. The different versions of the Haddadin story air the complexity of the relationship between Palestinian Christians and Muslims. The story begins on the uneasy note that the Haddadins are encircled by the Bedouins and lorded over by a despotic prince; instability results from the fact that the lines of distinction are not clearly drawn. Such lines become clear, however, when Muslim neighbours initiate a marriage with a young Christian woman and the Christians in turn assert the Jordan as a boundary between them. The story does not end on a note of religious distance or spatial separation, but rather by pointing toward the potential peace between Christians and Muslims in a city established by Christians who fled persecution. In Khalil Abu Rayya's printed version, Rashid Haddadin has a strong alliance with his Muslim neighbour, Husayn Banawiyah. As Husayn likewise feels oppressed by Ibn Qaysum's tyranny, the two organise their families and flee together. In Naseeb Shaheen's version, the wronged party is Rashid's brother, Sabra, who eventually returns eastward and reconciles with Ibn Qaysum.

Another context in which I heard the story of the Haddadins was in Christian households following their harassment or the destruction of their property by Islamicists. Older family members would tell younger ones or, in my case, foreign guests the story of the Hadaddins as a means of contrasting an initial Christian hospitality to Muslims in the Ramallah region with occasions of Muslim intolerance toward Christians. It should be emphasised, however, that Christians feel bound to Muslim Palestinians due to the collective national struggle and that in one instance a Christian narrator told me the story of the Hadaddins as well as the description of how her family car had been torched by Islamicists in the company of a Muslim friend and landlady who disparaged the 'shabab' (youth active in Palestinian uprising) who burnt the car and took pride in the qualities of the Haddadin.⁶ Recalling the idyllic beginnings of Ramallah as a refuge fosters nostalgia at the same time that it suggests that periods of threat and oppression can come to a definitive close. As Palestinians perceive no practical end to such a period in the near future, the story offers comfort and hope in the form of praiseworthy forerunners.

The figure of the pioneer enjoys a privileged place in Israeli national mythology. Pioneer myths catalysed behaviours in the prestate Yishuv and encouraged immigration and settlement patterns (Sternhell, 1998, p. 20; Katriel & Shenhar, 1990, p. 366; Attias & Benbassa, 2003, p. 155). Within the Yishuv and later the state, accounts of the pioneers were deployed pedagogically to instruct newcomers and to socialise Jews from diverse ethnic and class backgrounds through a common narrative of beginnings—that is, the establishment of communities and agricultural progress of the pioneers were transmitted not as local gains, but as a renaissance for the Jews of the world. The pioneers documented their settlement process in journals, autobiographies, meeting notes and collective memory books, and much of this simultaneous archive was incorporated into educational materials in Israel and the Diaspora. The pioneer ethos, vaunted as the sublime resolve that could bring Herzl's dream into being, was said to be manifest in a range of activities including settling in

kibbutzim, conscription in clandestine military units and, in a more general sense, withstanding challenges of scarcity and war. The pioneer myth originated as a mainstay of the Labour Socialists and expressed their ideology of Jewish metamorphosis through labour, territorial acquisition and national assertion.

As other movements and new values have taken hold in Israel, the myth has been reformulated, co-opted and even satirised. As I will show, following the 1948 war, the notion of an Israeli pioneer was increasingly militarised. While the myth has lost ground among secularists and liberals due to increased national cynicism in the wake of the Palestinian uprising, the birth of new historicism and the economic crisis of the kibbutzim, it maintains a presence in Israeli national consciousness. Transmission of the myth is ritualised through school trips to pioneer sites, museums and interactive exhibits (Katriel, 1997, p. 169), and by the establishment of retreat centres and guesthouses that offer urban visitors contact with the natural environment and accomplishments of the kibbutzim. The first pioneers established Kibbutz Degania, 'the mother of the Kibbutzim', in 1912 on the eastern edge of the Jordan River. The enterprise of 'establishing an independent settlement of Hebrew workers on the national land' was staged at a highly symbolic location in order to link the modern national movement with biblical history, foreground the Torah as a mandate for Zionism and transpose text onto landscape so that immigrant Jews could forge a sense of familiarity. The Jewish National Fund (JNF) purchased the lands of *Bab-al-Tum* where the Jordan re-emerges from the Sea of Galilee with the intention that the first collective agricultural settlement would symbolise a twentieth-century Jordan River crossing to emancipation.⁷

Before expanding the analysis of this symbolic resonance, let me note that the JNF acquired lands down the western bank of the Jordan and in the Marj Ibn Amr/Jezreel Valley strategically near water sources so that the valleys would become sources of hydroelectric power and Jewish breadbaskets for the Yishuv to be incorporated as a future state. Settlement was the means of asserting borders that could later be upheld as nonnegotiable (Reichman, 1990, pp. 321–323). In terms of biblical precedent, the east bank of the Jordan was an ambivalent inheritance. Although the Bible records Jewish settlement east of the Jordan, it is excluded from the boundaries of the Promised Land and a locale much criticised by biblical prophets. At first, the fact that Jews had once resided in Transjordan was motivation enough for Zionist acquisition. Under Ottoman rule, both banks were included in the jurisdiction of Vilayet Damascus and dubbed 'East Israel' by Jews. Between 1917 and 1920, Zionist leaders 'put forward their own maximalist interpretation of the Balfour Declaration' in which the Jewish homeland spanned both banks of the Jordan (Shlaim, 2001, p. 8). Working toward this vision, they opened negotiations with Emir Abdullah and Bedouin sheikhs regarding the purchase and development of east bank lands.⁸ Despite the fact that Transjordanian leaders were more amenable to Jewish settlement than the Palestinians, no such arrangement came to pass due to insufficient Jewish funds, growing Arab resistance and British opposition (Gil-Har, 1979). I argue that some of

the biblical ambivalence was replicated in the tepid approach and easy surrender of Zionist attachment to the east bank.

When the British White Paper of 1922 bestowed Transjordan on Emir Abdullah, the Zionist leadership acquiesced and concentrated its efforts west of the Jordan. As the river gained force as a 'natural' delimitation of Zionist aspiration, Zeev Jabotinsky split from the mainstream movement and founded the World Union of Zionist Revisionists that insisted, in the words of its popular song: 'There are two banks to the Jordan, this one is ours and so is the other.' With the exception of the Revisionists who would later come to power manifest as the Likud Party, Zionists then operated under the assumption that the Jordan had been and would be the eastern border and that there was a qualitative difference between the two riverbanks. The biblical map was thereafter enlisted to justify the expansionist tendencies that halted at the Jordan.⁹ Discussions about an eventual transfer of Arab Palestinians to Transjordan, partially enacted during the 1948 and 1967 wars, reveal the sense of dichotomy between the two banks as well as the desire that the Jordan define the Jewish state and separate it from the Arabs (Simons, 1988; Reinhart, 2002).

Kibbutz Degania and later the Naharaim hydroelectric plant were the only significant early Zionist developments just east of the Jordan. Degania was situated in such a way as to proclaim the border and showcase the transformation of the Jews of exile into the new Hebrews. Part of this transformation involved a rejection of exilic history during which Jews were subject to gentile rule and powerless when the tides turned against them (Zerubavel, 1995, p. 215). This rejection drew a straight line between Zionism and Antiquity, the last period of Jewish autonomy, and further fused the two by saturating the places encountered by the Zionists with biblical imagery (Abu El-Haj, 2001, p. 81; Zerubavel, 1995, p. 26; Attias & Benbassa, 2003, p. 159). The Zionist movement structured its metanarrative along the lines of the biblical exodus: Theodore Herzl was the Moses who gestured toward the land but never entered, the leaders of European national movements were the increasingly hard-hearted Pharaohs and David Ben-Gurion, captivated as he was by the book of Joshua (Attias & Benbassa, 2003, p. 204),¹⁰ saw himself to some degree as akin to the biblical general who led the People of Israel across the Jordan. The name for Zionist pioneers, *Halutzim*, is adapted from the book of Joshua where the *Halutz* is a military vanguard that crosses the Jordan ahead of the other tribes (Josh. 1:14, 4:12–13) and serves as the infantry in the battle of Jericho (Josh. 6:7, 9). Degania's setting implied that the first kibbutz was both a beginning and a revival; the metamorphosis of land and the Jewish body was broadcast as the very Jordan crossing that shuttled the new Hebrews into liberation.¹¹ Inaugurating a concerted nationalist project at the Jordan River sacralised a secular Jewish endeavour while defining a vital stretch of river as a rupture between the pioneers and both their diasporic past and present Arab neighbours.

In daily life, the Deganians perceived their community as straddling a line between safety and danger. The complexity of relationships with Arab neighbours was simplified through 'an Orientalist binary' (Stein, 2005, p. 275) in which violence and

opposition were attributed to marauding Bedouin bandits from the east while the Arab communities to the west with useful knowledge of farming, culture and trade were construed as equally vulnerable to Bedouin raids. In the records prior to 1948, the Arab threat is portrayed as a phenomenon of the east. Reality did not conform to the perceived dichotomy; coordinated Palestinian national efforts to stave off Jewish immigration and block development began in earnest as Degania was expanding. The early Palestinian nationalists 'identified their struggle, first and foremost, with a specific territory—Palestine' that ceased at the Jordan River (Muslih, 1988, p. 202).

The Deganian accounts of traversing the river and venturing eastward into Transjordanian territory are confrontations with danger during which the pioneer identity is enacted and clarified. One of the turning points in Degania's early history is the murder of Moshe Barsky, the collective's 'first sacrifice' (Degania Museum, 1990). While crossing the river in order to obtain medical supplies from Menahamieh, a nearby Jewish town, Moshe is attacked. The written account describes how he descends from his horse and sends it back toward Degania in order that the collective not lose the precious animal and contends with his attackers in order to disprove the Arab perception of Jews as soft and easily killed 'Children of Death'. When Moshe fails to return from his mission, the Deganians go out as a search party and find him 'late that night lying with a stick and a pair of shoes on his head: this was a sign of vengeance, it meant that in the fighting he had killed or wounded someone' (Baratz, 1957, p. 80).¹² Focused on forging a new Jewish image characterised by physical strength, productivity and truculence, the Deganians find solace in how Moshe met his end. The condolence letter from his parents in Russia encouraging the Deganians to work 'with vigour and hope', pledging another son to replace Moshe and assuring that 'Moshe's death will bring all of us to the land' confirms their interpretation (Degania Museum, 1990; Tanfilov, 1950, p. 15). Degania's first loss and the resultant hostilities inspired a change in their sense of what it meant to be a pioneer.

Refugees

The pioneer sensibility accrued an additional biblical image taken from the book of Nehemiah where the rebuilders of Jerusalem hold work tools in one hand and weapons in the other (Neh. 4:10–12). The Deganians adapted to the challenge of the frontier by becoming more vigilant in their guarding and repossession of stolen property and by imitating Bedouin mores and cultural attitudes. The Deganians' sense of vulnerability, and that of the larger Yishuv, meant that each stage of expansion or act of defence was framed as a requisite move. The absorption of Jewish refugees from other regions of Palestine during the First World War and the Arab Revolt of 1936, and later, refugees and survivors from Europe following the Second World War strengthened the Jordan River communities' dedication to Jewish survival and as a result saw their increased militarization.

The pioneer and the refugee, both shaped by the Jordan River as a border, are stock characters of Israeli and Palestinian national myth. The key years for these figures as well as for the mythic systems in general are the war years of 1948 and 1967. These are also the years when the Jordan actually became an Arab-Jewish political border as well as the dividing line between the Palestinian homeland and exile. It can be said that in 1948 the Jewish perception of this geography became the Palestinian reality. While all conflicts surrounding the withdrawal of the British and the partition plan can be seen as struggles over dividing lines, the Jordan served as a primary military front for Arab armies and assumed strategic importance as the eastern point of entry to Jewish communities and settlements. Thus as the Israelis fought in the name of their new homeland at the Jordan front, a dramatic percentage of Palestinians lost theirs through an eastward crossing.¹³ The year 1948 is synonymous with the *Nakba*, the great disaster that befell the Palestinians; the collective expulsion from the Galilee and other regions is termed the '*Nuzuh*', the 'exodus' from Palestine.¹⁴ The cataclysmic loss involved with the exodus is a primordial event in Palestinian identity narratives (Sayigh, 1998, pp. 42–58) and brands the Jordan 'as *the* border: the closest one spiritually, the one travelled across most painfully, the one that most fully characterises the displacement and the proximity of its cause' (Said, 1994, p. 8). In the Palestinian imagination, the Jordan bifurcates the eras of pre-1948 and post-1948, and symbolises the impediments that prevent a collective return.

In late April 1948, soon after the British withdrawal, a battle erupted between kibbutz members from the Jordan/Sea of Galilee region and the villagers of Samakh over control of an abandoned British police fortress. The engagement exhausted both parties, but when promised Arab reinforcements failed to arrive, the police fortress as well as the town of Samakh fell into Jewish hands (Nazzal, 1978, pp. 29–30). The inhabitants of Samakh, numbering approximately 3,600, were shuttled to the other side of the Jordan and transformed into refugees. Following the battle with the Samakh villagers, Iraqi and Transjordanian units moved across the Jordan and onto the Tiberias-Nazareth and Beisan-'Afula roads.¹⁵ Death tolls were high despite the fact that both sides were ill-prepared for engagement. The Arab armies lacked a coordinated strategy to maximise their weapons and leadership, and the Deganians had sustained heavy losses at Samakh and did not possess sufficient weapons to defend themselves against the Arab armies.

A group of representatives from Degania travelled to Tel Aviv to request the protection of the Israeli Defence Forces, but, as one kibbutz member recalls, David Ben-Gurion told them: 'I know you Deganians. If you meet face to face, you'll drive them out' (Baratz, 1957, p. 157).¹⁶ The aura of pioneer invincibility in this case did not work to the Deganians' advantage. The battle continued over a few days until the Syrian Army conquered the former British police fort at Samakh, opened fire on the retreating Degania force and continued on to attack Degania itself (Nazzal, 1978, p. 19). According to the accounts of kibbutz members, it was the victory of the weak over the strong as the Deganians repelled the Syrian tanks and armoured cars with

mismatched rifles smuggled over the years and Molotov cocktails (Kibbutz Deganya Alef, 1962, p. 209).¹⁷

During the war, the nascent Israeli military expelled Palestinians and forced the inhabitants of the Jordan Valley as well as other regions across the bridges and fords of the river. This was the case, for example, with the town of Beisan, south of Degania and close to the Sheikh Hussein Bridge, from which many inhabitants departed prior to the expiration of the British Mandate. Those who remained were ultimately transported either to Nazareth or across the river by the Israeli troops (Benvenisti, 2000, pp. 131–132; Morris, 1987, p. 213; Nazzal, 1978, p. 17). As Israel and the Arab states continued the war and negotiated a ceasefire, about 100,000 Palestinians found themselves as refugees in Transjordan.¹⁸ Despite the fact that the refugees had lost their homes and property and found themselves in the terrain of exile, they fared better than their counterparts in the Transjordanian-controlled West Bank where the displaced huddled in orchards and lacked food and water. After arriving, the East Bank refugees lived in tents and received food rations and small quantities of money from the authorities and then moved to International Red Cross camps built outside of Amman, Zarqa, Salt and Irbid. They would eventually be granted citizenship. However when the news travelled of the superior conditions east of the Jordan, the Transjordanian government laboured to distribute food to the refugees in Jericho and prevent their movement across the river. Again the Jordan served as the border between uncertainty and stability, although in this case greater stability was to be found on the East Bank. When the West Bank was under Jordanian control, patterns of economic development and policy encouraged the migration, particularly of the wealthy and educated, to the East Bank (Nevo, 1998, p. 4). From the point of view of the Palestinian refugees, however, their exodus would find no end until they returned en masse to their place of origin west of the river.

Freedom Fighters

My intent at this juncture is to analyse the legacy of the pioneer trope in postwar Israeli and Palestinian national myth. What type of actions did the figure inspire after the borders were drawn and what impact did these new pioneers have on the perception of border's permeability? After the armistice lines were formulated in 1949, Israel's eastern border ran along the Jordan, dividing Israel and Syria north of the Sea of Galilee and Israel and Jordan south of the Sea for 40 kilometres. The central part of the nascent Israeli state was divided from Jordan by the 'sinuous frontier' of the Armistice or Green Line (Cobban, 1984, p. 169). To the south, the Arava, the Jordan Valley's dry counterpart, outlined Israel and Jordan as stipulated in the Partition Plan. The other side of the Jordan with its 'alluring proximity' (Stein, 2005, p. 269) maintained a hold on the Israeli imagination and roused nostalgia for the time when the question of borders seemed open. Because the pioneer is the figure most associated with open borders, the myth and the privileges bestowed on the pioneer generation caused some degree of resentment and frustration in Israeli

society. Raised on the myth, the generation born in Israel yet too young to fight in the country's War of Independence experienced a sense of deflation and confinement (Merkoviski, 1997, pp. 337, 340).

The general fascination with what lay beyond the borders found a focus in Petra, the southern Jordanian red rock city hewn by the Nabateans. For young Israelis in the 1950s, Petra seemed a destination that represented the intrepid national character as well as one that could transport the Jewish traveller to the other period of time when Jews resided in a homeland. No matter that the Nabateans were enemies of ancient Israel and, at the time, the Jordanians enemies of modern Israel, the very antiquity of Petra offered a means of identification.¹⁹ Contact with the ancient, perceived simultaneously as exotic and familiar, promised to contextualise Israelis in the Arab world and relieve them from quotidian modernity. Trekking eastward was a manner of infiltration that affirmed extant borders while testing the possibility of an enlarged space in which one could be an Israeli and an occasion in which a 'point of contact with and separation from Arabs' became a 'site in which Israeli identity and solidarity (was) acted out and reified' (Rabinowitz, 2003, p. 219). In addition, such a venture beyond enemy lines suspended the pioneer myth and proved that the borders could still be redefined by Jewish initiative.

The clandestine pilgrimage to Petra was first undertaken in 1953 by Rahel Sevorai and Meir Har-Tzion, members of Kibbutz Ein-Harod. Sevorai described the trip to Petra as an Israeli rite of passage: 'It wasn't that our generation lacked danger, but the trip was part of our settling the land: settling ourselves into the land and becoming settled with its dryness, its heat, the slope of its mountains' (Shafran, 1999, p. 8). For Sevorai, the border appeared an instrument of self-identification rather than a line of obstruction, and transgressing it seemed a way of exploring a potential wider scope of Israeli sovereignty. As news of the Petra adventure spread, a second group began devising a follow up. During the autumn holidays in 1953, Arik Magar, Miriam Monderer, Eitan Mintz, Yaakov Kleifeld and Gila Ben-Akiva set out following a Palmah reunion in the direction of Petra. The three men and two women departed from a vacant wadi on the Israeli side and began walking along a navigated course. Some five kilometres into Jordan, Eitan Mintz was bitten by a snake and the group reversed its course apparently in order to return to Israel.²⁰ Near the Bir Madkor police station, the five encountered a patrol of the Jordanian Gendarme and met their deaths in the desert.²¹

The fever pitch of reaction to the deaths quickly enshrined the event and conferred legendary status.²² On the one hand, criticism was sounded that five young people had sacrificed themselves not for the state, but for a reckless adventure, while on the other, the Israeli public was captivated and saw the trek as expressing a national resolve to define the state rather than be defined by its enemies. The undertaking and its price disclosed a feeling of unnecessary constraint while reinforcing the ceasefire lines as partitions between relative safety and mortal danger. The fact that the five young people, remembered as being the best of a generation, fell on the other side of the border offered some psychological solace by locating the ever-present threat of

Arab attack on external rather than internal terrain. In their memorialisation, the Petra five were honoured as having died for the collective and reaching Petra became the dream of new 'pioneers' (Brash et al, 2001, p. 22).

The mythification of the Petra five vindicated Israeli society by producing heroes who perished unarmed at the hands of Arab forces thereby upholding a collective sense of victimisation that in turn fed the reservoir of justification for Israeli provocation. It can also be seen as the cultural reflex of the Israeli military forays. The myth operated to obscure the Israeli incitements of diverting the Jordan River from the Israel-Syria demilitarised zone at Geshar Bnot Ya'acov and brutally attacking the Jordanian town of Qibya in the name of reprisal (Lowi, 1993, p. 87; Shlaim, 2001, pp. 82, 86). Although the voyage to Petra was one incident among many that tested the borders in 1953, it was the one that best embodied how Israelis wanted to see themselves in relation to their Arab neighbours.

By 1960, when two Israeli paratroopers, Shimon (Cushi) Rimon and Victor Friedman, reached Petra in purloined United Nations (UN) vehicles, the figure of the Israeli pioneer had been solidly refigured in a military context.²³ The figure of the soldier/scout/biblicist cut in the portraits of those fallen on the way to Petra became the new standard of national hero following the 1967 Six-Day War. The pioneer myth was easily co-opted to condone the actions of settlers in the occupied West Bank and Gaza as the continuation of the work begun by the kibbutzim. While the secular kibbutzim maintained affiliation with the left, the epithet 'pioneer' became the rallying cry for right-wing religious nationalists staking claim and building fortress-like settlements in the 'wild' West Bank.²⁴ 'These new settlers regarded themselves as disciples of the early Zionist pioneers. And like their role models, many of them chose to farm the new land: agriculture was seen not merely as a way of life, but as a moral and patriotic calling' (Segev, 2006).²⁵ The primary technique of justification for continued settler presence is evocation of the biblical map of the Promised Land that reaches to the Jordan.

While space does not permit analysis of the border battles during the 1967 war, the ramifications included the repetition of mass Palestinian expulsion, the designation of the Jordan from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea as the border between Jordan and Israel and the introduction of a new kind of nationalist messianism in Israeli politics. At least 150,000 Palestinians were exiled to the East Bank of the Jordan and barred from a westward return. Some fled the war, some were bussed to the Allenby Bridge by Israeli troops and others coerced (Masalha, 1999). The Palestinians pushed east of the Jordan in 1967 lost their homes, businesses and belongings with many becoming refugees dependent upon UN aid and alms.²⁶ Jordanian society offered some political integration blended with discrimination and blame for forfeiting land to the Jews. Even the landscape of resettlement proved a bleak echo of West Bank terrain: 'Those who fled from the West Bank left behind them fertile areas for the semi-desert plains of the East Bank' (Dodd & Barakat, 1969, p. 6). By the time the 1967 refugees reached the other side, Palestinian social structures were inverted or overturned. Although other borders were thresholds of exile, the Jordan came to

symbolise Palestinian dispersion.²⁷ Home, palpably proximate yet distanced by occupation, was revisited primarily through the reconstructions of ritual and memory (Siddiq, 1995, p. 88; Schultz, 2003, p. 115; Slyomovics, 1998). For the global community of Palestinian refugees, the eastward exodus was recalled as a descent into a shadowland of negation and a future march westward stood for restitution and return.

In the wake of the 1967 war, the Jordan was also the frontier where Palestinian identity was reconstituted as part of a resistance movement and the *fida'iy*, the guerrilla fighter, developed his tactical objectives and mythic status. Cross-border attacks and subversion of Israeli development represented the restoration of national dignity and the possibility that the dispossessed Palestinians could succeed where the Arab armies had failed at humbling Israel. The *fida'iyyin* movement contested the borders, and with them the legitimacy, of Israel through perpetration, sabotage and the establishment of quasi-state apparatuses in exile while promoting a vigorous national identity that defied perceptions perpetuated by Israel and the Arab states. Resistance brought the new avatar of Palestinian identity into relief and the Jordan River became a prime target as the resource that sustained Israeli communities and enabled immigration as well as the demarcation line beyond which Palestinians had been driven. Armed struggle at the Jordan was a herald that the Palestinians would define themselves through engagement with Israel rather than be forgotten through acts of removal and suppression. The resurgence and transformation of national identity at a frontier signalled a temporal break between an ignominious past of suffering and a new era of sacrifice in the name of collective redemption.

In addition, operating independently in border zones leveraged the Palestinian position within Arab states by creating an intermediary space for the formation of Palestinian institutions, asserting an identity distinct from pan-Arab or other Arab national formations and 'political(ly) outbidding' other commitments to Palestine through persistent presence and attack (Sayigh, 1997, p. 174). Since the Arab regular armies had not only met with defeat in the 1967 war, but the Arab regimes, to varying degrees, had also immobilised the refugees through prohibitions, the rise of a distinctly Palestinian resistance was an assertion of self-determination amid the state of statelessness.

While several clandestine groups focused on Palestinian restoration via Israeli destruction formed around the post-1967 peripheries, it was ultimately Fatah operating in the Jordan River Valley, that seized the reins of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and assumed leadership of the national movement.²⁸ Through devotion to territorially focused guerrilla tactics and the creation of a victory narrative that countered historical circumstances, the Fatah leadership aligned the definitions of 'warrior' and 'Palestinian'. Training camps were established just east of the Jordan, the longest continuous border with Israel, to offer rebel-minded Palestinians an alternative to the stasis and despair of UN refugee camps. Similar to the way in which the Degania founders sought to reverse the image of the weak and humbled Jew at the Jordan, the early Fatah recruits endeavoured to shift the

image of the Palestinian from a dependent refugee to an impassioned revolutionary worthy of emulation by the whole Arab world. In both cases, image reversal required resistance and resistance easily morphed into provocation.

Fatah's first operation in 1964, launched under the pseudonym *al-Assifa* ('the Storm'), was an attempt to blow up the station where Jordan water was pumped into the main pipe of the Israeli national water carrier (Shlaim, 2001, p. 232). Although foiled by the Lebanese border patrol as part of a joint plan with Jordan to protect the states from Israeli reprisals (Cooley, 1973, p. 94), the sabotage aimed to counter the attempts of the 1964 Arab Summit to sequester resistance by establishing the PLO as Nasser's Palestinian puppet and its inaction regarding Israel's diversion of Jordan waters. The second *Assifa* operation, planting explosives at the water carrier near Tiberias, was similarly unsuccessful (Sayigh, 1997, p. 107; see also Hart, 1984, pp. 182–183). Despite the fact that the explosives never detonated, one operative was killed by Jordanian forces and the other captured by Israelis (Cobban, 1984, p. 33), these attacks stoked the motivation for cross-border raids and established the Jordan as the primary battlefield. *Assifa* attacks were staged from the West Bank, but in the war's aftermath, the guerrilla organisations regrouped on the East Bank where they were policed by a Jordanian government forced into a level of permissiveness by swelling public recognition and popular support.

In 1968, amid constant negotiation concerning *fida'iyyin* status in Jordan, Fatah launched 78 raids into Israel from January to March (Sayigh, 1997, p. 177). Public outrage about the explosion of an Israeli school bus by a mine laid by Palestinian guerrillas rallied support around a deterrence operation on Jordanian territory (Terrill, 2001, p. 95). Israel forewarned the UN of 'a large search-and-destroy mission against guerrilla bases in and around Karama' and Jordanian intelligence, tipped off to the operation, encouraged the guerrillas to evacuate (Sayigh, 1997, p. 177). The suggestion of flight seemed to trigger multiple levels of resistance: to being subdued by the Jordanians, to the pattern of Palestinian flight and to the Israeli military. Karama, a refugee camp four miles east of the Jordan that served as Fatah's primary base, thus became the site of the inaugurating 'success' of the Palestinian guerrilla movement. On 21 March 1968, Israeli battalions supported by air squads crossed the river anticipating that the guerrilla forces would abandon Karama and thereby facilitate a rapid operation. Instead, about 300 fighters held their ground reinforced by the Jordanian 1st Infantry Division stationed with tanks and artillery on the mountains above. Although the battle was primarily fought between Israeli and Jordanian troops and the Israelis gained control of Karma in less than a day, accomplishing the mission of its destruction, the battle became mythologized as a resounding Palestinian victory. Rashid Khalidi sees Karama, which became the 'foundation myth of the modern Palestinian commando movement', as exemplifying Fatah's rhetorical strategy of portraying defeat at great odds as 'heroic triumph' (Khalidi, 1997, p. 196).

The myth of Karama overlooked the outcome of 120 guerrillas killed, 100 wounded and between 40 and 66 prisoners seized, the steep Jordanian casualties and the

destruction of the town and surrounding commando outposts. Such casualties were sweetened by the fact that the enemy also counted dead and wounded and by the choice of active defeat over passive retreat. The Palestinian guerrilla, hero of the myth, figured as the defender of borders and steadfast protector of the Palestinian identity. As '*karama*' means dignity in Arabic, the rallying cries of 'Karama' were understood as a promise to Palestinian exiles everywhere that armed struggle would restore dignity and ensure the indelibility of Palestine's borders. The theme of the weak prevailing over the strong relied on the details of armaments: the Fateh fighters greeted the well-stocked Israeli brigades and battalions with 'only a handful of anti-tank mines, seven anti-tank rocket launchers and two 82 millimetre mortars' (Sayigh, 1997, p. 178). The Jordanian Infantry Division, which matched the Israeli forces and was responsible for most of the casualties, and its significant losses went unmentioned. The celebration of 'a new Palestinian political identity' forged through heroism in a purely Israeli-Palestinian battle was upheld even in an environment where Jordanian commemorations narrated a more accurate version (Terrill, 2001, pp. 91, 105–106). Subsequent anniversaries of the battle, celebrated by Jordanians as 'one of the symbols of Jordan's modern nationalism' and by Palestinians as their initiatory victory, highlight a rift in interpretation that widened into the standoff of Black September (Nevo, 1998, p. 13).

While the Israeli soldiers lingered after the defeat of Karama to collect the bodies of the 28 dead and shuttle the 90 wounded back across the river, they abandoned several tanks.²⁹ These vehicles became the relics of Karama, substitutes for the corporeal enemy, paraded through the streets of Amman and Salt as part of the ritual replay of the battle. The dissemination of the myth as well as the parades celebrating Karama boosted the number of recruits at guerrilla camps, inspired the proliferation of borderland outposts, strengthened the unity of East and West Bankers through common cause, encouraged a new audacity in attacks against Israel and ultimately elevated Fatah to independent leadership of the PLO. At the 1968 meeting of the fourth Palestinian National Council, the myth of Karama underwrote the policy that direct attacks on Israel should be the dominant front in the struggle for liberation. Karama catapulted Yassir Arafat, who emerged from the battle yet again unscathed, to a position of fame as his visage began to appear on the cover of magazines, and one of prominence, as he soon became the official Palestinian spokesman.³⁰ The 'romanticism, wishful thinking, and deliberate distortions' that characterised the Karama myth and answered Palestinian emotional and psychological needs became Arafat's signature style (Terrill, 2001, pp. 97–98).

As a narrative, Karama was deployed to forge national cohesion in exile and bestow a new image on the Palestinians. The guerrillas were presented as 'a different breed of men' whose stand against Israelis troops marked a new stage in Palestinian history (Turki, 1972, p. 60, quoted in Terrill, 2001, p. 98). Descriptions of martyr commandos igniting explosive belts and using their bodies as weapons against tanks, relished and embellished, defined the manner in which Palestinians would thereafter contend with Israel.³¹ Iconic representations of Karama and its heroes abounded in

Palestinian visual and verbal art forms (Terrill, 2001, p. 108) and, like the map of the land between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, became calls for remembrance and uprising. The Karama myth was put to several uses. As a charter, it granted Fatah the prime position in the hierarchy of the Palestinian resistance and placed the guerrillas above the law until the Jordanian crackdown. As a press release, it brought attention to Arafat as commander of the *fida'iyyin* and contextualised the Palestinian struggle as a revolution worthy of international funding. As a 'pioneer' story, it reverberated as a renaissance at the very border that symbolised Palestinian dispossession. As a narrative of beginning, it promised that future victory would be achieved only through armed engagement with Israel and self-sacrifice. Indeed, Fatah has been prone to reanimate the Karama myth as a means of resuming armed struggle when negotiations bore no results (Terrill, 2001, p.109). Karama opened up new configurations of Palestinian identity while reinforcing their connection to national aspirations and the necessity of specific spatial coordinates. The battle's setting near the Jordan was mobilised as proof that resistance was the way back home.

Conclusion

In nationalist myth, historical events are sculpted into cultural traditions that determine collective identity while configuring systems of power. The territorial referent anchors the myths in space and renders identity bounded while naturalising hierarchies. While outlining hierarchy and articulating the anxiety of contiguity, border stories establish new epochs of national development. The heroes of border stories are pioneers whose actions, reified in narrative form, are enlisted to promote indelible links to land and to require sacrifice in its name. The militarism of both Israeli and Palestinian cultures is traced to heroic origins when an improvising group strengthened by national conviction held its own against a state army. Both the account of the Deganians protecting their kibbutz from the onslaught of Arab armies and that of the Karama commandos facing the formidable Israeli Defence Forces are structured as a David versus Goliath battle of the weak against the strong. Another similarity arises from the fact that heroes distinguish themselves at frontiers, risking their lives for the nation's inviolability. Even as specific pioneers fade from national consciousness, the borders drawn by their tales persist as national signifiers. Two nations claim signification by the Jordan and thus their mythologies exist in dialectic tension where the other is sometimes absent, sometimes negated and always at some level operating as enemy. When aware of the other's national paradigms, Israelis and Palestinians interpret them through inversion so that Israeli pioneers are militarised colonisers of Palestinian land and Palestinian freedom fighters are terrorists bent on hunting down Israelis. Since each mythic context can neither support nor sustain the opposing perspective, shared symbols produce competition and perpetuate conflict. While feeding nationalist sentiment, the Jordan River border stories interpenetrate and manoeuvre within a single discourse of struggle.

Notes

- [1] According to Anderson (1991, p. 6), the imagined political community of the nation is always conceived of as limited.
- [2] In the Palestinian National Charter, 'the second and fifth articles defined its borders as those of the British mandate, within which 'Palestinian character is an essential and undying feature that is passed from fathers to sons' (Sayigh, 1997, p. 98).
- [3] The British definition of Palestine relied on the mappings of the Palestine Exploration Fund that operated with an 'a priori conception of where Palestine's borderlines (should) actually lie' based on interpretations of the biblical Promised Land. Hence the mandated terrain was understood to be 'bounded by the Jordan, and the sea' (Abu El-Haj, 2001, pp. 28–29). Such borders, however, also had resonance for the central Ottoman government that 'established an administrative entity with borders practically identical to those of Mandate Palestine on three brief occasions during the nineteenth century: 1830, 1840 and 1872' (Doumani, 1992, p. 9).
- [4] A man in his 60s from Ramallah residing in San Francisco explained that the story has been passed down as the central identity narrative of Ramallah Christians: 'My father told me this story and so did my grandfather. When we were little, our great-grandmother told all the children, "we are from so and so" (Interview, San Francisco, 17 April 2001). (All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.)
- [5] Interview, San Francisco, 17 April 2001.
- [6] Interview, Beit Hanina, 10 February 2000. The cause of Palestinian nationalism has to a certain degree united Christians and Muslims. For the tension that persists between the groups despite their common cause, see O'Mahony (1999).
- [7] Crossing the Jordan in the biblical book of Joshua terminates the past and ushers the Hebrews into a new era in which they fight and settle the land promised to their ancestors.
- [8] An article in *Al-Jazeera* on 23 October 1921 expressed the impatient wish of many Arab landowners on the East Bank to sell their lands to Jews. The article also alerted certain readers about the 'new danger' that they faced (Ilan, 1984, p. 363).
- [9] For the invocation of this map following the Six Day War on the part of Rabin, Eshkol, Begin and Dayan, see Shlaim (2001, pp. 246, 255, 256, 316).
- [10] Ben-Gurion sponsored and participated in an extended dialogue concerning the book of Joshua with the leading Israeli Bible scholars of his day (*Studies in the Tanakh*, 1971).
- [11] In the words of a Degania founder: 'I don't think we need to be so much afraid now. We are a different people from the people who lived in dispersion in ghettos; we even look quite different' (Baratz, 1957, p. 70).
- [12] As it turns out, Barsky wounded one of his attackers who eventually died (Kibbutz Degania Alef, 1962, p. 70).
- [13] Palestinians were also expelled in dramatic number to Lebanon. At least 750,000 people from across Palestine lost their homes and went into exile.
- [14] The nature of the exodus is central to Israeli and Palestinian national mythologies and, therefore, not surprisingly, deeply disputed by the two. In the Israeli myth, a miracle occurs in which the Arab Regular Armies broadcast radio announcements urging their Palestinian brothers to move aside so that they can once and forever eradicate the Jewish roots in the Holy Land. This massive flight shocks the Jews, but relieves them of the problem of Arabs in a Jewish state. They also beat their opponents and win the war. Jewish soldiers then intervene by urging and evacuating Arab residents. All tellers of the myth whom I have encountered will admit to the killing of the villagers of Deir Yassin, but understand the exodus to be proof that the Palestinians can find refuge in all Arab lands and originally saw themselves as citizens of a Pan-Arab world, not of Mandate Palestine. In the Palestinian myth, the Jews are

utterly ruthless and use any means possible to expel the Palestinians and seize their lands. The expulsion of Palestinians is the attendant dream of Zionism, which has no purpose except their harassment. The *Nakba* (Disaster) of 1948 changes nothing about their claim to ancestral land. The keys, deeds and memories of original houses offer proof enough of ownership and prevent any future other than return to the way things were before the establishment of a Jewish state. ‘This “other exodus” . . . forms the core of the history and the legend which feeds today’s Palestinian Arab nationalism’ (Cooley, 1973, p. 40). The reversal of the biblical image has been noted: ‘While the Biblical Exodus could be viewed as a search for an identity or rootedness, the present exodus was a flight into exile and uprootedness. . . . It was sudden and there was no prophet to lead it. Unlike the Biblical Exodus, there was no hope of a Promised Land ahead’ (Dodd and Barakat, 1969, p. 2).

- [15] With the exception of Egyptian forces and a few battalions that descended from the north, the Arab armies penetrated from the east side of the Jordan River. The ALA 1st Yarmuk regiment under Muhammad Tzafa entered Palestine, crossing the Jordan River at the Damia Bridge. A contingent from Damascus crossed the Jordan River on 28 January 1948, despite objections on the part of the British, and scattered among the villages of Samaria. As the Iraqi forces prepared to infiltrate, the Israelis began to destroy the Jordan bridges in order to thwart their approach (Gelber, 2001, pp. 117–137).
- [16] The Galilee was Ben-Gurion’s second priority after Jerusalem and its environs (Shlaim, 2001, p. 36).
- [17] Historians have noted that the Syrian Army itself was disorganised and lacked weapons (Morris, 1999 p. 232; Gelber, 2001, p. 141).
- [18] The number of 1948 refugees in Transjordan is hard to determine. Some estimates put it at 160,000 and others at 60,000. The 1950 United Nations Economic Mission to the Middle East reported 100,905 refugees in the East Bank. The total number of 1947–1949 refugees is also disputed. Benny Morris shows how difficult it is to arrive at a precise number. In light of estimates by the British Foreign Office in 1949, he sets the number between 600,000 and 760,000 (Morris, 1987, p. 298).
- [19] A woman of this generation, whom I interviewed at the Palmah archive, suggested that young people were encouraged at Palmah gatherings in the 1950s ‘to cross over to Petra and search for signs of Jewish antiquity’ (Interview, 27 December 2004).
- [20] ‘His walking barefoot . . . becomes a symbol, and the land, the earth, is sanctified and rises to a level of supreme value’ (Bar-Itzhak, 1995, p. 87).
- [21] In some versions of the story, the five encounter a group of Bedouins who had been exiled in 1948.
- [22] With the release of Arik Lavie’s catchy pop ballad, ‘The Red Rock of Petra’, the myth became embedded in popular culture. The extensive radio play of a song in which the desert itself seems to swallow three valiant young heroes contributed to the construction of the 1950s border as ‘a fetishised entity’ and ‘a space where the nation defines itself against the ultimate Arab Other’ (Rabinowitz, 2003, p. 226). David Ben-Gurion banned the song in 1958 not for these reasons, but because he feared that it would motivate other young people, lead to more deaths and provoke the Jordanians. Between 1956 and 1957, eight young men were killed on the way to Petra.
- [23] Meir Har-Tzion and Shimon (Cushi) Rimon, two of the five who returned from Petra, fought with Ariel Sharon in the controversial Paratroop Unit 101 that carried out the attack on Qibya. Both were rewarded by Sharon with desirable properties close to the Jordanian border in the north and south, respectively. As those associated with the early kibbutzim comprised the Labour elite of Israel until 1977 (Sternhell, 1998, p. 79), the new ‘pioneers’ for whom borders were not limits formed the elite of the Likud Party, which subsequently came to power.

- [24] It should be noted that Labour governments have not restricted the building and expansion of settlements. Leftist Israeli artists, however, have opened the founding myths to critique as a mode of resisting the continued Israeli occupation. The hip-hop group, HaDag Nahash, subjects the pioneer myth to ridicule in *Gabi and Debby*, and the transsexual singer, Dana International in *Travelling to Petra* 'turns the Ashkenazi Israeli myth with its implicit sexual imagery of a heroic masculine penetration of a feminized Orient into an explicit sexual encounter with a desert that one returns to rather than from' (Ben-Zvi, 1998, p. 3).
- [25] This stance, in many ways, is a continuation of the 'agricultural fundamentalism' that characterised the Yishuv and early state (Attias & Benbassa, 2003, p. 157).
- [26] Within the Jordanian definition, the 1967 Palestinians are not classified as refugees 'since they were living in Jordan up to 1967 and are currently "displaced persons" rather than refugees who have crossed an international frontier' (Weighill, 1999, p. 161).
- [27] 'Though the surrounding Arab countries of Lebanon, Syria, Iraq, and Egypt have been deeply affected by the expulsion of Palestinians, Jordan has emerged most urgently the experience of what Edward Said calls "Palestinianism," a political movement and a state of being. Both are confined by borders, especially *the* border (Said's emphasis) between Israel and Jordan. For Palestinians, Jordan's capital city, Amman, and by extension Irbid . . . are seen by Said as holding pens, characterised as "a terminal with no other raison d'être than temporarily to preserve displacement; beyond the city, physically and in consciousness, are a desert and extinction. In Amman, the Palestinian stays on as best he can or repatriates himself from it as a guerrilla"' (Slyomovics, 1998, p. 188).
- [28] 'Fateh, which is a palindromic acronym for *Harakat al-Tahrir al-Filastiniyya*, was established in the late 50s and early 60s, through the coalescing of various specifically Palestinian nationalist (as opposed to Arab nationalist) networks already active in the refugee camps, in diaspora groupings of Palestinian students, and in the embryo Palestinian communities of the emerging Arab Gulf states' (Cobban, 1984, p. 6).
- [29] The Palestinian version pits the guerrillas' bodies against Israeli tanks. 'Our fighters, our children, they came up from their secret places and they threw themselves at the Israeli tanks. Some climbed onto the tanks and put grenades inside them. Others had sticks of dynamite strapped to their bodies,' as narrated by Arafat in his biography (Hart, 1984, p. 262).
- [30] 'In May 1968 Fatah was granted a full 38 seats on the Palestinian National Council (out of 100 at the time). . . . In February 1969, 11 months after Karamah, Arafat was elected Chairman of the PLO Executive Committee, the most important Palestinian leadership position' (Terrill, 2001, p. 103).
- [31] The Jordanian version does not attribute much assistance to the guerrillas: '[F]or the most part, they simply got themselves killed' (Terrill, 2001, p. 106).

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