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14 Martin Heidegger, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking", in: Barbara Miller Lane, *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives in Modern Domestic Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 100-124.

15 Lacan,Jacques, Des Nomes-du-Père, (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2006).

16 In this context a difference should be noted between the Palestinian refugees and their children or grandchildren, born in the refugee camps, away from the original family home. One of the main aspirations of the parent generation is to pass the sense of original dwelling on to the children, thus preserving nostalgia and the aspiration to return. The attempt to rebuild the home in the refugee camps as a place that is an alternative to home but reminds one of it and is not detached from it, is one of the psycho-political mechanisms to overcome the gap between the actuality of home and its imaginariness and symbolism.

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18 Barbara Miller Lane, *Housing and Dwelling: Perspectives in Modern Domestic Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007).

19 Darwish, Mahmoud, In the Presence of Absence (Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), p. 157.

20 Bashir, Nabih,Land Day (Haifa: Mada Al-Carmel, 2006).

21 Benjamin, Walter, 2003."On the concept of history", Selected Writings 1938-1940, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

22 Eviatar Zerubavel, "Easter and Passover: On Calendars and Group Identity," *American Sociological Review*, 47 (1982), pp.

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23 Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Time Books, 1979).

24 Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story for the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006)

25 Walid khalidi, *Before their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians*, 1867-1948 (Washington D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1984).

26 Fawaz Turki, *The Disinherited: Journal of a Palestinian Exile* (New York: Free Monthly Press, 1972).

27 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).

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29 On the creation of this category and its implications, see Amal Jamal, "The Palestinian IDPs in Israel and the Predicament of Return: Between Imagining the 'Impossible' and Enabling the 'Imaginative'", in: Ann Lesch and Ian Lustick (eds.), Exile and Return: Predicaments of Palestinians and Jews. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. pp. 133-160.

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33 Rubinstein, Danny, The Fig Tree Embrace (Jerusalem: Keter, 1990); Al-Arif Arif, Nakba (Beirut: Al-Maktaba Al-Asriyah, 1956).

34 Zizek, Slavoj, 2002. Matrix, Resling (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2003). Zizek, Slavoj, The Parallax View (Cambridge, mass.: MIT Press, 2006).

35 Jamal Amal, "The Struggle for Time and the Power of Temporariness: Jews and Arabs in the Labyrinth of History", Tal Ben Zvi and Hanna Farah (eds.) Men in the Sun (Herzliya:

the necessity of the bond between presence and absence and the way in which absence presences selfhood as tragedy. Furthermore, Darwish shows how the desire to presence contains the tragedy of the fear of forgetting or of not recalling. In other words, the wish to normalize existence contains the price of erasing and banishing memory and being by means of which – alone – we presence ourselves as who we are. On the other hand, the tragedy of the abnormality of remaining 'abnormal' exists in the wish to presence the past. Darwish points to the necessity of absenteeship as that which defines and gives meaning to presence and its importance. Still his words can be taken to mean that presence contains the loss of its meaning by banalizing presence. Banal existence at home, then, according to Darwish, must not characterize Palestinian existence. This is a clear and thick enough hint for Palestinians who continued to exist in their homeland and home that they must safeguard them, not through the banalization of existence but through the constant observation of the centrality and pain of absentee-ness and absence. It is a preaching of the holiness of home and of the constant need to nurture it so that it may continue to be of central existential significance. Home is not the physicality of the building, but rather the presence-ing of the sense of dwelling that is contained in the physicality of the building. The loss of home, then, bites into the humanness of man as an entity conscious of the importance of its own consciousness of presence.

Notes

Translation: Tal Haran

1 Darwish, Mahmoud, In the Presence of Absence (Riad El-Rayyes Books, 2006), p. 53.

2 Derrida, Jacques, *Writing and Difference* (London: Routledge, 2003).

3 Heidegger, Martin, *Sein und Zeit* (Tubingen: Niemeyer, 1957); Martin Heidegger, *Existence and Being* (London: Vision, 1956)

4 Bachelard, Gaston, *La terre et les reveries de la volonte* (Nimrod ; Jean Genet, 1965).

5 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974).

6 Much has been written about the Palestinian Nakba, its meanings and the responsibility for its occurrence. It is important to note the first book written on the subject as early as 1948, which related to its deepest human and historical meanings. See *Zurayk, Constantine. The Meaning of Disaster*. Beirut: Khayat, 1956.

7 Saleh, Al-Tayyib, Season of Migration to the North, translated by Denys Johnson-Davis (London: Ibadan-Heinemann, 1970); Kanafani, Ghassan, Palestines Children: Returning to Haifa & Other Stories, translated by Barbara Harlow (Boulder: Lynnr Rienner, 2000).

8 In this context it is important to raise the issue of the state's policy of house demolitions in Arab villages and towns in Israel and in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as another window through which we may regard the meaning of dwelling through loss.

9 Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

10 On the numbers of refugees in the world, see HYPERLINK "http://www.refugees.org/"www.refugees.org

11 On the absentee property law and its implications, see Amal Jamal, "The Palestinian IDPs in Israel and the Predicament

have prospered economically left the refugee camp. But many of them return there often as a principal means of connecting to selfhood, a sense of identity and a passion to feel Palestine, as indicated by Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki.[54] The desire to feel Palestine does not create refugeeness. Refugee-ness is that which creates the sense of the original Palestine. The politicization of this human aspect is a reflection of Palestinian nationality striving for political mobilization of the need for and desire for home. The Palestinian aspiration to presence history is expressed through the existence of the refugee camp. After all, without the refugee camp historical Palestine does not exist. The dismantling of the refugee camps involves the dismantling of 'the original' Palestine and the acceptance of changes that have taken place in it over time. On the other hand, an Israeli aspiration exists to empty Palestine of Palestinian-ness through the erasure of Arab villages and construction of new localities with old-new names, biblical mostly, or changing existing names such as Hadera instead of Khadira, Acco instead of 'Aka, and the like.[55]

The wish to revert to history through presence-ing is embodied in the bridging of time through the refugee camp. Suspension of time, on the other hand, was carried out by the military government from the founding of the State until 1966, and since the occupation of the Palestinian Territories in 1967 until the

Oslo Accords in 1993. The sole wish of the dominating expert master is to slow down the flow of Palestinian time. The aim is to slow down Palestinian development by means of checkpoints where people wait for hours on end without having any control of the pacing of their time, without having any information of the duration and suspension of the flow of time.[56] This is a slowing down of time that strives to empty the individual of his authentic temporal meaning and force him into a space over which he has no control.

I shall conclude with two examples that illustrate Palestinian contending with the emptying of time and its suspension by Israel. The first is manifested in the works of Palestinian writer Yihya Yikhlef, who wrote outside the borders of historical Palestine and expressed the bond between the refugee and the *'Feda'i'* which, in the meantime, has been replaced by the *'Shahid'* - the Palestinian liberation (religious) fighter – as he who is willing to sacrifice his own life, kill himself for the sake of home – the homeland.[57] The connection he makes between the two contains opposition on the one hand, but also maintains a positive dialectic leading to reciprocal productivity on the other hand. The refugee and the *feda'i* give meaning to each other's identity.[58] The second instance is, again, Mahmoud Darwish's book, *In the Presence of Absence*, a work speaking of the tragedy of existence as a refugee, but also of

important phenomenon in itself. What bridges do we erect, between which banks? This is an important existential question. When do we insist on erecting bridges between different banks of time, and how does this reflect the meaning of our existence as humans? What are the different banks we try to connect, and why? These questions all reflect our constant striving for self presence-ing. Our beingness becomes significant when it stands on a bridge. The bridging is in fact the home. Home is not something concrete made of physical materials: it is the connection that presences the link between the different banks of time. It bridges the past and the present or life and death. This significance is expressed in the roots of the concepts home or dwelling. The root of these words goes back to the meaning of death or something that has passed away 'from the world'. Home, then, is the bridge that gives meaning to its surrounding, and thus gives it importance. The surrounding at large loses significance in the absence of home and thus the longing to return home is a longing for meaning. Since the Palestinians cannot return to their original home, they do so through naming a neighborhood after a certain village or keeping the original house-key. This is existential symbolism. The key is the bridge. The key that connects past and present is the expression of the passion, the desire to exist.

The link of time and temporariness, or the fixation of temporariness, is inseparable from creating the self. Namely I, the refugee, wish to remain in a time dimension that is temporary and fix this temporariness as log as time does not connect to the original physical place. The fixation of temporariness is a most important element since temporariness is inseparable from our human existence as futuristic creatures, and its opposite is the striving for physical fixation. As we regard this matter – the preservation of refugee-ness as a permanent temporariness as long as connection with the original physical place has not been realized – one can understand the opposition to ideas that Israelis bring up in negotiations with Palestinians to have the refugees settle in their place of residence. Onlookers might see the lack of settling refugees at their places of residence as irresponsible and inhumane. I wish to point out that from the refugees' perspective, at least some of them, their actual remaining in the miserable refugee camp is perceived as a humane act. Only in the refugee camp is the link kept with the authentic original. Life in the refugee camp is indeed wretched, a kind of punishment, but this punishment attaches them to their selfhood, and any housing solution that is not a return to the original village extinguishes hope. In their perception, inhuman is not he who does not house them, but rather he who prevents them from returning to what they perceive as the original place of residence – home. Many of the refugees who

place in consciousness points to the lack, the missing, the loss, the rift. There is something about the march itself that might be called a bridging, an attachment. Thinking in depth about the phenomenon of visiting demolished villages, we might use such terms as creating a bridge. The point is not the bridge as such, but the connection of two experiences, two structures of the consciousness of existence that become connected by means of this bridge of a physical return. Even if the refugees and their descendants are turned away, even if the police harasses them, even if they are detained, even if Jewish residents see them as aliens and warn them not to 'trespass private property', still the bridge is an integral part of existence. The attempt to connect spaces of consciousness, which is constructed not only on the physical aspect but also on memory – even of those who never experienced that home themselves - this attempt redefines the two sides of the space of consciousness, just as a bridge over a river redefines its two banks, that would not have been river banks unless the bridge were there.[52] One must not necessarily experience the home in its physical immediate sense in order to have a sense of home. The fantasy of home as absence is no less powerful than its physical manifestation. The depth of the fantasy presences the home as a kind of missing physicality.[53]

Longing creates the desire to erect the bridge connecting spaces. Still, the desire to connect spaces is a new phenomenon expressed in the visits to the villages. These visits have a political expression because they take place on the State of Israel's Independence Day. As the generation who experienced the home dies out, the need to invent a tradition of visits grows stronger. In this context the question is asked, who creates the bridge? And is it the landscape that creates the bridge, or the bridge that creates the landscape? After all, before the bridge was created the area had no special presence in the consciousness of the second- and third-generation. As soon as the bridge is created, connecting the two banks, they are defined as river banks. Before the bridge was built they did not exist independently, or they had no significance. The moment a five-year old child is taken to visit the village, a memory is created for him, connecting the past and the present. This is not to say that without visits there is no claim to the original home. All that is said here is that construction of the missing fantasy is based on the act of bridging life in the present with the original family home. This is not a uniquely Palestinian phenomenon. It is a human phenomenon, the strongest expression of which is the declaration of commemoration days and visits at memorial sites the world over.

People live on the bridge between the banks of time in order to preserve their selfhood as they see themselves. The act of bridging becomes an

elsewhere, in spite of changes that have taken place in the past several decades. Interviews with internally-displaced people in Western Galilee villages show that the sense of temporariness is bound with a longing to preserve the past in order to return to a reality that is considered authentic. The sense of estrangement of the internally-displaced in their present villages of residence still exists even after sixty years and after having born and raised children and grandchildren in the new village. In talks with refuges of Ikrit and Bir'am one can sense their longing to return to the original villages, arising from their longing for dwelling, the sense of peace and calm at home, nurtured by the local residents who have always regarded the refugees as outsiders who do not belong.[49] The dialectic of refugee and local bestows special significance to home, a meaning based on the perception of time more than of physical space. This is a passion manifested in a longing for the original imagined home as an absent fantasy, in the words of Zezak.[50] Longing and passion preserve temporariness by preserving pain and presence-ing loss. Temporariness does not presence loss for reasons of masochism but rather as a strong motivation to politicize future generations that are supposed to preserve the longing to return home even if they did not experience living in it themselves. Research by Rosemary Sayegh, Julie Peteet, Helena Schultz-Lindholm, Lali Khalili and Ilana Feldman of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and elsewhere

reflect the consciousness of self-estrangement, the sole purpose of which is the refugees' striving to return.[51] With this in mind, they build their homes and neighborhoods in a pattern that is an imitation of the original. This pattern is constructed temporarily and bears the original names of the neighborhoods of the original village as a type of semantic designation with actual political implications, since the referent of this designation is preserved by it. A look at the names of neighborhoods, hospitals or other institutions clearly shows this process. As William Faulkner said, "The past is not dead. In fact, it's not even past".

The 'roots' journeys conducted by the internally-displaced to their original villages on Nakba Day is a renewed expression of presence-ing the place and reviving temporariness. Most of the original villages were demolished and no longer exist, and sometimes another locality was built over the ruins, generating deep alienation between the refugee's selfhood and his place of birth. Still, longing for the past exists as a significant being. The desire to connect to the original experience even on the part of second- and third-generation refugees, unfamiliar with the original experience of home and village, is intense. The passionate drive to connect to the place and the love of the village are profound. At this point one might ask: why are they manifested? The main reason is the sense of loss of home. The actual presence-ing of the

have them settle in other villages, thus refuting their human, political and legal claims. Most of them are aware that it was in the State's interest to cast the refugee issue into oblivion and categorize the physically present who are absent as regards their rights and legal claims. The State assumed that as soon as a permanent home is produced, the sense of alienation is forgotten and the banality of the existence of home is presenced. Against this background government assistance was bestowed upon the internally-displaced in several Arab villages in the 1950s.[44] However, in spite of the existence of the alternative residence, a deep and intense longing persists, expressed in social, political and legal ways, to return to the original home, as witnessed by the organization of refugees from the village of Safourieh near Nazareth, and as reflected in the picturesque poetry of Taha Mohammad Ali, a refugee of the village.[45] Waiting and temporary existence are a tragic characteristic of Palestinian existence, even when everyday life appears normative. This is also true regarding the sense of threat experienced by every Arab citizen of Israel in view of the planning and ghettoization policy gradually intensified in all Arab regions in Israel.

Thinking about processes that refugees undergo, including the present-absentees, in spite of differences that should be preserved, it is evident that alienation and self-estrangement are an inseparable part of their selfhood.[46] They are determined to continue existing in a sphere of temporariness, of imitating the original, without enabling the present home to undergo a process of banalization. Second- and third-generation refugees continue to experience the sense of alienation mediated by their parents, reviving their sense of loss which presences the original, desired, sense of dwelling. These refugees live the imitation and make sure it will not become the original itself. Temporariness plays an important role in preserving the hope for a better future. Naturally temporariness is not a one-dimensional phenomenon. The refugees' temporariness has been nurtured by their perception of time. In this context it is important to note that Palestinians who remained in their homes contributed to the sense of estrangement of refugees and thus assisted to preserve their sense of temporariness.[47]

This dynamic is expressed, for instance, in the elections of the Arab local councils. Gaps between refugees and 'authentic' residents are evidently preserved and even heightened during election campaigns.[48] To this day conflicts are generated by the kind of bond inhabitants feel with the place, and the duration of their presence there. The original residents of some of the Arab villages struggled to prevent candidates of the refugees group from being elected as heads of local councils. Examples of this may be seen in Tamrah, Jedeidah, Kabul and

residence in exile and the striving to return to the home in the homeland. The act of imitation is a condition for establishing the memory of the original home. This is the attempt to re-enter selfhood in a reality where only the imitation of home exists. Naturally, the act of imitation is a primary expression of a physically essential dimension. Another dimension is the need of framework, the will and the passion for it. These contain the longing to return. Thus construction in the camps is a kind of imitation of the original - an imitation that proves its temporariness. It is an improvised imitation of home in order to ensure its existence in one's consciousness, while making sure that the imitation will not become permanent but will remain temporary. Based on this desire, materials that served to build the home were, at first, temporary materials. Although in time some of the refugees did amass enough money to afford building a permanent home, many of them preferred to stay in the refugee camps as an expression of the temporary state in which they live.[41] This temporariness was the most perfect expression of the injustice done to them and a primary ground for their claim to return to their original home. In other words, staying in the refugee camps is but an expression of preserving temporariness in order to ensure the realization of its opposite – return to the original home as a permanent dwelling.

The Arab states and the PLO have been accused by Israel and the West of neglecting the refugees.[42] Indeed they cannot be left unaccountable for the sub-human living conditions in the refugee camps, but this is a false and even manipulative understanding of the historical and psycho-social process that characterizes a colonial, chauvinist thinking pattern. The human dimension of the refugees themselves should be considered, the will to create something temporary, not for the love or liking of the misery of life in the refugee camps but rather with the desire to preserve the hope of returning to the original home. This is a tragic inversion which a 'normal' person – if such a person indeed exists – finds difficult to register and comprehend, because of the misery of life in the refugee camps. This causes politicians and even scholars to turn the political tables or show profound lack of understanding of the wounded human psyche. Preservation of refugeeness as a survival mechanism and a source of hope for return in time, reflected among refugees in the Arab world just as it is among the present-absentees in the State of Israel, living in much better conditions than their brothers in the refugee camps, shows the tragedy of Palestinian existence. Indeed the physical home of the present-absentees exists, and for some it was created with partial support of the state, but most of them – young and old alike – still see their present home as a temporary dwelling that is not home.[43] These refugees were aware of the direct interest of the State of Israel to

geography – to perfection. He presences the Palestinians in the place as an inseparable part of its development and transformation. Darwish deconstructs the naïve banality that typified the Palestinians' bond to their homeland prior to 1948 and constructs its real significance as it is manifested in the everyday experiences of Palestinians throughout history. He constructs a mythological tie between the people and its historical home that cannot be unraveled in spite of the ravages of contemporary history. The link between personal and mythological loss is reflected in his poem *"Abad al sabar"* (The Eternity of the Cactus) appearing in his book *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone*.[39]

In his book *In the Presence of Absence*, published in 2007, he returns to the subtleties of the personal ties with homeland and home. He revives the dialectic of real versus symbolic and imaginary aspects of home as calm childhood, peacefulness, finality and death.[40] A direct connection can be seen between this book by Darwish and his poetry of the 1960s and 70s summed up, perhaps, in the fragrances and scents that waft out of his poem *I Long for My Mother's Coffee*, written in the 1970s. The link between the physical aspect and the cultural, romantic-sentimental aspects changes in time, but remains an important element in Darwish's writing, reflecting a more widespread phenomenon among Palestinians. The loss of the real home is translated into a profound passion for dwelling, based on a fantasy of home that presences the missing beingness and partial presence, both aspiring towards self-fulfillment in a future home.

Comparison of Al Kassem and Darwish shows that the passion evident in Darwish's text is based on the human need and personal desire to return to physicality, to the concreteness of home, to the direct aspect – the attachment to the earth, or in his terms:
a bit of land, a fistful of soil or some earth. The passion in Al Kassem's text, on the other hand, is for nationhood, the wish to create the desirable Arab, a homogenous, strong nation. The desires of the two differ although they maintain a positive dialectic. The desire that expresses ties to place affects the presence-ing of the I as a rift. Furthermore, the dialectic of the physical dimension and the imagined dimension of home and homeland contains an aspiration to re-create the physical homeland. An observation of the process of imagining home indicates that as soon as the refugees sense the loss of home and its absence, they try to create or rebuild it as an initial act. The refugees strive to create the place where the I presences itself, physically, to ensure our survival as human beings with meaning and a sense of presence. Thus they create their home in the refugee camps in imitation of their original home.

The imitation of the original home attempts to overcome the cognitive dissonance between

sense of dwelling, still the opposite is not necessarily false. Absence from home, especially when forced and associated with the sense of the injustice of expulsion, has deep political potential, as we can learn from the politicization of Jewish nostalgia for *'Eretz Yisrael'* within the Zionist movement of the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century.[36] Nostalgia and turning home into fantasy constitute an important component in Palestinian beingness even among those born and living outside the borders of the historical homeland. Nostalgia has its own independent existence affecting consciousness both consciously and unconsciously, and producing behavior patterns that are not always intelligible for the observer.[37]

The difference in the centrality of the physical, cultural and sentimental aspects of home can be brought to light by studying contemporary Palestinian poetry. Suffice it to regard the work of two prominent Palestinian poets for example. Both remained in the homeland until a certain point. The one, Samih Al Kassem, had the privilege of staying in his historical home, whereas the other, Mahmoud Darwish, remained in the homeland until the early 1970s but not in his own home. Al Kassem remained at his original home in the Galilee village of Rame.[38] Consequently no concrete longing for home developed in his poetry in actual terms. In his writing he focused on the loss of the collective home, the abruptness of this loss,

the destruction that followed and national identity in its broader sense. Al Kassem does speak of the homeland and its loss, but can afford not to speak of his own concrete-physical home nor of the longing for the physicality of home. He concentrates on aspiration in a wider framework, that of the nation, the framework of the people, that hold the solution for the future. Thus his writing is less nostalgic in the concrete sense and is largely based on future passion and fantasy, striving for a new cognitive reality that fulfills an imagined identity model supposed to provide the aspired solution. Unlike him, Darwish who remained in the homeland until the early 1970s experienced the loss of his personal home as a child, expelled from his village Al Birweh and bearing refugeeness and its harsh actual implications as an adult escaping to Lebanon and returning to the village of Jedeidah. Darwish's writing focuses on the existential and on the memory of the loss experience, while establishing a historical bond between the Palestinians and their historical homeland. Darwish binds the personal experience that is based on longing, and narrativist writing that aims to counter the Zionist narrative regarding the Palestinians' attachment to their homeland. Darwish weaves together loss and longing not only as a fantasy but especially as a real right rooted in the inherent affinity of the Palestinians as a people to Palestine as a homeland. In this context he raises Palestine – land, topography,

among third-generation Palestinian refugees who did not experience the actual home in their homeland but do develop nostalgic feelings towards a certain image of the home that becomes a passionate fantasy with deep revolutionary potential. In psycho-political language based on Althusserian tradition one may say that this is an imagined interpolative process based on the individual's need of a reflective self-image in order to construct his own identity and maintain it.[32] The external image, constituting the imagined object of passion, is the Palestinian living in historical Palestine, described as a paradise where life was all peace and harmony, broken by the Jewish immigration and founding of the State of Israel.[33] This image is inspired by the existence of Palestinian citizens of Israel and the intensity of their ability to counter Israeli policies from their own homes.

This intensification is bound with their continued existence in their homeland and the better economic conditions they enjoy compared to other Palestinian communities. This status constitutes an object of identification and a potential mirror image of the contemporary I of refugees living in the temporary home, supposed to be maintained as temporary in order to ensure the future fulfillment of the imagined fantasy. Absenteeship and the lack of the imagined real that the Palestinian refugee meets on a regular basis, constitute a strong

motivating force in the construction of self-identity and its constant affirmation. The fantasy does not supply the passion of dwelling, but rather constructs the Palestinian refugee as a passionate subject. This is a way of organizing the longing for home based on the antagonism felt towards the real.[34]

The unfulfilled fantasy of home makes existing-away-from-home, in the refugee camps, an outstanding temporary existence that consists of a sharp contrast of pain and suffering on the one hand and hope and the dream on the other. The temporariness is painful and constitutes a kind of existential crisis that shatters emotional stability. On the other hand, temporariness can keep the horizon of the future open, through hope for a change for the better. Temporariness is also a punishment of 'the other', responsible for the injustice sustained, by being enveloped in the temporariness that disputes the actual legitimacy of his existence.[35]

Against this background one might say that this temporary existence contains deep political potential of submissiveness and a passion for fulfilling the fantasy and transferring it from the imaginary, symbolic plane into actuality. It is a passion that creates a special kind of link between an imagined past and a wishful future, bypassing the present that is perceived as undesirable and unimportant as such. Hence, even if the more self-evident existence at home is, so much stronger is one's physical

who remained in the homeland but as refugees. This group, too, is divided in two: its first part consists of refugees who ended up in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and fell victim to the domination and re-socialization policy applied in those regions by the Jordanian and Egyptian regimes respectively. Another group of Palestinian refugees consists of 'present-absentees'. This is a legal demographic category created by the State of Israel, depicting citizens who are present physically but absent in their claim to their land and homes.[29] This category has been politically defined as to lessen the number of Palestinians who are accorded Israeli citizenship, deprive them of their property and change their ties to their homeland. It is a process of creating a new category of Palestinians who live as strangers in their homeland and exiles in their home. Mohammad Ali Taha described the state of the present-absentees well, especially that of exile at home and being a stranger in one's homeland (Taha, 1978).

Palestinians of the third category are those who were uprooted from the homeland and found themselves in Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Egypt and elsewhere. These have been altogether removed from home, both private and collective. The nostalgia for home and the longing to return is prominent among members of this group. The best expression for the special nature of this group's nostalgia may be seen in Ghassan

Kanafani's book *Return to Haifa*, that depicts a refugee couple who leave their baby son in his cradle during the 1948 war, and come searching for him after the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank.[30]

In time each of the different Palestinian groups develops its own relationship with the homeland, depending on its actual location – in the homeland or outside it, present in the home or outside it respectively.[31] All Palestinians share the tension that exists between the sense of belonging to a home and the processes of alienation from it as a result of the refugees' refugeeness or the threat of expulsion those present in their home.

It is agreed that people develop different types of dwelling and sense of dwelling according to their whereabouts in relation to home. The connection between the physical aspect of homeland and the cultural, romantic and sentimental one is transformed by the Nakba and the differentiation between different groupings of Palestinians. Study of the development of the idea of dwelling in different Palestinian communities shows that the further we are from the place that we perceived as home, the stronger its romantic, sentimental aspect becomes. Nostalgia becomes an important component in the construction of the consciousness of home. Nostalgia has many effects that do not always bear upon the actual dimensions of the home. This is noticeable

Palestine undergoes a process of politicization and writing begins to address the link between the people and the place as an integral part of innocence. The natural claim to place is expressed in various writings.

The beauty of the homeland begins to have its national expression unlike the 'making the wilderness bloom' propaganda uttered by many Zionist leaders. Tukan's lyrical and romantic descriptions of the homeland are a model of the beauty of the landing the eyes of its inhabitants, refuting the claims of Zionist thinkers about the neglect of the land and the need to make the wilderness bloom. Home begins to have a collective expression. Homeland becomes the object of Palestinian patriotism. Politicization begins to express a contemporary language, more collective and less naïve. A growing number of writers and authors warn of the threat to the homeland.[27] In his book *Introduction to the Eastern Problem*, Al Khalidi writes about the Jews' historical bond to Palestine. He distinguishes Jewish-Palestinian inhabitants – an inseparable part of the local population – and the Jewish immigrants who bear a political ideology that threatens the Arab-ness of his homeland, and he expresses his clear opposition to it. Warnings by Al Khalidi and others are translated into a growing sense of threat among a growing number of Palestinians. However, for both internal and external reasons, they do not mange to translate

this sense of foreboding into coordinated collective behavior.[28]

Following the Nakba events various Palestinian categories were formed according to the Palestinians' place of residence, which played a central role in their value system and their relations with their homeland and home. One group of Palestinians not only remained in the homeland but even continued to reside in its original homes. The ties of this group with the homeland remained direct, in spite of the changes that the homeland had undergone and is still undergoing as a result of the founding of the State of Israel. This group, remaining in the homeland, is divided into two groups. The first consists of Palestinians who became a part of the State of Israel, a Jewish state that granted them citizenship but at the same time implemented a policy of domination, abandonment and alienation, turning them into suspended-citizens. The second group consists of Palestinians who remained in their homeland and even in their own homes, but under Jordanian rule in the West Bank and Egyptian rule in the Gaza Strip. This group too fell victim of a policy of domination and re-socialization. The Palestinians under Jordanian rule experienced a process of Jordanization that marginalized their national identity and channeled their spatial and temporal consciousness to new domains (Mashal, 1974).

Another group consists of those Palestinians

The closer we move in time to the Zionist immigrations, we realize that the threat itself begins to raise new questions in the Palestinian public. The threat is not translated into extensive literary writing or comprehensive constituting texts. Still one can see that existential threat revives a certain tradition of popular romantic fiction that becomes stronger with time. Moreover, poetry emerges as an increasingly prominent expression of collective Palestinian presence at home. Ibrahim Tukan was one of the leading figures of national poetry. Others who deal with existential threats in their writing are Najeeb Nassar, Izhak Mussa Al-Husayni, Muhammad Izzat Darwaza, Rouhi Al-Khalidi and Khalil Al-Sakakini (Daraj, 2002). In this context, it is important to mention Ibrahim Tukan's famous poem *"Mawtini" (My Homeland)* that became the unofficial anthem of the Palestinian national movement and a popular Arab hymn (Tukan, 1966). In his poem Tukan praises the beauty of the homeland and the Palestinians' profound bond with their home. The words of the poem, expressing deep feelings on the popular level, refute claims of the absence of a Palestinian collective conscious that ascribes romantic existential value to the homeland. Al Khalidi's book *Introduction to the Eastern Problem*, in which he details the dangers lurking in opening his homeland's doors to immigration is another expression of the powerful presence of Palestinianness as dwelling in Palestinian society prior to the 1948 Nakba (Daraj, 2002).

These writers and poets, who were only few in backward Palestinian society of those days, write Palestinian poetry and literature that invoke and presence the threat, and consequently the importance of dwelling, selfhood, being in the homeland and their significance. As the threat rises, the banality of dwelling is replaced by emphasized practical dwelling. This is reflected in personal exchanges, popular talks, personal stories and the like. It is transmitted to poetry, passes on to short stories that develop and eventually to the press. In the 1920s and 1930s one can see an ever-growing public pre-occupied with Palestinian existence in Palestine vis-à-vis the growing Jewish threat. This is reflected in the daily and weekly press that grows significantly in those years (Kabaha, 2004). It is important to state that these texts begin to presence new aspects of Palestinian being in the homeland, aspects that were not sufficiently attended to earlier. Holding on to land and home and the strengthening awareness of the importance of tending the land and introducing new technologies – are all manifestations of this process.[25]

The modesty and innocence reflected in Palestinian poetry and literature prior to 1948 are a perfect expression of the ease at which Palestinians felt with themselves and with the place. They express the banalization of collective existence in place, repressed for the sake of doing and action.[26] Due to external threats,

to give external expression of their existence in time and place because of the banality of their affinity to the place, just as the indigenous peoples of North America presupposed their affinity to their land without the legal codification common in Europe. In their view, existential actuality is powerful enough to express itself both in- and outward. Their naïve attitude keeps them from seeing the changes taking place in the outside world, and especially the growing centrality of narrative as a prerequisite for justifying collection existence vis-à-vis the external world, increasingly important in the recognition of claim to place on grounds of historical being. The Palestinians do not show any understanding to the echoes of the Westphalia treaties and their colonial significance in the world. Nor are they aware that narrative has overcome actual reality. They do not show understanding of the assumption that has gained strong practical meaning in the modern era, that whoever does not possess a narrative written in a certain style is not perceived as existing and therefore is not entitled to claim his right to exist. The absence of a written Palestinian narrative - reflecting or representing actual Palestinian existence in the homeland - becomes the Palestinians' Achilles Heel in their own homeland, especially in view of the Zionist narrative that has grown in power and pervades the land and its inhabitants with its details and does not allow them an existence separate from the eternal bond between

divine promise and the Jewish People.[23] This is precisely the place where the principle Zionist thinkers concentrate their efforts to promote the project of a Jewish national home. This is the meaning of the motto 'a land without people for a people without land'. Since a people in its modern senses, is imagined through text, the absence of a constituting text is perceived as the absence of the people's existence, in spite of the existence of people. As a Palestinian national text becomes increasingly present in the war of narratives, so grows the consideration of its existence in its own view as well as in others'.

Tragically, until a certain point the Palestinians felt at home to such an extent that they did not even feel the need to produce the constituting text that would weave them into the idea of home. The historical text and the collective national story do exist in popular literature, in folk tales, in stories passed from mother to son, daughter, neighborhood children and the like. But no comprehensive history books were written about the land and its indigenous people, a fact that had extensive existential implications for which the Palestinians themselves are accountable, in spite of being victims.[24] Looking at poetry and literature, which are now being presenced anew, one can see that traditional Palestinian poetry and literature contain very profound ties to home and dwelling and to the link between selfhood and home. This was true before 1948 as well.

exposed to intense external harm.

Let us imagine ourselves coming home from a hard day's work. We get home knowing this is the place where we can feel at ease. It is the ease of being able to actually take off our clothes, shower, put on something comfortable, sit on the couch and decide what we want to do and when we want to go to sleep. Sleep is a kind of surrender to the banality of dwelling; the ability to lose control of the flow of time and do nothing. Alongside this ease of dwelling, and within it, we prepare for the morrow, for going out into the world, assuming that home is not the world. The world is outside the home. Home is the intimate plane of selfhood where our doing is reflected in our eyes alone. In the world outside, on the other hand, doing is reflected in the eyes of many others. The intimacy of dwelling does not rule out the instrumental aspects of home, but at the same time it struggles with them through the banalization of everyday action. The sense of losing the instrumental aspects of home - or of their being under constant threat - is an inseparable part of presence-ing the deep, emotional aspects of our being and existence. This threatened potential sentimentality gives meaning to dwelling as a presence-ing of being.

In 1948-1949 a severe rift occurred in the banality of Palestinian existence. The Palestinian vocabulary speaks of *Nakba* with profound existential connotations. It speaks of deprivation, loss, social finality, death of the collective as such, in addition to the death of certain people. The occurrence of the *Nakba* raises the questions that illustrate the tragedy of banality inherent in dwelling. Until the beginning of the Zionist immigration, in the late nineteenth-century, a deep sense of dwelling prevailed among Palestinians. This sense was associated with taking a-historical time for granted. The banality of the conception of home and time is an inseparable part of the standardization typical of human societies in general, with a certain Palestinian particularity.[22] These processes of banalization and standardization rule out the need for everyday coping with the meaning of existence here and now. It is a process in which language falls mute and history is wiped out, since Palestinian existence at home is taken for granted and is undisputed.

With this in mind, one can understand why Palestinians did not need to write their own history. Actual presence as being and the sense of dwelling were repressed for the sake of everyday practice that was perceived as the most pertinent and undisputed ontological expression of historical, emotional and political affinity to place. The banality of existence connected well with the verbal, unwritten culture that characterized popular Palestinian culture. The Palestinians who lived in their homeland for hundreds of years did not bother

repair or carpentry shop. The clash of traditional and 'modern' construction reflects the tension that exists between the physical aspect of home, homeland, place – and their cultural, imagined and romantic aspects. This aspect is significant especially in view of an external threat to the actual existence of the home. Various behavior patterns reflect this aspect, especially in the way we relate to the home. In the State of Israel - whose Arab citizens live with the pervasive feeling that the State constitutes a major threat to their basic existential sense of dwelling and wishes to deprive anything that is not Judaized of its mere existence and meanings -the idea of dwelling is intensified by emphasizing the romantic aspect of home as an expression of existence and persistent presence in place. Home is a measure of human value, whereas loss of home is the loss of human value, as reflected in the words of numerous refugees.

Hasty closing of the open pillared space on the ground in most Palestinian houses might shed light on the tragedy of Palestinian experience in particular, and human experience in general: loss or hardship are the main source for the growing awareness of the importance of existential life-foundations. As soon as the Palestinians lost most of their lands to expropriation measures, the existential centrality of home and land flashed into conscious being. This is another round, or even the sequel of the Nakba tragedy of 1948, raising awareness of the importance

of that which had been constantly taken for granted. This illustrates Walter Benjamin's words on the connection between danger and consciousness.[21] The loss of home is central not only in becoming aware of the functional importance of home – but also and especially in recognizing its centrality to being and selfhood.

After 1948, certain phenomena emerged expressing meanings of home that had not been prominent in earlier Palestinian discourse. The romantic, emotional aspect is antithetical to the banality of a home's physicality. As we said, there is a banal physical aspect to home. It is 'taken for granted'. We come home, we leave home, we sleep at home, etc. The deepest aspects of home are banalized, enabling the continuous flow of time. It is a way of repressing presence as existence limited in space and time. Banalization is a condition crucial to our openness to the world, reflected in constant doing and action. The banal aspects of dwelling are felt in extended travel, when we restlessly wander about. Even when we enjoy a certain stay away from home, the sensation emerging in our consciousness is that of dwelling or the wish to presence a sense of dwelling. This sense of dwelling is strongest when we know deeply and instinctively that the banality of our dwelling is undermined. The deepest aspects of the existential meaning of dwelling, of the peace and quiet, property, residence all arise when selfhood – inherent in home – is threatened or

One aspect of traditional construction is the fact that the home hides, sheltered within the existing landscape. Rather than reveal, traditional construction conceals. Situating the house amidst trees rather than uprooting them is an act of concealing, an attempt to adapt the house – hence, selfhood – to the landscape rather than the other way around. It is not a conquest of nature but an act of integration with it, although often, and for lack of official construction arrangements, building lacks coordination among the residents and initial organization. Moreover, economic hardships leave many houses unfinished, a fact reflected in rural landscape in characteristic bare concrete on the one hand and red roof tiles on the other. Despite the missing finish, and sometimes even because of it, the nature of construction in Arab villages reflects a basic and authentic ecological approach, not ideologically conceptualized in ways familiar to us in present modern ecological thought. Clinging to the ground bears important existential meaning, but also contains considerable aesthetic aspects that reflect a reconciled regard of nature, visible in the landscape of Arab villages of the Galilee. Houses are organized and situated as if desiring to be integrated in the landscape and don the ground. In the words of Mahmoud Darwish, "imagination rises like an apparent cloud on the hills that carry the villages on their waists, seeking to maintain the beginning of genesis."[19]

As time passes we witness changes in Arab construction and affinity to the land. On the one hand, the 1970s - an interesting period in itself – bring about Land Day, March 1976.[20]

The struggle over the land deeply reflects the profound attachment Palestinians have developed to it. This is an expression par excellence of the inherent connection between private and collective identity and attachment to the land and a designated area. A new form of construction begins to develop then: building on pillars. This reflects an attempt to get away from the ground. Building the home over pillars was regarded an expression of luxury and modernity, a reflection of certain western influences and the buds of modern construction of multiple-storey buildings in Arab villages. Even if at the initial phases no high-rise construction was taking place, two-storey buildings over pillars were budding. The point was to create a distance between the home and the ground in order to reinforce the surrounding landscape and be free of farmer culture. This thinking pattern expresses the clash of 'modern' versus 'traditional' construction. This clash, however, did not last long. The growing shortage of area for new construction following bouts of land expropriation by the State of Israel requires a more modest use of space. Moreover, economic constraints forced numerous Arab families to close the ground floor – space between pillars - for dwelling purposes, or to be used as a car

concrete experience of detachment, connected to the struggle of memory with actuality and habit inherent to survival, in order to preserve selfhood and the I as a central part of my being a concrete person with a specific personality. In a refugee or exile state, actuality becomes the enemy of memory, which in turn – however limited and selective – becomes a means for the preservation of 'authentic' selfhood. Commemoration ceremonies are the foremost manifestation of this struggle between the banality of existential habit and the desire to preserve an active subjectivity that persistently strives to close the gap between exileness and selfhood as dwelling.

There are different ways to construct home. They make one wonder about the source of their difference and its meanings regarding the perception of being and identity. Home is not amorphous or abstract. Certain characteristics express the meaning of home. In this context, different forms of construction reflect various modes of thinking or express different ideas about existence and presence in the world.[18] In traditional construction the family house is built directly on the ground, in two possible forms: in the first, the whole family lives in the same complex. This form is still dominant in villages or among traditional families all of whose children still reside in the same place - the Palestinian home, divided into several units with family members residing in its different

parts. The second form is the Syrian house built around a central patio, with the rooms of all family members branching out of it. Such a house is usually built directly on the ground and consists of one storey, although nowadays, due to diminishing construction space, multiple stories are being built. The one-storey house has profound cultural significance. Building directly on the ground provides not merely comfort, but also a sense of presence, solidity and power. This expresses the idea of home-place as the bastion of one's encounter with the world, where super-human, natural or metaphysical forces are resisted. It is a state of non-alienation from the land. There is direct affinity here to the place of residence, constituting a sturdy foundation in the structure of culture as well as of personal and social identity. Furthermore, the Arab house penetrates its natural landscape and wishes to be integrated in it, as it were. Unlike modern construction that flattens the ground, prepares infrastructures and does away with natural landscape in order to build different dwelling units, traditional construction is in accordance with the land, it does not contradict it. It is integrated with the landscape itself. It adjusts itself to the surroundings even at the expense of lacking basic infrastructure such as wide roads, electricity, water supply and telephone networks. This is an expression of existential minimalism on the one hand, and the anxiety of existence or submission to nature, on the other.

strong resemblance of the personal home to the collective homeland. Just as the home – actual, symbolic or imagined – that results from the absence of home presences individual selfhood, the homeland presences collective selfhood.[15] Selfhood or the being of the individual or collective subject is not meaningful when it detaches itself from the place where it comes into being or becomes self-conscious. As soon as selfhood is detached from the specific place called home, where it has come into being, where habit was formed, where a personality ripened with certain consciousness and had certain experiences – at that moment of detachment of selfhood from place, a gap is formed between selfhood and identity, the I is fractured. The place where I grew up, where I was present, the place where I feel at home has been detached from my self, and this rift affects the meaning of 'I' and transforms the meaning of selfhood, for there is no I prior to the experience of dwelling. The subjective consciousness of the I is formed together with the sense of dwelling, it does not precede it. Hence, dwelling in its deep and existential sense is associated with a specific place where primal experiences had taken place, giving home a concrete, not just an imagined meaning.[16]

This is not to generalize and say that the liberation of selfhood that follows exile is uniform. The liberation of selfhood is complex. It can be expressed in various ways, depending on the extent of the rift. As varied as this rift might be for different people, the personal or collective experience plays a central role.

Another important layer in the dialectic of significant existence and place emerges when we deconstruct the concept of place. The Arabic word for place is *makan* (مكان). It is derived from *kan* (كان), 'was', and in the future tense – *yikun* (يكون), 'will be' or 'become', and is also associated with *kaun* (كوّن), 'being', or 'universe', and *kian* (كيان) - 'entity' or 'being'.

The verb kan inherently links actual being, existence, with the past. Place means that which has been, or that which is, continuously. Place, then, is a derivative of that which was, in its present appearance, or the presence of that which was in continuous past- present. Place creates a certain continuity from the beginning of time, while the time in which we are present is only the time of 'now', an accumulating present. All that remains of the past is only memory, presence-ing the I as a specific entity. In this context the I, actual identity, is the memory of the past, the continuum or accumulation of the memory of the past. Linking this to home, we make a clear connection between the actual and the imaginary, symbolic dimensions of home in a linear, not necessarily chronological continuity.[17] With its real connotations, place is associated with home, which in the case of refugees becomes imagined and symbolic. Undoubtedly, being detached from home is a

as well as 'finality' or 'death'. The connection between the various meanings is especially telling. It reflects the centrality of the relation of place and time. Hence it does not focus on dwelling as a place familiar to us from our relating to the objects within the space of home. The meaning of home as manifest in the two concepts we presented reflects how place is made into home by means of the time continuum contained in the connotation of comfort, adjusting, finality or death. Home is not merely the place where I live by means of the objects with which I come in contact, but rather the place where I feel peaceful and at ease to the extent of the profound, existential acceptance of death.

Furthermore, the various meanings of the concept *maskan* reflect the centrality of habit and the banalization of relating to home, not in the sense of existence characterized by sound, noise or vocal expression, but rather silence. Home or residence is the place to which we are accustomed, and therefore do not need to speak in or about it in order for it to exist. We live **it** and not just **in it**. This distinction enables us to discern our place in the world and the meaning of our presence and our selfhood as humans. We are at home by the mere banal practice of everyday life. Home is the place where we carry out certain habits, we know where every thing is and need not speak or even think about it. We inhabit home in peace and quiet. When home

customs accumulate and become an inextricable part of one's selfhood, a *habitus*, there is no need to externalize home through speech. In other words, the hidden aspect of residence, reflected in our actual being, is a more crucial aspect than the physical place I inhabit. My actual habit of certain behaviors, a certain order, and all that they imply, imbue home with crucial importance on the existential level, to the extent of rendering meaning to the being of existence. Home, then, contains the meaning of the most profound human intimacy, reflecting the selfhood of the I as being present in the world.

The dialectic link between 'selfness' and selfhood, between my being and home, between this place that I call home and home, points to the centrality of dwelling in human existence.[14] The conceptual world of dwelling indicates the cultural context of the importance of home in Arab culture. The link of home to collective cultural identity is inherent, for home presences selfhood, the I, as it perceives itself in terms of place, culture, mentality, knowledge and cognition. People differ in the depth and scope of the link between home and selfhood. They each have their own selfhood, denoted by one's actual existence in a certain place called home. The personal aspect is important for selfhood is expressed in the actual fact that I exist at home.

In this context, one should begin by noting the

been declared absentee property by Israeli law. Contemplation of this issue directs one's attention to the deep existential meanings of the absentee property law, passed mainly to deprive as many Palestinians as possible of their dwelling and bestow a sense of dwelling on as many Jewish immigrants as possible at the time.[11]

We shall focus here on home, dwelling and being from two points of view.

The first is related to the politicization of the meaning of home, while addressing the meaning of home as expressed in language and in practice. The second perspective regards changes that have taken place in the version of home prevalent among Palestinians in the past one-hundred years. The ontological and epistemological context to which I shall refer raises the importance of Arabic, the language that enables a special point of view at the various meanings of home and dwelling. Language plays a central role, as we have been taught by Martin Heidegger and Walter Benjamin, each in his own manner.[12] Language plays a central role when we examine the personal and collective significance of home. The etymology of a word can expose the complexity of reality and the power of politics and force that act upon it; the way in which force hides by the suppression or repression of a certain phenomenological world, of certain words or certain meanings of words.

Let us begin with the home, *bayt*, (بيت) in Arabic. Home is derived from *bata*, (بات). The word '*bata*' in Arabic means 'inhabit', 'sleep', 'dwell', 'sojourn', or 'gone forever'. These words have a clear physical and material resonance. They also possess a psychological aspect constructed around the ontological certitude that is inherent in 'sleep', 'repose' and the like - obvious connotations of the concept. A deeper layer, however – cultural, symbolic, existential – reflects the time continuum and the connection of past to future. Bata denotes an action that took place in the past and is over; however, bata also refers to the future in the sense of the past's influence upon being in the present and upon the future.[13] The past, then, is not that which is finished and gone, but rather that which has occurred and continues to resonate in the present and in the future. Hence, home is not merely the place where I have slept until now, but rather the place where I shall also wake up tomorrow and the day after. Home is that which will be. It contains the flow of continuous time from the past through the present towards the future. In order to stress this meaning we should refer to another word in Arabic associated with home: *maskan* (مسكن). Its Hebrew parallel is the word *mishkan*. The Arabic *maskan* contains a whole world of meanings built around its various derivatives. *Maskan* is derived from *sakan* (سكن) - 'stayed', 'was present', 'kept silent', 'fell silent', and is related as well to *sukun* (سكون) - 'calm', 'silence', 'peacefulness', 'halt', 'ease',

home affects the meaning of our existence in its concrete-material sense, as well as in its romantic-symbolic one. The absence of home enables certain thinking about different meanings of dwelling; for absence evokes the various meanings of presence that is reflected in dwelling. Absence makes for profounder, purer thinking about the phenomenon of dwelling. The phenomenon of homelessness enables one to regard the meaning of dwelling as the existence of a physical place where everyday life can be lived, or as an ontological affinity to physicality, a condition for the emergence of beingness with its steady, continuous identity. The homeless do sleep somewhere eventually – under a bridge, on the subway etc. What connection is there between the place where I 'choose' to sleep and home? We know the homeless develop an emotional affinity to the place where they sleep, even when they do not own such places in the modern sense of the term. The motive of ontological certitude, survival, is there along with the deepest desire for assured peace of mind, finite as it may be. This connection implies that place presupposes being and home presupposes identity dialectically![9] Being means being at a specific place, just as ontological certitude means that place is home. On the other hand, having a specific consciousness – identity – presupposes the existence of a specific home, containing the desire for secure beingness which can repress its actual beingness and function as a social agent

upon reality and within it without constantly contemplating itself.

In the modern era these ties have a special manifestation and undergo a drastic shift in the post-modern world with its voluntary and involuntary migrations, and the widespread increase of homelessness. Frightening statistics depict tens of millions of homeless people the world over who have been expelled from their homes and are not allowed to return.[10] In this context, centrality of exile as a 'normative' phenomenon emerges, enabling the thorough examination of the meaning of home and its link to exile. Exile as a state of the homelessness, for example, is an issue well worth addressing. On the other hand, the issue of exile at home or dwelling as the repression of exile, too, constitutes an issue to be attended to. In most cases, the absence of home means exposed life, the absence of defense mechanisms safeguarding one's actual physical and mental existence. Hence the link between the legal ownership of home and a sense of dwelling is of the utmost existential significance. In this context reference should be made to Palestinians living in cities such as Akka, Haifa and Jaffa in houses – even if their own – that have been declared absentee property, and pay rent for their lease. Questions should be posed about the link between their sense of dwelling and the original sense of dwelling that might have existed had those houses not

place, whether such meaning even exists prior to the existence of my own home in a specific place. Still, the decision to situate a home in a certain place cannot be banal. Granted we do not always determine the location of our home, but in cases where we can choose to build or purchase a home, its location affects our sense of dwelling.[4] We cannot address all the various issues and questions raised by associating presence, dwelling and being. I shall try to address several, using the Palestinian context. I choose a concrete context for two main reasons: First, this is no abstract epistemological discussion but rather one that presences our ontologies as epistemological beings. The second is related to the first and results from the need of 'absence' as an important component in the process of thinking about presence. Loss in Palestinian being and consciousness since the Nakba until the present enables me to elucidate some of the insights I wish to raise and discuss later on. Loss, especially that of home-homeland, constitutes a concrete and cognitive turning-point that hones thinking about the meanings of home and presences human beingness. The sense of dwelling, as stated above, becomes obvious and is repressed for the sake of customary doing and action. Since the banality of the sense of dwelling is a central factor in one's ability to function in an environment and live a life of practical and beneficial action, the presence-ing of absence and loss enables a deeper and purer thinking process about the

present meanings, the sense of dwelling and being.[5]

The loss of home becomes an 'opportunity' - albeit tragic - for a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the meaning of our presence in 'reality' and of the meaning of home. This is not to lessen the injustice and historical wrongdoing embodied in the loss of home. The point is to examine the meaning of home which is revealed in a special way, if not the most obvious, by the loss of home, without blaming the victim or holding him entirely unaccountable.[6]

The loss of home can take on different forms. Loss of home as a result of chosen emigration, reflected in the novel *The Season of Migration to the North* by Sudanese writer Al Tayeb Saleh, differs from loss of home due to expulsion, as reflected in the novel Return to Haifa by Palestinian writer Ghassan Kanafani.[7] When I speak of loss I do not mean freely chosen emigration, although from a post-colonial point of view, the migration of the southern poor to the wealthy north is by no means seen as freely chosen. I mean forced loss, imposed illegitimately, that does not enable free return home. In this context nostalgia should be recognized as a central motive affecting our conduct and our conception of home.[8] Here, the actual-physical meaning of dwelling should be distinguished from its emotional-existential significance. The loss of

is a repressed support for presence that enables us to take its existence for granted and be free to attend to our everyday business, capturing us in its temporal and spatial organization.

The link between presence and the assumption of the place of presence, both physically and mentally, raises questions about the link between our presence and the meaning of home. The meaning of home and the link between 'our home' as a house in which we reside and home as a state of mind are central to our human experience. The way in which the link is formed between the building as a material reflection of a mental sensation and the sentimentalization of a defined physical structure is another issue that raises questions about thinking patterns, and especially our emotional and sensory structure. The link between the physical building and the mental state, and the way these two aspects combine to create the meaning of home require profound study. Furthermore, thinking about home, we cannot ignore the inherent connection between our own specific home and its environment. Just as we assume our presence in a certain place, without emphasizing place as a basic part of presence, thus, too, physical surrounding is placed in the mere sensation of the home's existence. Accordingly, one cannot think of the existence of home, especially as a mental sensation, without assuming the existence of a surrounding – both physical and mental –

that imbues home with its sense of dwelling and constantly presences its existence. The sense of dwelling cannot be detached from the identity of place and environment that render it a substantial part of its meaning. This environment is not only personal but can also be expressed collectively as homeland. Thus the significance of homeland is derived as a collective sense of belonging that is not manifested in physical or emotional contact merely with a place or a concrete, defined home. The link between home and its environment is dialectic in nature, endowing the home with profound meaning and an emotional and cognitive affinity to its surrounding. The process whereby home becomes dwelling, linked to place or environment, has a temporal dimension par-excellence. The existence of home as dwelling and its effects on the place's coming-into-being as well as its existence and its repercussions on the sense of dwelling cannot cope with their existence in a fleeting temporal framework. The issue of precedence is present here in its full force, and an exhaustive answer may not always be found. Still the symbiosis of the two constitutes crucial ground for the actual presupposition implicit in our presence or being in the world. As illustrated by Jean Genet and Gaston Bachelard, each in his own way, our being in the world as conscious presence connects with the meaning that home gives to place, and defines it. The connection of home to place brings into question the meaning of

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Place, Home and Being: The Dialectics of the Real and the Imagined in the Conception of Palestinian Domesticity

The person who is born in no-country…does not exist either. If you say metaphorically that you are from nowhere, you are told: there is no place for the nowhere there. And if you tell him, the officer of passports: the nowhere is the exile, he answers: we have no time for poetics… if you like poetics go to an other nowhere.

Mahmoud Darwish[1]

A scholarly consideration of Palestinian reality has much to gain from the study of literary texts, a field replete with theoretical insights on reality. My point of departure is that text and reality are inextricably and dialectically interrelated. These relations turn reality into text and text into reality. In view of this, one wonders what we look at as we observe the phenomenological world. For a profound understanding of this world, we need to attend to three main components: need, will and desire. These three central motifs exist in any text and are dialectically interrelated[2]. They are manifested in various forms, not always apparently or explicitly. They are distinct, but only when analyzed. Thus it is not always possible to distinguish need from will and desire. The cunning nature of texts weaves all three in a complex manner that prevents "objective" cognizance of the concrete motif that is behind this or that manifestation of reality. Still, however, observation of and through these motifs may illuminate certain aspects of reality that are not always evident. Let us begin with

the basic issue of our presence in the world.[3] It is important to think of the way in which we are present, the meaning of this presence, and no less importantly – the assumption implicit in presence itself - an assumption not usually given its proper place in our normal thinking modes - about the kind of place in which presence takes place and whether one can think about presence without assuming the existence of its place? Reflective observation of our primal thought patterns indicates that we assume presence, being and existence. "Naturally" we take our existence for granted, and do not constantly think about it. We also repress thinking about the place of presence when we direct our attention to presence itself. Presence is usually repressed for the sake of doing, action, practical life etc. We are not constantly contemplating our presence, we take it for granted. This assumption raises questions as to the reasons for our not dealing with presence and existence, especially when we wish to think about presence in its physical significance. The assumption of presence has a profound physical aspect that assumes the existence of the place of presence. Presence, as a repressed conscious presupposition cannot be taken for granted nor can it emerge as a disturbance without relying on the existence of the place of presence. The place of presence - not merely the space in which body mass exists - constitutes an existential point of departure for the authenticity of presence. The place of presence