revista
PERIFERIAS

The Body in a Bundle: By Way of a Periphery

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| Palestine |

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I am become a Palestinian
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I am Palestinian, I was told. Born in Egypt, I was still a child, living in Jordan when I was told I am Palestinian. My Palestinian history whispered in my ears. I was told that I am a Palestinian because my family was forced into exile in 1948 after the *Nakba*.[1] *Nakba is an Arabic term meaning "catastrophe," and is commonly used to refer to the Palestinian exodus. After the destruction of more than 530 Palestinian towns, villages and villages and the expulsion of more than two-thirds of the Palestinian population of their land, 774 towns and villages were controlled by Israeli forces and many families were forced to leave their homes in Palestine. The atrocities of Israeli forces included more than 70 massacres, with more than 15,000 massacred Palestinian people. Nakba Day is the day Israel announced the foundation of the "Israelite state." In Palestinian culture, this term is closely linked to sadness, feelings of loss, betrayal and tragedy. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2012) report shows that 1.4 million people lived in historic Palestine in 1948, approximately 800,000 were expelled from their homeland. By January 2017, 5,340,443 refugees were*

registered with UNRWA - the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. This is only an estimate that does not represent the right number of refugees, given the presence of unregistered refugees, for example, families not considered eligible to receive UNRWA assistance, or families that have become refugees after 1948. Our village, Al-Muzayri'a, was depleted of its life and even of its existence on the map.[2] Al-Muzayri'a is my family's home village, located in the district of al-Ramla. The village was completely ethnically cleansed by Jewish terrorist troops as part of Operation Dani on July 12, 1948 (for more information on the village, see www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/al-Muzayri'a/index .html). In an interview with Suleiman Wadi, my uncle, I was informed that my family left the village with the rest of the inhabitants after the murder of two men of the village who were part of the resistance group. The population also left the village after hearing rumors of rapes that took place in the village of Deir Yassin. The family took a mattress and left, thinking that they would leave the village for only a few days; they have not been able to return to this day. For nine months the bodies of my family were dragged on a walk into exile until they reached Ramallah. Those were the same nine months that my grandmother's body, marked by defeat, took to give birth to her ninth son, the first and last son of exile: my father.

Is it my fate to be the daughter of the last person conceived in Al-Muzayri'a before departure? Is that why I know the smell of a land where I've never been? Or am I just the daughter of a Palestinian who started a generation of an Al-Muzayri'a born in exile? An exile that will be forever mine too.

A second exile outside Palestine was the fate of my family in 1967, when they settled in Jordan.[3] The second loss of Palestine comes in 1967. It is designated by Naksa and refers to the outcome of the so-called "Six-Day War" between some Arab countries and Israel, which resulted in the complete occupation of Palestine and brought more tragedy to the Palestinian people. Naksa means "relapse." It is a term used, for example, when a person returns to illness. In the Palestinian collective case, the Naksa is the relapse after the Nakba. For years, my family walked with their bundle of exile, which became, whether I wanted to admit it or not, mine too. I, who knew Palestine just from seeing these bodies made out of longing.

Despite my father's reunion with Palestine thirty years after his absence from office,[4] After the Oslo Accords in 1993, some 200,000 Palestinians were allowed to "return" to the West Bank with Palestinian identity cards (Hawiya). This returning group was allowed to enter only the West Bank. My father could return to his hometown, but never to his home village, occupied in 1948. Despite being fiercely critical of the Oslo Accords, his desire to return to the "houses of the heart" - as he calls them in his book - forced him to accept a conditional return. The Oslo Accords did not benefit the Palestinians and were misleading, as it became clear that the Israeli authorities were controlling almost every aspect, including the return of my family. Green identity cards are issued by the Palestinian authorities, but subject to Israeli approval. Both my parents and I were allowed to have the identity card, but not my brother, and so the return of the family was not complete, and limited to occasional visits, of which my brother was always excluded. after 1967, homesickness clung to my father's body, resisted and refused to leave: "I finally returned to the place, but the place did not return to me, "he wrote in his book *Homes of the Heart* (2007: 106).[5] In this paper, all translations from Arabic into Portuguese are my responsibility. For the translations of English, I am grateful to Adriana Bebiano. One thing, one thing only stuck with him in that body of Palestinian nostalgia, one thing that was untouchable and unchanging. It was when my father embraced the Palestinian rain: "rain like no other rain; Ramallah has its own thunderstorms, its lightnings, and its rain. "(2007: 104). And so I ran to find the place, the place I once embraced in the words of my father, a place to which I was told I belong.

During my first return to a land I never knew, I had the opportunity to visit a friend's village very close to Ramallah. Khalto Ansaf pointed to a mountain in the background showing me my village, al-Muzayri'a, and told me: "your village is the beginning of their '*frontier.*' That village I've never seen, but I've always dreamed of embracing as my own. "There" was very close to the one who spent his life seeing al-Muzayri'a in the abstract. At our side, a car exited a nearby settlement, honking, like a shout, warning us that our existence disturbs the settlers. The car passed beside me and went to *my* al-Muzayri'a. While I let myself stay where I was. At that moment and with my body paralyzed, I managed to cross the border and reach my village, even when I was paralyzed. I realized, felt and decided: I am a Palestinian.

On my first return to a land I never knew, I made an illegal visit -- which I still claim to be my right -- to the sea of Haifa occupied in 1948, the sea from where my father's rain comes, rain-like-no-rain . I felt the waves stolen by the occupation squeezing my body for the first and most probably for the last time, and I felt the blood trickling down my legs. It was not the first time I saw blood coming out of me, I had been told a few years ago that I had become a woman, but it was only then that I felt the sea and the blood, and I realized, felt and decided: as one body.

In 1998, fifty years after the *Nakba*, on a mountain at the foot of al-Muzayri'a and in a sea that sends its perfume to my village, I felt the *Nakba* that my body carries in a bundle. The *Nakba* was asleep in a body laden with memories and scars of exile. A body in a bundle full of homesickness that it never knew: Palestine. My relationship with Palestine is a bodily relationship, it was the quasi-encounter of my body with al-Muzayri'a and its sea that made me understand that this meeting has not yet been held. In a land and sea that always belonged to me and never belonged to me, I became a Palestinian body.

This text is an excerpt from my book Bodies in the Bundle: Artistic-Life-Stories of Palestinian Women in Exile, Coimbra: Almedina (2017). The title has been modified, adapting it to this journal.