



In Colonial Shoes:

*Notes on the Material
Afterlife in Post-Oslo
Palestine¹*

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Close-up of used goods in Jaffa's pishpushim market. All pictures in this article were taken by the author.

Introduction: The Toilet Bowl Graveyard

A strange and unexpected kind of waste fell across my path as I set out to research what I had neatly packaged for myself as “the politics of waste management in the West Bank.” It was late 2009 when an American friend introduced me to it on one of my first days in Jenin. “Oh, you’re interested in trash? You’ll love this place, it’s full of it!” And we were off. What struck me most when we finally made our way through an orgy of fresh fruits and vegetables, sold off stands and carts in Jenin’s *hisba* market, was the scene of what my friend called the toilet bowl graveyard: rows and rows of porcelain bowls, no seats, out on the open concrete. Most were white, a couple pastel blue and pink. Down an alley below a building with a bombed-out second floor we passed a mismatched set of electric hospital beds and lightweight metal room separators. They

were lined up next to TVs and worn-out shoes laid out on sheets. Piles of clothes, also on sheets, punctuated every block or so of this central, if evidently separate, market.

I had thought that by investigating the everyday workings of waste (*qua* sanitation) I might be able to understand better the reshuffling of individual, community and government ethics, rights and responsibilities, that has characterized the political landscape in post-Oslo Palestine. Upon arrival, it hit me fairly quickly that before deciding whom to interview, what archives to delve into and in what practices to become included – as a good anthropologist-in-training – I first had to decide what I meant by waste (another anthropology must). People’s suggestions provoked me: “What about the way the occupation is designed to waste our time?” “And the waste of international aid when the army stops projects or the donor hires German experts instead of local ones?”

I tried to keep my focus on sanitation. Sewage, of course, was sewage. Few would refute its trans-historical, universal demand to be managed, whatever the technologies of time and place. With the right access to archives, municipal councils, engineers and talkative friends, tracing the genealogy of its management could be fairly straightforward. But why garbage (what today is called “solid waste”)? And how does the toilet bowl graveyard, each used bowl exchangeable for a few dozen shekels, fit into the story?

This essay aims to unravel elements of the dense mix of anxieties, assumptions, and social and material relations to which the circulation of used goods in Jenin has given rise over the past half-century. In doing so, it asks what it means for the politics of everyday life today that many Jenin residents went from receiving humanitarian hand-outs to buying colonial hand-me-downs. It also explores the particular forms of ambivalence with which each type of used goods is spoken about today. Finally, it proposes some initial thoughts on how the post-Oslo amputation of the West Bank from Israel – which occurred in the decade of transition from hand-outs to hand-me-downs – has made it possible for Israeli discards to develop an afterlife in places like Jenin. It asks: what impacts, from Jenin’s perspective, has this massive transformation had on everyday rhythms, priorities and expectations in people’s lives?

I. Souq Al-Baleh

Circulations: Passover in Jenin

That first visit to the toilet bowl graveyard became one of dozens of hours I spent in Jenin’s *souq al-baleh* over the next two years. One of the shops I would sit in is Mustafa’s. Mustafa sells tea sets, salad bowls, blenders, flat screen TVs, crystal balls and even menorahs. One hundred percent of what he sells comes from across the Green Line – mainly from the two equivalent *baleh* markets in Jaffa and Haifa.²

There’s no polite way to say this – the stuff is garbage. On the shelves in Jenin, of course, it’s spotless. But its source is unmistakable. Half an hour away in Haifa, or two hours away in Tel Aviv, Israeli Jews³ throw the unwanted material foundations of their

lives away on what seems, to Mustafa, like a daily basis.

Some days are better than others. Passover is the best time of year for *baleh* markets across the West Bank. Jewish traditions of renewal, along with encouragement from the Israeli loan industry, mean that many throw out the contents of their homes – couches, computers, paintings – everything, Mustafa tells me, in order to buy new ones. It works just as well when someone dies or moves. A Tel Aviv, or Jerusalem, or Haifa municipal truck comes around and collects the discards from beside dumpsters. When I mentioned this to Israelis, I would get a shrug of confirmation. A quick personal anecdote usually followed. Everyone seemed to be participating in the system:

Yael⁴: Like the rest of the world, we clean in the Spring. And now, a couple of weeks before Passover, there are specific rules about how we have to clean. It's all written down... So people go around cleaning... they even clean the corners of the house with a toothbrush.

SSR: And things like furniture?

She nods.

Yael: They take everything out of the house and repaint the whole house inside. And then buy new furniture.

SSR: Isn't that expensive? Getting new furniture every year?

Yael: Well, maybe not every single year... But also that's when the big sales are.

Her daughter's partner chimes in:

Shoni: It's the magic of credit – my dad totally believes in it! He thinks that instead of paying, he's just doing this action. (She moves her hand in a side to side swiping gesture). It's not real money for him.⁵

Local sanitation workers sell what they collect, wholesale, to someone who rents a square of ground – marked by a grid of four yellow lines of paint on the cobblestones of Old Jaffa – to what's called *souq al-bashboushim* (from the Hebrew *shuk al-pishpishim*, or flea market). A box of things off the street might go for something like one or two hundred shekels. Maybe less. From a fold-out table in the square, what they call in Yiddish *altesachen* (old things) are then sold to Israeli hipsters, recent immigrants, Orthodox families and a handful of men from the West Bank. Friday is the *bashboushim*'s big day. So Mustafa's middlemen, Ahmad and Yousef, leave Jenin on Thursday night around 2 am. Ni'lin checkpoint near Ramallah opens around 4 am,



A corner of Jenin's *baleh* market.

so that gives them just enough time to drive down, get through the checkpoint, and start work in Jaffa around 6 am.⁶

Mustafa can't go himself to the *bashboushim*, though he's become a connoisseur of used goods and speaks with pride of his selectiveness. He's unmarried and thirty-three, so he's stopped even trying to get a permit. Instead, Ahmad – another Jenin resident and *baleh* merchant who is married with eight children, has never been arrested and can (sometimes) get a three-month trader's permit – is Mustafa's eyes and ears in Jaffa. But because Ahmad is a West Bank ID holder, driving a yellow-plated car is out of the question. So Ahmad's wheels, so to speak, come in the form of Yousef. Yousef is a Nazareth-born Israeli citizen living in Jenin. Like thousands with this status, he is breaking Israeli law by living with a wife and children who hold West Bank IDs.⁷

All three men – Mustafa, Ahmad and Yousef – found work in Jenin's *baleh* in the past ten years after thousands in the city lost their jobs across the Green Line. Within less than a decade, the market grew from four stalls outside Jenin's main mosque to over two hundred *baleh* stores and stalls below the *hisba*. Almost every city, town and village in the West Bank now has a *baleh* market. The largest are in the "border" cities of Jenin, Hebron and Qalqilya. But even villages now have at least four or five shops. The market has become an *'anwan*, or location with an address of its own, and bears the names *souq al-baleh* (not from *zbaleh* but from *balat*, as in bales) and *souq al-rabish* (market of rubbish), depending on the speaker's feelings about it.



A corner of Jaffa's pishpushim market, where Jenin baleh traders come for weekly pickups.

***Baleh* Ambivalence**

Tellingly, no one in Jenin pointed me to the *baleh* throughout my two years of asking about the management of waste (*idarat al-nifayat*, or *al-zbaleh*) there. This, I realized, was because the fact that almost everything in the *baleh* had been used and tossed out by Israelis – something everyone in Jenin was quick to tell me – does not necessarily make it garbage. Not in Jenin. To my American friend, it was the obvious fun of a quirky flea market (the term itself connoting the filth of second-hand merchandise).⁸ To those in the media who picked up on the emergence of this trade, it represented the sad crumbling of Palestinian autonomy. It was the acceptance of Third World standards.⁹

Seeing the important, by now even self-evident, role the *baleh* has come to play in the lives of so many in places like Jenin, it's not surprising that my framing of the market as the commodification of Israeli garbage within Palestinian communities falls somewhere between puzzling and offensive. In Jenin, I came to realize, the *baleh* is an ambivalent space. On the one hand, it offers good prices for hard-to-find, high quality, long-lasting items in the context of a "free market" siege. On the other, it is a space in which many would prefer that neither they nor their relatives be seen. Most would never admit to shopping there.

It was precisely this ambivalence – toward what people heard me saying and toward the market itself – that compelled me to investigate it further. It also brought me back full circle to my original question: if this wasn't garbage, why not? And what is considered garbage? When and why does the distinction between garbage and commodity matter?

The Politics of Consumption

As the small but robust group of scholars who have written about garbage always remind us, garbage is that which is meant to be forgotten, made invisible. Especially in the context of systematic, spectacular battles and bloodshed under occupation, the mundane tossing and collection (or not) of garbage seems not only insignificant but also too common and universal an experience to help us understand anything about "the Palestinian experience" *per se*. Nor does it seem to speak to "political" or other forms of consciousness, about which much ink has been spilled over the past few decades. The same may be said for something like shopping, all the more so in a flea



Interior of a Jenin baleh shop.

market. Friends both in Palestine and abroad have been quick to remind me that there are much bigger, more impressive and older used goods markets in Jordan and Egypt. What's so special about finding a small one in Palestine?

I would argue that practices like waste management and shopping do have political significance, and further, that they are indicative of changing material realities, shifts in techniques of colonial management and, most significantly for the last half-decade, of the occupation's perceived (to some) recession and replacement by self-rule. To describe and to historicize such everyday practices and their current meanings is, furthermore, to foreground the ways in which Palestine is linked to global processes. It is also a step towards understanding where colonialism and emerging modes of self-governance in the West Bank fit into such processes as much at the level of changes in international trade as in the micropractices of how people choose to spend a month's salary.

With what some have called the "globalization of the Palestinian elite" and the transformation of urban spaces like Ramallah and its up-and-coming rival, Rawabi, there has been an increasing interest in what most agree is a new prevailing "social imaginary." Some call it the new middle-class affect and link it to changed articulations of capital and the state.¹⁰ Others, like Lisa Taraki, call it "the normalization of a new individualistic ethos embracing leisure, self-enhancement, and social mobility."¹¹ In light of Ramallah's construction, retail and restaurant boom over the past few years, few would disagree with Taraki that "consumption is the

overarching medium through which this new consciousness is expressed, whether it is of material or of symbolic commodities.”¹²

If consumption is a key medium of expressing this emergent consciousness, then shopping is its most oft-repeated practice. And if that is the case, then commodities are the material foundations upon which this consciousness is daily reproduced. To follow this argument to its logical end calls not only for an examination of the spaces in which that consciousness is expressed, but also of the commodities themselves. How do they become commodities in the first place, what are the networks through which they move, are blocked and rerouted? What do we learn when we look at this new “social imaginary” in its concrete, practical moments of production? The *baleh* is a system of trade and consumption that emerged across the West Bank during exactly the period in which Ramallah’s social imaginary was being born. Jenin’s *baleh* can thus be seen as indicative, I think, of some of the transformations – and stagnancies – that came to shape “social imaginaries” among those on the West Bank’s political and economic peripheries in this same period. That among them we find the commodification of Israeli waste, I hope to show, is not incidental to their political significance.

Closure: Textures and Temporalities of a Free Market Siege

One of the signs to which commentators often point to argue that there have been improvements to life in the West Bank since around 2007 is the activity of urban markets. The optimism manifest in this kind of argument is the doppelganger, one might say, to Taraki’s lament about the growing individualist, middle-class ethic. Downtown Jenin, Nablus and Hebron were among the hardest-hit cities of the *intifada*. Today it seems there isn’t anything money can’t buy there. Since the end of 2009, even Palestinians with Israeli IDs – effectively banished from the West Bank for nearly ten years – also fill markets like Jenin’s, coming in by the busloads to shop for fresh produce and cheaper goods.¹³

But while bustling markets are a welcome (if ever ephemeral) change from bombings, the word on the street and in homes is that there’s little that’s actually *good* for sale in Jenin. There’s nothing unique to Palestine in the flooding of markets with Chinese goods. What is unique, however, is that this particular flooding is symptomatic of a specific breed of autonomy politics that mixed, in the late 1990s, with what turned out to be a small but important makeover to the experience of occupation.

Both scholarship and popular narratives about the post-Oslo period tend to focus on social and economic effects of violence in the second *intifada* and on the politics of aid and NGOs. But few outside the field of economics have touched on another massive transformation that took place in the same period. This combined three elements. First, the signing of the Paris Protocol between Israel and the PLO in 1994.¹⁴ Second, the PA-sponsored policy of “opening up” the occupied Palestinian market so that any individual in the West Bank could import goods “directly,” something heretofore illegal.¹⁵ I put “directly” in quotation marks because, according to the Protocol, which birthed what many call a “quasi-customs union” between the PA and Israel, Palestinian customs officials are still not allowed at ports of entry (like Ashdod), all Palestinian

imports – those destined exclusively for the West Bank – must meet a list of Israeli standards,¹⁶ and can only be imported by way of Israeli middlemen. All Palestinian imports are taxed in a number of ways by Israel as well.

Both implementation of the quasi-customs union and the opening up of the occupied market to direct imports were made possible by the spatial reorganization of the West Bank. The third element in the transformation I am describing is thus the well-known amputation of the lives of West Bank-ID holding residents from everything on the other side of the Green Line. Thus the consolidation of the idea of Palestinian “autonomy” in trade relied on agreement to a much less porous border. It was agreed, in other words, that people and goods could not leave the West Bank and enter Israel (without permission) and goods could not enter it except under Israeli control.

Closure and heavily-taxed “direct imports,” in turn, raised the cost of importing. Closure also meant that thousands lost jobs and an estimated one million people lost their main source of income. With an impoverished consumer base and shrinking spaces for employment locally, small businesses proliferated selling ever cheaper goods.

Almost two decades have passed since this transformation was set in motion. While the effects have been multiple, one in particular is crucial to an understanding of the politics of consumption and waste in the West Bank: the increased disposability of the material foundations of everyday life.

II. Genealogies of Reuse: *Bukji, Baleh, Zbaleh*

The Politics of Waste: The Birth of *Zbaleh*

Until about sixty years ago, garbage basically didn't exist in Jenin. We all have certain notions of what trash is. We imagine plastic bags caked in dust, stuck in Qalandia's barbed wire. We imagine grey construction debris peppered with colorful soda cans and candy wrappers; car carcasses on the way through Wadi Nar; the unmistakable smell of burning dumpsters. As someone focusing on Jenin in particular, I think of the West Bank's very first Palestinian-run sanitary landfill, called *Zahrat al-Finjan* (flower cup) – built in 2007 on a \$10 million World Bank loan that just came due. I also think of my twenty-year-old friend 'Amer, in Jenin camp, who last year left acting school for a job as an UNRWA garbage collector. He had to, since his father lost his permit and hence his job, inside Israel.

But had we all lived in Jenin sixty years ago, things would have looked, and smelled, very different.¹⁷ Seventy percent of us would have kept animals to which we would have fed food scraps. The thirty percent of us without animals would have given our household *zibil* to one of a handful of municipal workers who came around with a donkey-cart every few weeks. He, in turn, would have given it to farmers to use as fertilizer in Marj Ibn 'Amer, now the location of Jenin's used goods market. Farmers wouldn't have worried about separating “organics” from “plastics” when using *zibil* instead of the chemical fertilizers that were just beginning to circulate.

Plastic bags, or most kinds of plastic, wouldn't yet have existed. Refrigerators,

plastic containers, cellophane and the like would have been rare at best. When shopping for what we didn't grow or raise at home, we would've carried goods in baskets or in folded sheets or blankets. We would have called the latter *bukaj* (sing. *bukji*). We would've poured milk from glass bottles or from our animals directly. 'Amer might not have found a job as a garbage collector in the camp. This is partly because women working at home would have been responsible not only for the spaces inside homes, but also for the *hara* as a whole.¹⁸ What is more, sixty years ago Jenin municipality wouldn't have been paying hundreds of thousands of shekels per month to dump trash at *Zahrat al-Finjan* to help pay back the \$10 million. That also means it wouldn't have linked a monthly "waste management fee" (*daribet al-nifayat*) to the prepaid electricity cards that are today a major source of public resentment – not just in Palestine, but also across swaths of austerity-plagued countries in Europe, the Middle East and Africa.¹⁹

With the closure of the West Bank, local industries continued to decline and cheaply made goods proliferated. Buying more cheaply but from further afield, people came to feel change in the rhythms and quantities of purchases.²⁰ The shelf lives of the everyday objects for which people were exchanging hard-earned cash were cut short.

This is where the birth of *zbaleh* occurs. A material history of the relatively small new market called the *baleh* helps us see, I think, that through the post-Oslo transformations in spatial, trade and governance regimes other transformations were catalyzed as well. Separation of the West Bank from – but with continued control by – Israel over the past two decades has had impacts of all kinds. Some are material, like unemployment, the destruction of infrastructure and land theft. Others are less visible, like the defeatism that leads some, like Mustafa, to stop *themselves* from applying for permits to visit Jerusalem after countless rejections.

To these well-documented impacts I want to add one more. This one is visible. It's tangible, yet somehow still hard to articulate. It can be found in the conditions that have come to allow some materials – Israeli garbage, in this case – to have an afterlife, and others – Palestinian garbage – to become dead-end objects. Because, as my numerous hours at Jenin's new landfill taught me, the deterioration of the material make-up of everyday goods in Jenin has coincided with a spike in the tons of garbage Jenin produces. As in the rest of the West Bank, this is linked to population growth. It is also linked to the fact that, with more women working outside the home, there is less time to repair things like clothes and household goods.

But that's a different story.²¹ Suffice it to say here that what we know today as garbage – or *al-nifayat al-salbeh*, among those who work with it – has a very short history in this part of Palestine.²² The significance of Jenin's new market transformation thus lies in the fact that *zbaleh* is now not just a metaphor for low quality merchandise on sale in Palestinian markets. It is a prescient descriptor.

With this in mind, I decided that if garbage as a category was in motion, the story of its management had to be flexible as well. It had to mimic the movements of the material itself between statuses as useful, valueless and reusable. It also had to understand how those moves were being made, why and when that mattered.

People in Jenin were certainly reusing materials sixty years ago; just without terms like “recycling” or “environment” as correlates to their practices. The thirty percent without animals, for example, had been expelling unwanted substances from within the walls of their homes or gardens, through the hands of municipal workers, as they do today. But that which was discarded had continued to circulate. That is, until it vanished, becoming a useful – and quickly invisible – part of something new. It might’ve become soil in a wheat field, for instance, or fuel to heat the water at a public bath house.²³ Not only has garbage been a changing category over time, it has also, necessarily, meant different sorts of materials at different moments.

In this sense it is not hard to imagine Jenin’s post-2000 *baleh* emergence as a continuation of these very same practices of reuse. But I wondered: had there ever before been another *trade* – involving a cash exchange – in used goods from further away? Or the practice of wearing the clothes and shoes of people to whom one couldn’t trace a face-to-face relation, in living memory? In conversations with generations over the age of fifty in Jenin, this question soon brought me to the *bukji*.

Al-bukji

We remember from our short genealogy of garbage that in the first half of the twentieth century and in the absence of plastic, transporting goods from place to place meant stuffing them in baskets, wheeling them on carts or, as we see in old photographs of Palestine, carrying them on one’s head wrapped in a sheet. The composite bundle created by the sheet and goods was called a *bukji*. After the Nakba, the *bukji* acquired a new and painful meaning. The following lines from an *al-Quds* article by PA Minister of Prisoners’ Affairs ‘Issa Qaraqi’ offer one narrative from this year:

We have been waiting for the *bukji* for 63 years, wrapped in a blanket and offered to us by UNRWA from time to time...we are the small children around it, we open it, we search in it for a decent pair of shoes or one wool sweater even if it is worn out, and we wear our pants even if they are not our size. The smell of the clothes makes clear that they are from beyond the ocean, donated to us after others wore them for many, many years. They threw them at us. We wore them and we thanked the countries that colonized us and fed us and gave us fish oil to drink.²⁴

After the Nakba, *bukji* thus became the name given to the bundles of used clothes and shoes delivered to refugees throughout the Middle East. It was distributed, by the ton, according to the number of members in each family. It was folded into sheets tied together by their four corners or, in winter, oversized coats with tied arms. It was distributed twice annually (once in winter once in summer) beginning around 1952, after the UN took over from the Red Cross.²⁵

Abu Ahmad, one of the first local West Bank UNRWA employees responsible for *bukji* distribution, remembers that rubber rain boots were a top priority in the first couple of years. These years were characterized by especially brutal winters, an added

hardship for UNRWA's sanitation workers (who were also refugees) responsible for cleaning the camps' makeshift public bathrooms.

Over the phone from his retirement home in London, he speculated that the word "bukji" came from the English word "package."²⁶ Another local UNRWA employee in Ramallah, who oversaw the end of the *bukji* era in the early 1990s, wasn't sure of the word's etymology. He did however know it was chosen for a reason. UN staff chose it, he remembered hearing, because the *bukji* was already culturally legible. They assumed it would be more palatable as a conduit for aid.²⁷

The exact origin of the shoes and clothes remains a mystery. Everyone I interviewed did agree, however, on two things: One, that the garments were always used. And two, that they must have originated in America or Europe.²⁸ They came neither from the Arab states nor from the Israelis. There were other forms of aid, of course, whose origins were much closer to home in Palestinian community organizations and neighborliness. These too yielded assistance in the form of used garments, food, shelter and even employment. But none of these was quite so pervasive or left quite the powerful symbolic legacy as did the *bukji*.

III. "A Gift from the American People to the Palestinian People"

"The *baleh* and the *bukji* are the same thing, Sophia! They're both industries!"²⁹

***Bukji* Talk**

In Jenin, a city with a large refugee population, this is especially true. I learned that "bukji" is today a keyword for understanding how the material grit of exile is both remembered and produced. I started asking about it. Stories poured out. Often with a mix of humor, pride and tragedy.

Abu Sami: I could not have gone to school without [the clothes I got from] the *bukji*. Once I ended up with a jacket from the *bukji*. It was just my size, it was good. And clean. I wore it and went to school. My English teacher came over to me and asked me about the inside of my jacket. "What's written here in English? Made where? If it's written here that your father is a donkey, would you even know?" So I hit him. I hit the teacher.

SSR: (gasp!)

Abu Sami: The guy was telling me my father is a donkey! He was from the city (*madani*)... a property owner. And I'm a refugee. He's a snob (*shayif halo*). He's sitting in his chair wearing a suit and tie, he sees me wearing a *bukji* jacket... I said to him "Your father is a donkey, not mine." And I slapped him in the face.³⁰

Some of the more tragic *bukji* stories have also become commemorative practices. This one, recounted to me by an older member of El-Funoun Popular Dance Troupe in al-Bireh, tells of the moment in which the *bukji* was transformed from a way of carrying things into a symbol of exile:

Once the village nearby was attacked, people in your village would start leaving... So what would they take with them? *Everything* they had, they would throw it in a blanket, tie it up, put it on their heads and run. So if you notice in the photos of the *hijra*, most of the people have *bukaj* on their heads and they're walking. They carried what they could carry. To the extent that it's really entered our culture. For example there are some women who carried the *bukji* and left their homes, and one was so scared that she grabbed her son, for example, and put him in the *bukji* as she was fleeing. So they wouldn't kill him. And when she arrived to a place where she felt kind of secure, she opened the *bukji* and found a doll instead of her son. Her son's doll. She had left her son behind. She lost her mind and become the crazy woman of the camp (*majnoonet al-mukheyam*). *Khalas*, she went mad... I've heard these kinds of stories from people. Some people have taken this story and used it in films and TV series. And even we, El-Funoun, we put it into some of our performances about Haifa and Beirut. We had a woman with a *bukji* on her head, and then she went crazy and started dancing a mad dance (*raqsa majnooneh*). It's present in our culture.³¹

As a narrative trope, the *bukji* opens conversations the *baleh* doesn't. Nevertheless, I found that *bukji* and *baleh* talk today can be understood as lenses through which particular sets of priorities and of changing affective approaches to Palestine's colonial condition are made visible. That it was many of the same people who remembered the *bukji* in their lives – often as children in Jenin – who also offered incisive commentary on the *baleh*, a phenomenon in their present milieu, gave even further significance to their comparison.

The *bukji* was part of an international trade that reached much further back and farther afield than the Nakba or Palestine. What one UNRWA employee said to me (quoted at the beginning of this section) points to the fact that while the *bukji* was distributed to families free of charge, it was the World Lutheran Federation that, for much of the *bukji*'s existence, sold used garments to UNRWA. This would seem to make the *bukji* a “refugee version” of the more “democratically” distributed post-2000 *baleh*. But I think that a comparison between the kinds of talk around these two different sets of imported used goods is key to understanding important differences about the political, ethical and aspirational climates in which these materials circulate.

Dependence, Choice and ‘*ayb* Aversion

One of the starkest differences between talk about the two types of used goods is the absence of an affect of ‘*ayb* (rudeness, shame or embarrassment) in *bukji* talk, on the one

hand, and its palpable presence in *baleh* talk, on the other. I should clarify. It is not so much that *baleh* talk necessarily or always provokes *actual* embarrassment in the speaker; rather, it is that even if shame is not felt, an effort not to be associated with the *baleh* is consciously and deliberately made (implying an aversion to the shame of association with it more than to the *baleh* itself). There is also a third degree of separation from, but association with, this ‘*ayb* affect. It comes from the speaker who claims *not* to be embarrassed or ashamed at shopping in the *baleh*. This speaker points out that, in shopping there, he or she is unlike most other people for whom it *is* ‘*ayb* to do so.

Stories like Abu Sami’s about hitting his teacher after being mocked in his *bukji* jacket manifest a latent sort of pride I found in most casual talk about the *bukji*. We can imagine that this is in part due to the sense that the *bukji* was a universal experience, one binding refugees together in common exile. The *bukji* existed within the broader framework of aid. And, for the first two or three decades, people’s dependence upon it seems to have been taken for granted. Another childhood story about being aid dependent from Abu Rania, who grew up in Jenin camp, is telling:

Abu Rania: Let me tell you a little anecdote. A bag of flour would come to us, and it would have written on it “Gift from the American people to the Palestinian people.” Written right on it. So our schools would ask us to wear sports shorts. But there were no such shorts to buy. And even if there had been, there was no money. So my mother would come, cut the bag [of flour] and sew a pair of shorts out of it. And on the back [he gives his behind a dramatic pat] it would be written: “Gift from the American people to the Palestinian people.” I wore this!

SSR: (laughing) Were there jokes at school?

Abu Rania: No! We were *all* wearing this kind of thing! It was a bag for flour, a white cloth bag. Ask anyone, they’ll know what I’m talking about.³²

Unlike the *baleh*, the *bukji* wasn’t seen as a matter of choice. At least not for the first few decades. As Abu Rania does above with the flour, people speak of it as having literally “come down” or “come out” to them (*kan btitl ‘alak bukji*). What you did with it from that point on was your business. Attesting to the visibility with which people’s relationship to the *bukji* was lived, almost everyone also described getting together with neighbors or extended family when UNRWA would distribute them. Rounds of exchange and trade ensured that, when possible, families with more boys got more male clothes, small children got smaller shoes, and people wore the colors they preferred – within the limits of what Europeans and Americans were discarding at the time.³³ Recountings of the *bukji*’s time are told with an ambivalent pride in refugeehood, the ambivalence arising from the fact that *bukji* stories are often inflected with a sense of nostalgia for a lost time in which people, together, embraced a common *politics* of exile as well.³⁴

Talk about the *baleh*, conversely, mainly provoked uncomfortable laughter and hand-over-the-mouth hushed tones in urban Jenin. Younger women who admitted shopping there, for example, told me to lower my voice and took me aside. Some cut the conversation short. My *baleh* talk provoked downright disdain, disgust or performative dissociation among other reactions, especially older people responsible for providing for their families. Abu Rania, for instance, so funny in his retelling of being an aid-dependent child in flour-sack shorts in the 1960s, spoke with revulsion when I implied that he could buy clothes for his wife and daughters from the *baleh*.³⁵ Imm Nidal, sixty-five and also a refugee, at first feigned not hearing me when I mentioned the *baleh*. Next she claimed not to know of it at all. Finally, when I pressed her (her daughter's store was a five minute walk from it, after all), she shut me up with a stern look in the eye: "I *never* shop there. Nor do my relatives. Nor would we ever. *Khalas*."³⁶

Rude Luxuries, Clean Garbage

According to most shopkeepers in the *baleh*, this kind of dissociation from it seems to work a bit the way Victorian prohibitions on sex talk do in Michel Foucault's writings.³⁷ The more talk about it was prohibited, the more that which was the object of prohibited talk was probably going on. Shopkeepers, shoppers and rejecters of the *baleh* alike were constantly telling me two apparently contradictory things. The first is that the *baleh* was for the poor. That was why I shouldn't ask about it too loudly, 'ayb! That was why people from surrounding villages were not embarrassed to be seen there – no one would know them. Hadn't I seen the prices? Ten shekels for a pair of shoes that in the regular market would cost seventy. "We Arabs have lots of children, not like you in Europe. What do you have, one brother? How do you think we're going to buy eight new pairs of shoes for all eight of our children at seventy shekels a pair?" Jenin's unemployment rate, hovering between 22 and 45 percent³⁸ over the past decade, put that argument beyond doubt.

But what I also heard and came to understand over two years was that, in fact, people from Jenin's entire socio-economic spectrum actually shop in the *baleh*. I discovered that the *baleh* is a place of rare, otherwise inaccessible finds. Not just cheap ones. Mustafa sells *Korean* DVD players, thick *oak* grandfather clocks and tea sets *made in England*. His blenders are Moulinex, from France. Abu Mahmoud sells real Nike sneakers and Italian leather boots. Used, of course. But long-lasting enough for that not to matter.

I also heard the story of a man who, I was told by the Fatah-supporting shopkeepers who introduced me to him, was a member of Hamas. His leg had been destroyed by an Israeli missile that hit his house during the 2002 incursion into the camp. After undergoing twenty-four hours of torture, a hurried amputation (to which he had not agreed) at Afula hospital and then a year of administrative detention, he had been released back into Jenin. One of the first things he did there was visit the *baleh*. He was looking for a prosthetic leg. He found one. He tapped on it with a long pinky-finger nail to show me it was plastic. The color was a remarkably good match for his dark skin. I guessed it had been made, or imported, for African immigrants to Israel.³⁹

As I sat for hours in this corner of the market, I was introduced to so-and-so *min al-sulta* (a Palestinian National Authority, or PA employee), so-and-so who was a well-known doctor trained in Russia, and so-and-so who had just come back from Holland and had built a villa in *Kharoubeh*. Ilham, who first introduced me to one of the founders of the *baleh* (Abu Mahmoud), explained the combined poverty and luxury of the market as follows:

It's not that it's 'ayb (shameful), but that they want to say 'I don't buy from the *baleh*, I don't go there, I wouldn't buy anything used.' But they do think that it's 'ayb. They want to say, 'It's not like I don't have money, I don't have that kind of need. I'm not so poor that I have to go to the *baleh*.'... But then you find that they all know the *baleh*, and they go, but they go stealthily (*tahreeb*, secretly). But when I go to the *baleh* I don't have a problem, I'm not ashamed (*ma bast'hi*). People from all socio-economic levels (*min kul altabaqat*) go to the *baleh*. In fact, especially the richest people in the city go to the *baleh*. Why? Because they're looking to buy fine things (*shaghlat t'ileh*) to put in their house. Things whose quality is really good. Not that they don't have money, but they want to bring strange, rare things. If you come down to the regular market, you will probably see that all the stores have pretty much the same things. Exactly the same, all Chinese. But there are people who want to put special (*mumayazeh*) things in their houses. And that you won't find except in the *baleh*.⁴⁰

The dissociation that at first glance might have seemed like an old-school anthropologist's dream reaction to the fear of social stigma – or like the aversion to dirt Mary Douglas describes in *Purity and Danger*⁴¹ – was thus slightly more complicated. The “danger” side of purity and danger had something else, something pure, up its sleeve.

IV. In Colonial Shoes: *al-'Asli*, *al-Ndif* and Patina Trust

The Purity of (Colonial) Patina

Patina is a mark of time. It is time's toll on an object. In Mustafa's shop as in any other shop in the *baleh*, there is an unspoken assumption that signs of use should be erased, cleaned off. He stays in the shop for hours after the market has closed to make sure every object is spotless and in place. The fact of the objects having been used, however, and specifically by Israelis, is not concealed.

Nor can it be concealed. The histories of the objects remain visible on them. Sometimes, this is in the form of classic patina. Shoes are scuffed and shirts are stretched-out. In other cases, once wiped down, the objects' histories are visible in characteristics that betray colonial – and particularly Israeli – metropolitan origins. Along with the Native American dream catchers hanging from Mustafa's ceiling, his

shelves are spread with upright plates picturing miniature paintings of tourist sites in Spain and Poland; wooden African figurines with elongated necks and sitting Asian Buddhas. These objects tell the story of post-military service travel among Israeli twenty-somethings and of salaries and sensibilities that encourage vacations in the West and its former colonies. Their *afterlife* in shops built on Marj Ibn ‘Amer’s fertile lands correlates to and tells the continuation of these stories: that many of the shopkeepers who dust and arrange them haven’t left the West Bank in ten years. Or, in one case I encountered, have never left Jenin. They also tell that it has become more profitable for the families who own these lands to grow one-storey shop-fronts than it is to grow watermelons. Even on the objects successfully freed of grime, chippings and other marks of use, a kind of immaterial, spectral patina lingers. A patina that sticks in one’s mind. Or not.

I asked how Ilham felt about Israelis having previously carried the bag she had just bought in the *baleh*. Her answer reminded me of what Lori Allen calls “getting by” in the context of routinized violence⁴²:

What, war and killing are one thing. And your normal life is another thing. If I wore her bag, it doesn’t mean I killed someone, right? I didn’t kill a Palestinian! Or even if it was something that belonged to a person who came into Jenin in a tank, that’s got nothing to do with anything. We have to live our normal life. If we’re going to sit and think about that kind of thing... (tsk!) we’ll never be able to live!⁴³

Ilham’s mode of shrugging off the Israeli origins of her bag was prevalent in *baleh* talk – among those who admitted to shopping there. But what I also found was that *baleh* goods don’t only gain their value from being nearly impossible to find outside the *baleh*.

Paradoxically, one might think, it is the fact of their having been *discarded*, by *Israelis* and in areas *no longer accessible to West Bank Palestinians*, that most made the *baleh* a reliable source of high quality merchandise. The fact that the objects were discarded by Israelis, that is, made them worth spending cash on. Worth risking reputations for. Still more remarkable is the fact that, discursively, *baleh* goods’ greater value (compared with new goods) was often expressed in terms of their *nadafeh*, or cleanness. But what could possibly make colonial patina clean?

In Colonial Shoes: Searching for the ‘*asli* Post-Oslo

I found the first answer in one of the most widely used words for describing the value of *baleh* merchandise: ‘*asli*, or original. The term is a kaleidoscope of meanings. At one level, it refers to the objects being “brand name,” or made by companies known for their high quality. It means they’re not counterfeits. Not made in China to imitate real brand names. Some of them *are* made in China. But that’s precisely not the full story. Because another piece in the kaleidoscope is that their status as “originals” also means they have an origin that arrives with them. Each original, once in Jenin, is a visibly reborn thing. Something with a past.

One of the things that first struck me when I got to Palestine was how much energy Palestinians spend thinking about – indeed are forced to think about – what Israelis think and do. Even when it comes to Israeli thoughts and ways of being that do not directly relate to Palestinians or to occupation. Israelis, literally, occupy people’s minds. The *baleh* lends itself particularly well to this practice. In it I found something like an identification, among shopkeepers, with the unknown previous owner of the objects. Putting himself in the shoes (first literally then metaphorically) of the previous Israeli owner, the speaker would try to imagine why it was discarded. “In the Jewish faith,” several explained to me, “there is a holiday called *pesach*. Like our *‘eid*. That’s when their sheikhs tell them to renew.” “But other times maybe they’re just tired of them,” someone else would speculate. “Or maybe they were foreigners who moved after three or four months living here and had to get rid of the stuff.” The bottom line often was: “Israelis have taste (*‘andhum zoq*). And sure, if you have money, why not throw away!?! I would too.”

This identification is twinned with the radical alterity of knowing oneself to be the colonized recipient of the colonizer’s *discarded* personal effects. Several shopkeepers thus also expressed having been impressed by the care with which Israelis cleaned, folded, ironed and left out their discards to be taken away. As if to express surprise that they could take such care with objects they knew were destined for the hands, feet and houses of those they are occupying.⁴⁴

Baleh objects are thought of as having originally been intended for Israelis. That’s important. In having been used, the assumption is, they were first accepted – vetted – before being discarded. This gives them the authenticity they exude once they reach the *baleh*. Among shoppers, *baleh* goods are also known to have come through networks of people delicately working around permits, checkpoints, illegality and trust. People like Ahmad and Yousef, Mustafa’s intermediaries, thus gain a certain kind of social capital themselves by being known to gain entry into Israel two, three and sometimes four times weekly. In some ways, this too is a kind of vetting process. This kind of social capital extends back in time as well. It is thus common to hear stories in the *baleh* of an individual having been friendly with – having known and been known by – Israeli Jews. Even if an experience of the distant past, in the context of rampant immobility among refugee men working in the *baleh*, it confers on that individual a similar authenticity. An aura of really knowing, if not being able to currently access, what has come to be called “the inside” (*al-dakhil*).

Baleh work is almost impossible, I discovered, without knowledge of basic Hebrew, an eye for Israeli tastes and the right Israeli contacts. Abu Mahmoud, a refugee who can see his demolished village (al-Mazar) from the roof of his house in Jenin, hasn’t gone “inside” since 1999. In almost every conversation I had with him over the course of two years, he would mention the fact that when he worked inside Israel, he had Jewish friends. “I used to sleep at their houses in Tel Aviv!” he would repeat. “And Isaac, a Russian Jew, once even invited me to have lunch in Tiberias with his wife and children.” Ahmad took me on one of his Jenin-to-Jaffa runs one Friday morning at 2 am. He spent much of the three-hour drive listing the names of the

Israelis he knew. Two of them called him on his cell phone as we spoke. Shlomo and Beni would be safeguarding the day's best finds for him so he could have first dibs at 6 am in Jaffa.⁴⁵

The difference between Abu Mahmoud and Ahmad is that Abu Mahmoud has sons who've spent time in Israeli prisons. Ahmad, who is younger and open about being "careful not to get mixed up in politics," does not. It is because Ahmad kept his head down, so to speak, and kept good contacts inside Israel, that he is able to keep getting permits to enter.⁴⁶ But both men, like most of the men working in the *baleh* trade, either have connections with Israelis today or had them in the past.

Separation Anxiety: The Local Inauthentic and the Reliable Colonizer

Baleh objects thus index not only histories of Israeli consumption and rare networks of trust and movement. They also index the life histories of the people who buy and sell them. As a source of authentic 'asli goods the *baleh* market presupposes, moreover, the presence of inauthentic goods in close proximity. In 1968, Walter Benjamin wrote that "the authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced."⁴⁷ Extending his argument beyond the work of art, that seems like a good description of the 'asli origin that accompanies *baleh* objects to Jenin. But Benjamin goes on to say that reproduction jeopardizes "the historical testimony" of the authentic object. What seems to be happening in the *baleh* is the opposite: the presence of reproduction in the form of endless new, cheaply-made, counterfeit Chinese goods in Jenin's new market *enhances* rather than diminishes the aura of authenticity around Israeli used goods.

I thus found the second answer to why the *baleh* is considered *ndif* in what everyone had to tell me about what *wasn't* available in Jenin – or in the rest of the West Bank for that matter. Consumer critiques are as much about those responsible for the state of the markets as they are about the materials themselves. In Jenin, for instance, daily talk circulates about how the PA fails to monitor the goods people import. This despite the PA Customs Police cars usually stationed on Nablus Road at the entrance to the city, where Area B meets Area A. "The stuff we get is often expired, it has all kinds of chemicals. It could be dangerous!" I heard repeatedly. "It's all Chinese, cheaply made. What are we supposed to do?" Talk about China would confirm that people's main qualms were with PA monitoring, not with China itself: "In China," went the explanation, "you can have something made either cheaply or high quality. The problem with our importers is that they go for the cheapest thing possible. And then the PA does nothing about it!"

Finding documentary or statistical information on any of the *baleh* markets in the West Bank is pretty much impossible, whether in Israeli or in Palestinian sources. Most goods that cross the Green Line have already been imported or manufactured, taxed, and paid for.⁴⁸ There's almost no paper trail except that which remains in the hands of individual merchants for personal records. Aside from a few newsworthy incidents about bulk deliveries,⁴⁹ the *baleh* is thus invisible to the PA. (It is, however,

visible to institutions with deeper histories in Palestine including mukhtars, Chambers of Commerce, local municipalities and the Israeli army.) The PA Customs Police doesn't bother *baleh* merchants and the Ministries don't collect information.

One would think this lack of PA monitoring would detract from the market's reliability. But the effect is the opposite: That health and safety inspections are assumed to have already taken place – *by* Israelis, *for* Israelis – is precisely where *baleh* goods' cleanness can be found. It is thus a double reliability imagined through the *baleh*: one, Israel's reliability towards its own citizens. And two, the PA's reliable neglect of Palestinians.

In more arenas than just the monitoring of markets, I found the assumption that Israel takes care of its citizens prevalent among interviewees and friends. In the imagination of many, and failing the ability to actually go there, Israel is a country of laws (*fi qanun honak*). You can't litter there, you can't jaywalk there, and you have to wear your seat belt. This is tangible even for those unable to cross the Green Line. It has become possible to tell when a road in the West Bank has turned into a bypass and/or a "shared" road from watching the Palestinian driver fasten his seat belt, for example. This works both ways. Back on PA-monitored roads, the seatbelt comes right off again. The fact that the goods in the *baleh* were originally imported for Israelis, then, has come to signify that the goods are guaranteed to be higher in quality. It means they were reliably checked for health hazards. Food and toys are safe. Clothes will last. Like a fifty-year old divorcee entering the New York dating scene, the goods have already been vetted. In the shadow of this assumption, of course, we find not only the parallel assumption that the PA doesn't monitor or punish with the same severity. We also find a resigned confidence that where the Israelis *do* have a hand in monitoring Palestinian-imported goods (at ports like Ashdod prohibited to Palestinians), they'll do so minimally at best.

It was common to hear a host tell guests "the juice is Israeli" to mark that it was probably more expensive, of higher quality, and therefore a sign of respect for the occasion and guests. Or, as Imm Yasser, whose son was martyred in 2006, would often announce to me, "I only buy my children Israeli clothes. The other stuff? You just don't know where it's come from, what diseases it might have! And it'll only last you three months anyway, it's Chinese." There is a reason that the local BDS campaign has had a hard time gaining grassroots support. "*Fish badil, low kan fi...*" (there's no alternative, if there only were...) is the bleak response one hears from those who continue to buy Israeli. Developed over the past few decades, it is precisely the common sense that Israeli goods are better that the BDS campaign hopes to undo.⁵⁰ Though the campaign is gaining ground, there remains a sense of disappointment and preference for Israeli goods continues. The complaints: Chinese things don't last, may be health hazards, and are not worth the price asked. What is new and appears to be local cannot be trusted at face value.

What comes from the increasingly invisible *dakhil*, on the other hand, *is* something to be trusted. It is in this context that Israeli *discards* can be seen, for some, as cleaner than can goods imported *new* to the West Bank and sold locally. Such complaints are

a mark of a broader mistrust both of local (municipal) and of central (PA) government among many in Jenin. They also mark a silent understanding that Israel – not as a colonial power but as a state for its citizens – is reliable. But what is lost, what is gained, what is foregrounded and what becomes invisible when the *baleh* replaces *zbaleh*, or when *bukji* becomes *baleh* instead?

Conclusion

The Goods, the Visible and the Vanishing Patina

I introduced this essay as a set of notes trying to understand what happens when the taken-for-grantedness of *dependence* on humanitarian hand-outs mutates into the *choice* of buying colonial hand-me-downs. Both represent conditions of dependence and both entail submission to colonial control. But as we see in Jenin, each is shaped by and helps produce distinct forms of affect and particular relationships among people and between people and their material surroundings.

Most telling from their comparison, I think, is the sense of choice to which the *baleh* lends itself. The sense of choice – whose permutations include fear of the ‘*ayb*’ of making that choice – is produced in three ways. One, the *baleh* requires cash to be exchanged for used objects. Two, the *baleh* is now a physical location to which people choose – or don’t choose – to go. And three, the people who work there have also chosen that profession. They have created it, in fact, learning to become instant *bricoleurs*, cobbling together loans from family and friends and meticulously maintaining connections with Israelis who may once have employed them.

But choice thus produced obscures the relations of control and dependence, I would argue, that have made the market possible – even necessary – in the first place. Choice obscures the invisible patina that closure is encrusting onto people’s lives. It masks the reasons why Israeli *garbage* today circulates in Palestinian markets with greater ease than do Palestinian *people* in Israeli markets. Or the fact that the two areas on either side of the Green Line were once treated as one market, albeit unevenly.⁵¹ It elides the fact that post-Oslo ‘separation’ meant not only that the PA would be answerable to Israel to build a landfill like *Zahrat al-Finjan* deep inside the West Bank in the mid-2000s, but also that the granting of so-called “autonomy” itself engendered new forms of dependence increasingly difficult to see.

The emergence of the *baleh* market is symptomatic of something happening in Palestine. The *bukji* is its past – but has not disappeared. Debates about Palestinian dependence on international aid abound. This history goes back to at least the aftermath of the Nakba. But the aid that once came in the form of *bukji* jackets and rain boots is packaged differently today. For one, “gifts” like roads and salaries don’t bear the same material signs, the patina, of the used things that first arrived from across the oceans. Flour sack shorts once did the work of reminding people who wore them, and who saw them worn, of common exile. In their abstract exchangeability for things like four-by-fours and private educations, salaries have the power to erase their

source. (Unless, of course, they are not paid.) Even roads, like the many recently built and aggressively sign-posted by USAID, have a way of becoming abstract, utilitarian. Once paved, they are quick to give off the sense of having always-already been there. Publicly wearing what were legible in *bukji* times as the tangible signs of expulsion and liminality, on the other hand, meant that an awareness of aid dependence – for individuals but also for entire communities – was inescapable. That aid patina did a certain kind of political work. Today, aid is more ubiquitous than ever. Its patina, however, seems to be vanishing.

The visible is no longer a reliable source of what is there. Direct imports are not direct. Palestinian police uniforms mean Israeli coordination. And a new “Palestinian” road probably means more settlers. In light of a growing sense that things *here* are not exactly what they seem, it is no wonder, then, that the certainty of the bought, the used and the discarded *there* gives some reprieve.

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Endnotes

- 1 This essay is based on twenty-two months of field research I conducted towards the completion of my doctoral thesis in Anthropology at Columbia University. The research was made possible by generous grants from the National Science Foundation, the Social Science Research Council, the Wenner Gren Foundation and Columbia University’s Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. It would have been impossible without the patient guidance of all those I worked with while in the field. My family and friends near and far turned work into pleasure. Special thanks go to Hadeel Qazzaz and Penny Mitchell at PARC for organizing the seminar in Ramallah at which this essay was originally presented. Thanks too to Salim Tamari and Penny Johnson, without whom I would not have had the chance to expand it in this way. Extended conversations with Lila Abu-Lughod, Nadia Abu El-Haj, Brinkley Messick, Claudio Lomnitz, Kaet Heupel, Omar and Elizabeth Tesdell, Nisreen Mazzawi, Hussein ‘Amar, Suleiman al-Saadi (Abu Mahmoud) and Raja Shehadah were enormously valuable in helping me think through the story of the *baleh*. Any oversights are, of course, my own.
- 2 Jaffa’s market is called, in an Arabic version of the Hebrew, *souq al-bashboushim* and is located in old Jaffa’s square near the Clock Tower where, before the Nakba, animals and produce were sold by Palestinian farmers and traders. Haifa’s relatively smaller market is in and around Wadi al-Salib.
- 3 Everyone I spoke to in the network that makes up this market insisted that only Jewish Israelis were likely to discard things that still had some use in them (according to those who salvage them). The assumption was that Palestinians living in Israel or in Jerusalem would either use an item until it was worn, gift it to friends, relatives or neighbors if they had outgrown it, or would buy cheaper goods whose lifespan was shorter than higher quality goods. *Baleh* merchants in Jenin made particular remarks about two situations: One, that if someone died, Jewish Israeli relatives would have estate sales (putting ads in local papers, which is one way *baleh* merchants find out about them), whereas Palestinian families would hold onto the relative’s belongings or pass them on within the family. And two, that Jewish Israelis could simply afford to renew and would discard things half-used or in near-mint condition, whereas by class comparison Palestinian families would not be able to afford to do so.
- 4 NOTE: All interviewees’ names have been changed to protect their identities.

- 5 Interview with Yael, 29 March 2011, Jerusalem.
- 6 Were Jalameh checkpoint, just north of Jenin, to open earlier, that might be more convenient. But Jalameh opens after the peak work hours for Jenin's *baleh* merchants in Jaffa.
- 7 He lives illegally in Jenin because his wife and children have West Bank IDs and are denied Israeli citizenship. Israel's family unification laws for non-Jews stipulate not only that Israeli citizens who marry West Bank ID holders cannot live with their spouses in Israel or confer their Israeli citizenship onto their children; it also stipulates that they cannot move to the West Bank to live with them there, as Israeli citizens are currently not permitted to enter, let alone live in, areas under the Palestinian Authority's jurisdiction. I was thus unable to find statistics for this article about the number of Palestinians with Israeli citizenship living in the West Bank, like Yousef, precisely because it is a forced clandestine practice for thousands who have no alternative but to emigrate altogether. For more information on Israel's family reunification laws for non-Jews, see Hamoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual (<http://www.hamoked.org/home.aspx>); ACRI: The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (<http://www.acri.org.il/en/>); and B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories (<http://www.btselem.org/search/node/family%20unification>).
- 8 Oxford English Dictionary: "flea market n. [compare French *marché aux puces*, in Paris] colloq. term applied jocularly to a street market."
- 9 See, for example: Gideon Levy, "How they Spent Their Summer Vacation," *Ha'aretz*, July 25, 2003; "Economy Drives Shoppers to Look into Used Goods," Palestine News Network, April 12, 2008; Mai Yaghi, "Strapped Gazans Buy Israeli Cast-Off Clothes," Maan News Agency, March 14, 2011.
- 10 As in the work of Kareem Rabie, "'This isn't Bil'in, This is Ramallah': Private Development, Class Affect, and Politics in the Contemporary West Bank" (paper to be presented at the annual meeting for the American Anthropological Association, Montreal, Canada, 17 November 2011).
- 11 Lisa Taraki, "Urban Modernity on the Periphery: A New Middle Class Reinvents the Palestinian City," *Social Text* 95, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Summer 2008): 65.
- 12 Ibid, 64.
- 13 It is worth noting that there is also a list of items Israeli-ID holders cannot buy in the West Bank and bring back into Israel. The list includes certain meats, birds, chicken and electronics.
- 14 The protocol, called "the 'Paris Protocol on Economic Relations between the Government of Israel and the PLO Representing the Palestinian People,'" covers trade, taxes, labor, banking, tourism, insurance, etc. and "delineates the spheres of Palestinian autonomous decision making" as well as the rules that came to govern the economic relationship emergent between PA-controlled areas and Israel. Sharif S. Elmusa and Mahmud El-Jaafari, "Power and Trade: The Israeli-Palestinian Economic Protocol," *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1995): 15.
- 15 Ibid, 16-18.
- 16 Palestinians importing clothes, for example, are required (*before* arrival of the merchandise at an Israeli port or crossing) to have a label sewn onto every item detailing the importer's name, phone number and the material's makeup—in Hebrew as well as Arabic. One of the more puzzling aspects of this kind of regulation is that Palestinian importers in the West Bank are required by Israeli customs authorities to sign a document pledging that nothing they import will be sold in Israeli markets. That their merchandise is often delayed, seized or returned to sender because it fails to meet "Israeli standards" can thus only be read as a form of collective harassment. As is well known, many categories of materials (like certain fiber optics technologies) are banned from import altogether.
- 17 For residents of Tel Aviv and Haifa and their rural surrounds, garbage is also a relatively new phenomenon – though older, because of rapid industrialization and urbanization, than the history of garbage in a place like Jenin.
- 18 They swept several times a day, as they do today, and when they did the area outside the doorstep and around the corner was just as important, if not more so, since the *hara* was also a prime location for cultivating social relationships and family networks. Susan Slymovics has written about how public spaces (especially sources of water) were centers of social life, especially for women, in Nazareth. Susan Slymovics, "Edward Said's Nazareth," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and*

- Media*, Vol. 50, No. 1 & 2 (Spring & Fall 2009): 9-45.
- 19 Now famous examples of countries in which pre-paid infrastructures like electricity and water are being mainstreamed, often with dire political repercussions, include South Africa and Turkey. Antina Von Schnitzler's article "Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa" offers one very astute analysis of prepayment technologies' effects and logics. Antina Von Schnitzler, "Citizenship Prepaid: Water, Calculability, and Techno-Politics in South Africa," *Journal of South African Studies*, 34: 4 (2008). Like South Africans, Greeks did not respond well when austerity measures led the government to talk of linking a property tax to electricity bills: "Greece Battles Debt Crisis Amid Fresh Strike," Al-Jazeera English, September 26, 2011 <http://english.aljazeera.net/business/2011/09/2011192613325929727.html>. In Palestine, Bisan Center for Research and Development has been following the growing resentment, especially among camp residents, about the PA's campaign to install prepaid electricity (and soon water) meters in all homes across the West Bank.
 - 20 By virtue of terms like "direct imports" and neoliberal policies that encourage imports over local industries, the market became "free," in other words, even while remaining under siege.
 - 21 Elsewhere I have discussed the role of the emergence of the category of policy intervention we now call "the environment" in the transformation I'm describing. Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "The Environment Must be Defended: Trash, Governance and the Politics of Shopping in Post-Oslo Palestine," (paper presented at PARC Fellows Seminar, Ramallah), 27 June 2011.
 - 22 Here I am referring to rural parts of the West Bank and Gaza, which constitute the greater part of the land there. The rest of Palestine that fell under direct Israeli government has a different, though connected, history of material transformation. Waste management is no exception.
 - 23 In Ottoman times, household garbage was often used to heat water at *hammam* throughout the old cities in Palestine. Interviews with A.S, Nablus (8 December 2009; 7 February 2010; 20 February 2010); Interview with A.Q., Jenin (5 February 2010); Conversation with the curator at the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee's newly reopened museum in Hebron Old City (21 April 2011). There may be more information about the history of this particular practice in Martin Dow's *The Islamic Baths of Palestine* (Oxford: British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem, 1996).
 - 24 My translation of "*Al-Bukji...wa al-Thakira!*" (transl. "The Bukji...And Memory!") by 'Issa Qaraqi', Minister of Prisoners' Affairs. *Al-Quds* Newspaper (Arabic). 19 May 2011.
 - 25 Along with the distribution of food, tents and other basic necessities, this was one of UNRWA's first emergency relief programs.
 - 26 Interview with Abu Ahmad, 15 May 2011 (by phone).
 - 27 Interview with A.Y., 14 April 2011, UNRWA Offices, Ramallah.
 - 28 A few people said that they remember garments being from Germany. This led me on a dead-end hunt to see whether the garments might have come from among the possessions of German Jews killed or incarcerated in the Holocaust, but I was unable to find any evidence of this.
 - 29 Interview with M.S., 18 April 2011, Ramallah.
 - 30 Interview with Abu Sami, 7 February 2011. Jenin.
 - 31 Interview with A.Y., 14 April 2011, UNRWA Offices, Ramallah.
 - 32 Interview with Abu Rania, 2 April 2011, Jenin.
 - 33 For some, it was even a chance to discover never-before-seen fashions. Interview with Khalto Suha, 4 July 2011, Jenin.
 - 34 This nostalgia is also prevalent in disappointed commentary over the past half-decade or so in the West Bank that the younger generations have become less political. The interest I mention above in Ramallah's new "social imaginary" and the formation of new middle class affect in the context of neoliberal state-building come precisely out of this kind of critique.
 - 35 Though I should also say that he was happy to show me that his *own* shoes were real leather Martinellis from the *baleh*. This reveals that a more complex reading of social relations and *baleh* aversion is necessary. Specifically, I found an enormous difference between how people spoke about providing for themselves from the *baleh* (with relative ease) versus providing for their families – especially daughters, sisters and wives – from the *baleh*. The gendered and generational aspects of this certainly deserve greater attention.

- 36 Interview with Imm Nidal, 17 February 2011, Jenin.
- 37 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).
- 38 “Unemployment Rate Among Labour Force Participants in the Palestinian Territory by Governorate and Sex 1999-2008.” Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.
- 39 Interviews in the *baleh*, 12 May 2011, Jenin. (I also heard that eighteen gold teeth had once been found in the *baleh*—the storytellers’ guess being that the relatives of the deceased hadn’t realized their value.)
- 40 Interview with Ilham, 23 August 2010, Jenin.
- 41 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (New York: Routledge Classics, 1966).
- 42 Lori Allen. “Getting by the Occupation: How Violence Became Normal during the Second Intifada,” *Cultural Anthropology* Vol. 23, Issue 3 (2008).
- 43 Interview with Ilham, 23 August 2010, Jenin.
- 44 Conversations with Israelis confirmed for me that many are aware and even make the assumption that what they discard will end up in the West Bank. When I tried to ask an Israeli economist about what happens west of the Green Line – for example in terms of the bank loans Shoni mentioned in moments of Israelis’ ritual renewal – the story came back to the anecdotal, and to garbage. His email to me read: “As for the used goods market, indeed this is something that has almost never been addressed by economists, as it’s mainly based on informal channels. When I evacuated my apartment in Jerusalem, for example, it was clear to me that any item which I give the movers as a gift (and I gave them a lot of furniture which I didn’t have a place for), would be sold in the Palestinian market. The amounts may be small per item, but the volume is quite large. I was amazed that some of the items which the movers didn’t want, we put outside near the garbage cans for the city workers to pick up and throw away. Before we had time to throw everything out - a truck (also belonging to East Jerusalem Palestinians) stopped and started loading these goods, which were too low quality for the original movers. When we told them that more stuff are [sic] coming, they waited for us. Such trucks patrol the streets (especially on weekends) looking for used furniture to pick up and sell in the OPT” (S.H. Personal Correspondence, 22 September 2011).
- 45 Jenin-to-Jaffa run for *baleh* goods. 18 February 2011.
- 46 As part of the paperwork required for applications to the Civil Administration to enter Israel for work (i.e. “*tasrih tijari*”), all Palestinians must include a letter of invitation from an Israeli citizen (with a business). These are not easy to acquire and undergo stringent checks by the Israeli army. Following the bureaucratic logics described so well by Kafka, it is thus vital that anyone applying for such a permit *have already worked inside Israel* and maintained good relations with Israelis.
- 47 Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 221.
- 48 Merchandise in the category called “stock” has a slightly different trajectory. “Stock” is the word used to describe goods that a) had some defect or were held at international crossings and thus expired or became dead fashion and therefore never made it to shelves in Israeli stores or b) goods that have been returned for whatever reason.
- 49 See, for example: “PA Police Seize Black Market Cigarettes,” Maan News Network, January 3, 2011. According to the article, “customs officers seized 29 tons of illegal cigarettes” that “had been salvaged from a dump inside Israel and were bought by two dealers in Jenin and Hebron.” The article continues that “The goods were not fit for consumption, but the two planned to sell them on the Palestinian market,” according to customs official Ghaleb Diwan.
- 50 As described on the Boycott Divestment Sanctions movement website, “In 2005, Palestinian civil society issued a call for a campaign of boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with international law and Palestinian rights.” For further information, see <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>.
- 51 Sharif S. Elmusa and Mahmud El-Jaafari. “Power and Trade: The Israeli-Palestinian Economic Protocol” in *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (Winter, 1995): 16.