

Elke Kaschl

## Performing the Nation Between Israel and Palestine: Discourses of Gender, Tradition and Cultural Authenticity

Cultures do not clash, and neither do civilizations. The difference between collectives is constructed, and it is always constructed through processes which define the unique distinctness of collective identities not through opposition, but relationality. My dissertation focuses on examining such relational processes of constructing difference in the context of performing nationalism in Israel and Palestine. Analyzing presentations of *dabkeh/debkah*, I illustrate how two competing nationalisms staged the same dance form differently for purposes of national identification. Before the backdrop of an unfolding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *dabkeh*, an Arab dance event that historically formed part of village festivities throughout the Levant, was turned into folklore twice and emerged as a contested performance of both Israeli as well as Palestinian nationalism.

First, Zionist leaders in the late 1930s and 40s identified the Arab *dabkeh* as a stylistic model for the new folk dances which they had set out to create as a symbol of the Jewish national community emerging in mandatory Palestine. With the establishment of the Israeli state in 1948, the Arab *dabkeh* turned into an Israeli *debkah*, a defining element within a newly constituting Israeli folk dance tradition. In the late 1960s and 70s, *dabkeh* was brought to the stage as folk dance for the second time with the emergence of folklore movements throughout the Arab countries and, in particular, among Palestinians engaged in reconstituting their nationalist movement. Until today, both Palestinians and Israelis consider *dabkeh*, or *debkah*, an important means of national identification.

Examining how both Israelis and Palestinians continue to stage the same dance form differently,

my dissertation seeks to show that it is relationships of unequal power, not an unbridgeable difference of clashing cultures, that set the tone for the specific ways of staging the Palestinian *dabkeh*, or the Israeli *debkah* within their different contexts of presentation. For one thing, the staging of *dabkeh* as *debkah* in a Zionist/Israeli context was shaped by the subjugated position that *Ashkenazi* Jews had generally held within European societies, culminating in 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-Semitism and finally the Holocaust under the Nazi regime. Within this context, *debkah* in mandatory Palestine/Israel emerged as a performance of Jewish national emancipation from European domination. For another, the staging of both the Palestinian *dabkeh* and the Israeli *debkah* were essentially shaped by the ways in which Zionism not only functioned as an emancipatory movement of European Jews, but simultaneously worked to establish new forms of domination between Jewish immigrants/Israelis and the indigenous Palestinian population.

### 20 years of dancing

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is devoted to issues of theory, method and data acquisition. The second chapter is historical, tracing the relationality of Israeli and Palestinian nationalism through the double invention of the Arab *dabkeh* as an «authentic tradition» that performed modern nationhood twice before the backdrop of an unfolding Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The third, fourth and fifth chapters are each devoted to a detailed analysis of one of the folk

dance groups under investigation in this study. I first explore the performance of Palestinian identity through the work of the dance ensemble *El-Funoun Palestinian Popular Dance Troupe* from Ramallah/al-Bireh in the West Bank from the group's foundation in 1979 up until 1999. I highlight the changes that the group underwent during this time in terms of movement styles on stage and show how against the background of an ongoing Israeli occupation of the West Bank these changes occurred within parameters staked out by Israeli-Palestinian relations.

### Conflicting relationships

In the fourth chapter, I turn to analyzing the performance of contemporary Israeli Jewishness through the work of *Karmeï Makhol* from the Jewish development town Karmi'el in the Galilee. I show how the foundation, development and artistic activity of this folk dance group was intimately connected to official Israeli strategies of tur-

ning «hostile» Arab spaces into Israeli Jewish ones within the context of a large-scale settlement program known as «Judaizing the Galilee.»

Examining the performance of contemporary Israeli Arabness through the ensemble *Al-Asayyel* from the Galilean village Deir el-Asad, the fifth chapter seeks to complicate the simple dichotomy of Israeli Jewish and Palestinian performances of national identity. Operating inside Israel as a non-Jewish Arab dance group that identified with the Palestinian nation, *Al-Asayyel* was subject to various, often conflicting relationships. Outlining the ways in which these relationships impacted on the ensemble's work, I show how the group responded by improvising its performance of identity according to context.

My dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork in Israel and Palestine from July 1998 until September 1999.

Elke Kaschl: *Performing the Nation Between Israel and Palestine. Discourses of Gender, Tradition and Cultural Authenticity.* Diss. Bern 2002; erscheint voraussichtlich bei Brill, Leiden 2003.

Priska Furrer

## Semantisierung von Geschichte im zeitgenössischen türkischen Roman

In der zweiten Hälfte der 90er Jahre konnte die interessierte türkische Öffentlichkeit mitverfolgen, wie die Entdeckung der Geschichte durch den Roman zum publizistisch intensiv kommentierten Phänomen wurde. Im Focus stand dabei auch übersetzte Literatur aus dem Westen, vor allem aber ging es um den einheimischen Anteil an dem neuen Trend zum historischen Roman: Eine ganze Reihe türkischer Autoren (aber so gut wie keine Autorin) hatte die osmanischen und seldschukischen Schichten der Vergangenheit als Thema für sich entdeckt. Diese Hinwendung zur Geschichte erschien um so überraschender, als sie im türki-

schen Roman – zumindest ausserhalb eines meist nationalistisch aufgeblähten Trivialgenres – kaum eine Tradition hatte.

Meine Studie zur Semantisierung von Geschichte im modernen türkischen Roman ab 1985 untersucht die literarische Neudefinition von Geschichte entlang von vier grundlegenden Komponenten historischen Erzählens: der Selektion der Themen, der Kombination von historischen und fiktionalen Elementen, den verwendeten Erzählmodellen und dem doppelten Zeitbezug. Dazu kommen grundsätzliche theoretische Überlegungen zur Grenze von faktischen und von fik-