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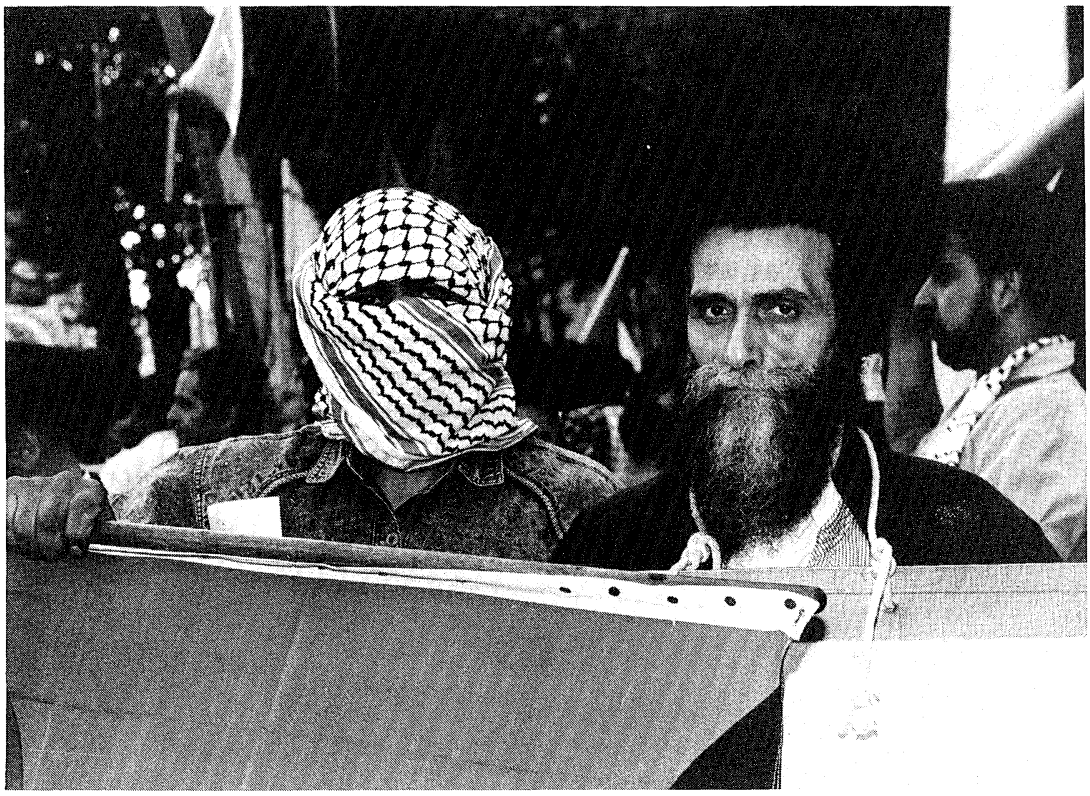
SEEING DOUBLE: PALESTINIAN/AMERICAN HISTORIES OF THE *KUFIYA*

In March 1988, about three months into the Palestinian *intifada*, those responsible for packaging the news at CBS and *Time* magazine rubbed their eyes in disbelief, thinking they were seeing double. They had only just come to appreciate the significance of the *kufiya* or "Palestinian scarf" from the scenes on nightly television news showing young Palestinian men and women confronting Israeli soldiers. All of a sudden, the *kufiya* had popped up in an unexpected place. So many people in New York and other U.S. cities were wearing black-and-white checkered *kufiyas* that it briefly became a "news" item (for CBS on March 18, for *Time* on March 21). What looked so natural in the West Bank seemed a transgression on the urban U.S. streets. Why, the media wondered, had this sign of Palestinian struggle suddenly appeared in the ensembles of "downtown" U.S.A., together with black turtlenecks, ripped Levis, hightopped sneakers, and eight-zippered black leather jackets? Could it mean political solidarity with the Palestinians? *Time* briefly considered this possibility, only to dismiss it and normalize the *kufiya*'s unexpected appearance under the category of fashion, citing statements from its wearers: "It's just an accessory," "The ethnic type of look is in right now," "The idea that it's political is ridiculous," and "What did you say it was called again?" (Cocks 1988).

I was aware that the *kufiya* had infiltrated the urban North American style scene in late 1983, but made no serious effort to understand its appearance. In October 1984 I left for the West Bank to do fieldwork. When I returned home in late 1985, I was pleased but puzzled to find that the *kufiya* I had purchased was still trendy.



Palestinian wearing *kufiya* with Jewish man in New York.
Photo by Said Elatab
Courtesy *Middle East Report*

Having learned something about its history in Palestine, I decided to attempt to understand why the *kufiya*, so prominent in the "field" where I had worked, had turned up at home.

I want to argue that the *kufiya*'s appearance in the mid-eighties was not mere coincidence or fashion, but an effect of linkages between U.S. and Palestinian history that official discourse continues to deny. I want to expose these hidden connections by tracing the U.S. and Palestinian official and unofficial histories of the *kufiya* through all their dislocations and interconnections, using a method I am calling "double vision." I hope to (1) demonstrate that the *kufiya* is neither as "natural" in the West Bank nor as "unnatural" in downtown New York as it might appear; (2) show that the relation between style and politics is a continuum rather than an opposition, and (3) suggest that the ethnographic object of study is located as much "here" as "out there," as much "then" as "now."

My field research, conducted primarily in the West Bank (but also Israel and the Gaza Strip), concerned the memories of what Pales-

tinians call the 1936 revolt against British colonial rule. I was particularly interested in how elderly males who fought in that rebellion remembered this significant event in their past, and in the place of that memory in Palestinian national history. The rebellion, which erupted in April of 1936 and ended in the summer of 1939, was *the* major anti-colonial insurgency of the century in Palestine—until the current *intifada*. It pitted a poorly-armed and tiny population against the military might of the world's greatest colonial power, which was also backed by Zionist forces trained and armed by the British. Beginning in April 1936 with a general strike in favor of national independence and an end to Zionist colonization, the revolt rapidly assumed the character of an armed insurrection, prosecuted by bands of peasant fighters operating in the countryside, and with enthusiastic support from the mass of the population. Although the revolt ultimately failed to win its objectives, it did confound the British colonial machine and tie down as many as 20,000 British troops for over three years. It now stands as an heroic symbol of struggle in Palestinian nationalist iconography. I chose to study this insurrection in part because I was intrigued by the fact that, despite the revolt's continuing symbolic importance as the first massive Palestinian mobilization on a national scale, Palestinian accounts tend to play down its subaltern character and to represent it as a national struggle that united the entire population without regard to class, sectarian, or regional differences.

I quickly learned that, in the mid-1980s, it was impossible to understand Palestinian memory under occupation solely on its own terms, and that its "truth" does not rest just in "the field." Only by taking into account the pressures of Israeli military occupation on Palestinian identity and the West's ideological disfiguration of Palestinian history could I begin to make sense of the gaps and silences, the romanticizations and embellishments, that pervaded the recollections of revolt veterans. In a real sense, how Palestinians "over there" remember their past and how they think of their own history have a great deal to do with how they are "remembered" or imaged "here" in the West. One of the most potent, and damaging, ways in which Palestinians are represented is through the image of terrorism, an image so pervasive that it seems to be "an almost Platonic essence inherent in all Palestinians and Muslims" (Said 1988: 52).

Soon after my return from the "field," I found an example of how that image works through its opposite in an advertisement, in the

Summer 1986 catalogue of the Banana Republic Travel & Safari Clothing Company, for a khaki olive bag called the Authentic Israeli Paratrooper Briefcase:

> When one is called away suddenly on business to *Entebbe*, for example, it can be hard to organize paperwork. To cope with the kind of bureaucratic entanglements that accompany *international brinkmanship*, the fast-descending Israeli paratrooper takes along a durable briefcase (Banana Republic 1986: 63; emphasis added).

Other samples of Banana Republic's marketing copy for the Paratrooper Briefcase: a 1987 advertisement announcing that "[w]hile floating gently down to earth. . .the prepared Israeli paratrooper needn't worry a whit[1] about inconvenience in alien territory" (*The Daily Texan*, Austin, n.d.), and an ad asserting that the Israeli paratrooper always carries a briefcase because he "[n]ever know[s] where he'll land next" (Banana Republic 1988: 44).

Otherwise, the elaborate shop displays and catalogue patter of Banana Republic's fashion fantasy offer the modern shopper Hollywood garb suitable for rambling the imaginary globe. In the middle eighties, Banana Republic featured two studied travel poses: the colonialist guise French Army Bush Hats, Gurkha Shorts, Safari Shoes—which conjures up jovial memories of the good old days of the raj, and the anthropologist posture, with appropriate outfits—the Somalia Skirt, Mandalay Shirt, Aztec Belt, and Yoruba Necklace, authenticated by the catalogue's ethnographic description—for "experiencing" today's Third World. Both poses conveniently forget the inequities and violence inherent in the colonial and post-colonial world.

But when it markets the Israeli Paratrooper Briefcase by enticing shoppers with fantasy missions abroad, Banana Republic's cheery rhetoric reaches its ideological limit. Here Banana Republic discourse refers to an unquestionably *present* condition: Entebbe—signifier of counter-terrorism—and thereby virtually recognizes its implication in a system of violence it otherwise cleverly and rigorously suppresses. But how can such selfconsciously ironic-nostalgic fashion discourse playfully identify with contemporary military operations? It is because, whereas other recent imperial missions have been subject to at least some public criticism, Israel's mission has appeared to be *anti-terrorist*, not colonialist or neo-imperialist. The 1976 Entebbe, Uganda rescue mission, moreover, is *the* model

of the surgical strike, while Palestinian violence appears by contrast to be "dirty" and erratic. The Banana Republic shopper can comfortably align with such an enterprise. An otherwise escapist and sometimes ironically critical[2] marketing discourse is able *here* to identify with the violent mission of the Israeli paratrooper because his imagined opposite is the Palestinian terrorist.

In U.S. government and media discourse, the association of the Palestinian, wearer of the *kufiya,* with the term "terrorist" has, until recently, been virtually indissoluble, and was secured by official superglue during what Edward Said terms the Great Terrorism Scare of 1983–87, when hysteria about Arab-Islamic fanaticism, hijackings, bombthrowing, and hostage-taking reached its panic peak (1988: 46). These images of terror are constructed as the opposites of everything that Western civilization imagines itself to stand for. In this political imaginary, Israel sits on the front lines of "our" system of defense, its military forces heroically patrolling the unstable frontier separating us from the barbarians. The aura surrounding the Israeli military battle against terror also envelops descriptions of its dealings with Arab civilians. Thus when the Israeli Defense Forces invaded Lebanon in 1982, at the cost of 20,000 Arab lives, the operation was called, no irony intended, "Peace for Galilee"; when it dealt with the Lebanese populace it practiced a policy known as "purity of arms." Even the fact that the Gaza Strip and the West Bank are under *military* occupation is frequently lost sight of, banished from consciousness by the discourses of counterterrorism. The disavowal of the brutal realities of the occupation, as well as the deep U.S. complicity in that repression, has been virtually complete.

It is precisely because official discourse depicts virtually all of Israel's actions as part of the West's self-defensive war against Oriental barbarism that the Banana Republic can fashionably identify with the Israeli paratrooper. Only because Palestinians are so vilified and demonized in Western iconography can otherwise humanistic, benevolent, ethnographer-wannabe shoppers openly identify with military actions.

Occasionally the official image dissolves, as during the brief media spectacularization of the *intifada* (December-March 1988), when the coercion that official U.S. agencies of public meaning normally work so carefully to cover up was momentarily revealed. Banana Republic's frivolous image of the paratrooper perhaps

seemed ludicrous to shoppers when juxtaposed to pictures on the TV screen,[3] and the cement holding together the terms, Palestinian-terrorist and Israeli-victim, loosened. It was this visible violence of the occupation that gave the *kufiya* its currency in U.S. media in 1988 and made it recognizable as a "traditional" sartorial emblem for Palestinians living under occupation.

I will return to this story, but now let us turn to a very different history, the genealogy of the *kufiya* as a sign in Palestine. Its symbolic power has been generated in the Palestinian people's confrontation with an occupying force that denies it *any* legitimate relation to a nation and territory called Palestine. In order to suppress Palestinian national feeling the Israeli authorities have imposed a veritable "routine of repression" (Johnson 1988) in the Occupied Territories that includes massive land confiscations, demolition of houses of those suspected of "security violations," deportations, town arrests, detentions without trial, the peremptory closings of schools and universities, and the suppression of expressive culture. The production and circulation of books on Palestinian culture and history is severely hamstrung; the censor has banned thousands of titles on such subjects from the Occupied Territories, aiming to "eradicate expression that could foster Palestinian nationalist feelings, or that suggests that Palestinians are a nation with a national heritage" (Benvenisti 1983: 1; 3; 130–31). Restrictions on overt manifestations of nationalist sentiment are so tight that it is even a criminal offense to display the four national colors (red, black, green and white). The Israeli apparatus ensures that the educational curriculum teaches Palestinian children little about their people's history (Graham-Brown 1984: 37–81). Poets, painters, journalists, and even folk artists are routinely harassed and arrested. University students are frequently searched and sometimes jailed when caught with their assigned readings for courses on Palestinian history and culture. Such has been the routine in the Occupied Territories for nearly 25 years.

It is against a background of repression and disruption that Palestinians assert their identity through symbols of national coherence. Those indirect expressions of the nation which manage to slip by the censor have become privileged objects of national feeling. Denied a sovereign state, passport, flag, national rites and historical monuments, West Bank Palestinians cling all the more tenaciously to the few available and usable symbols of unity and authenticity. Since

other forms of national expression are so repressed, these visible symbols are cathected with passionate national feeling. The *kufiya*, on the manifest level a mere item of everyday apparel, is one such substitute representation.[4]

Where and how did this symbol emerge? Its affective power flows in part from its association with the peasant or *fallah*, its "traditional" wearer. The *kufiya* is just one of an array of rural symbols, including the olive tree, *za'tar* (wild thyme), the embroidered dress, and the folk dance, which are widely regarded as tokens of the Palestinian nation and its permanence in the face of occupation. Nationalist discourse has fashioned the peasant into a signifier of the cultural and historical continuity and authenticity of the Palestinian people. As the West Bank village is drastically transformed—as agriculture employs progressively fewer people and is economically marginalized even as it becomes capital intensive and technologically sophisticated, as villagers increasingly depend upon wage labor in Israel and remittances from abroad to subsist—the image of the *kufiya*-garbed traditional peasant becomes a sort of nationalist simulacrum. The dangers Israeli occupation and land expropriation pose to rural life magnify the affective force of rural imagery. When less than 30 percent of the population makes its living from agriculture, the symbolic value of the rural way of life has increased. And as "transfer"—the wholesale expulsion of Palestinians from the territories—becomes an increasingly popular and respectable "solution" in Israel, one clings all the more fiercely to those symbols of rootedness.

The peasant equally signifies the national struggle. Official Palestinian nationalist discourse has fostered the image of a people endowed with a "struggle identity" (Sayigh 1979), engaged in continuous battle against invaders. While identification of the peasantry with nationalist struggles stems from the *fallah*'s central role in the 1936 revolt, the peasant's representative power as a symbol of struggle was acquired through an erasure of internal differences and the forgetting of social antagonisms.

It is out of that disparate history that the *kufiya* emerged as a unifying national symbol. Prior to the outbreak of rebellion in 1936, the cotton *kufiya* (also known as the *hatta*) was one element in a complex and dynamic code of dress that marked people by rank, region, sect, age and gender. The *hatta*, usually white, was worn almost exclusively by the men of the countryside, both peasants

(*fallahin*) and Bedouin. Worn over a skullcap and held in place by a headcord known as the *'iqal*, it kept out the winter cold and shielded against the summer sun, while affirming the modesty and respectfulness of the wearer. The turban, wrapped around the skullcap, distinguished the elders of the community from younger men (Seger 1981: 34).

In the terms of the sartorial system of this hierarchical society, the *kufiya* also marked its wearer as a man of lower status. It distinguished the *fallah* from the *effendi*, the educated middle- and upper-class man of the town, who demonstrated his social preeminence by donning the maroon-colored *tarbush* or fez. The reforming Ottoman government introduced the fez in the 1830s, to identify the wearer as an Ottoman subject without regard to his faith and to replace the turban, which differentiated subjects by sectarian allegiance (Hodgson 1974: 229; Winkelhane 1988: 136).[5]

After initial resistance, the *tarbush* gradually took hold among urban males, and throughout the nineteenth century remained *the* distinctive marker of "Oriental" identity even as other clothing items underwent westernization (Winkelhane 1988: 138). In the course of this sartorial evolution the Western hat, regarded as the emblem of the colonialists, was never adopted. In the early twentieth century Arab nationalists in Damascus initiated a campaign to distinguish between Turks and Arabs on the basis of the "Ottoman" fez vs. the "Arab" headscarf. Some men went bareheaded to avoid this Turkish-Arab conflict (Winkelhane 1988: 136). Photographic evidence suggests that the *kufiya* was an important part of the uniform of the fighters in the Arab Revolt led by Faysal (Khalidi 1984: 46). I do not know whether Palestinians were involved in this headgear struggle, but photographic evidence suggests that many young educated urbanites in Palestine adopted the bareheaded pose by the twenties and thirties—probably as a sign of modernization or Westernization. Photographs from the early thirties of radical young nationalists of the Istiqlal Party show a mix of bareheaded and tarbush-wearing men (Khalidi: 1984: 106–107). The *tarbush* was never donned in the countryside, except by those village boys who studied and men who worked in urban centers (Seger 1981: 62). Up to the 1930s the *kufiya* continued to signify social inferiority (and rural backwardness) while the *tarbush* signalled superiority (and urbane sophistication).

The status hierarchy based on rural-urban and class difference

was momentarily but dramatically overturned during the 1936 revolt. While the official political leaders of the national struggle for independence came from the urban upper and middle classes, the armed rebel bands that began to operate in the highlands were composed almost exclusively of peasants. These guerilla fighters took on the *kufiya* as their insignia. Wrapped close around their heads, the *kufiya* provided anonymity to fighters wandering around the countryside, disguising their identities from spies and helping them elude capture by the British.[6] During the insurgency's first two years, whenever fighters slipped into towns along with other villagers, their conspicuous *kufiya*s made them targets for arrest by the British army. So on August 26, 1938, when the revolt had reached its apogee and began to take control of urban areas, rebel leaders ordered all Palestinian Arab townsmen to discard the *tarbush* and don the *kufiya*. British officials were amazed that the new fashion spread across the country with "lightning rapidity" (*Palestine Post*, September 2, 1938).[7] While the order was issued to help the rebels blend in when they entered the cities, it was equally a move in the wider social struggle within the national movement. Harking back to Arab Revolt and the Damascus battles over headgear, the rebel command asserted that whereas the fez was associated with the Ottoman Turks, the *kufiya* was the headgear of the Arab nation.[8] Dr. Khalil Totah, Palestinian director of the American Friends School at Ramallah, commented privately:

> The Igal [and *kufiya*] of the Arab today is surely a liberty cap but conceived in an original and native fashion. . . . By making Supreme Court judges, big Government officials, important merchants and the entire professional class and in fact everybody, wear an igal the rebels have made a grand sweep in the direction of democracy. . . . The fellahin do not conceal their delight at seeing their "uppers," the effendis, come down a peg and look like them in the matter of head dress. They feel proud of having raised themselves in the social scale.[9]

Rebels even resorted to force to make reluctant effendis put on this lower-status garb (Morton 1957: 53). The order therefore was not merely a matter of military strategy, but a symptom of social antagonism. It represented a symbolic inversion, a reversal of the "natural" semiotic hierarchy of clothing that violated the symbols of power (cf. Guha 1983: 61–63).

The new imposed dress code should also be understood in the context of other rebel actions in the late summer and early fall of 1938. Urban residents were instructed by rebel commanders to stop using electric power, produced by an Anglo-Jewish company. (Villages did not have electricity at the time.) The rebels extracted large sums of money as "contributions" to the revolt from wealthy Palestinians, particularly big orange-growers and merchants of Jaffa. And the rebel command declared a moratorium on all debts, taking effect on September 1, 1938, and warned debt-collectors and land agents not to visit the villages. (Usurious loans were one of the chief means by which large landowners exploited peasants and kept them dependent.) The command also cancelled all rents on urban apartments, which had reached scandalously high levels. They warned Arab contractors and their workmen not to construct police posts and roads, and attempted to disrupt the orange harvests on plantations owned by big Palestinian landowners.[10] At the same time, the rebels were setting up an alternative state apparatus in the countryside that included law courts complete with white-wigged judges and court stenographers, printed legal codes, lists of village residents, and taxation schedules. This system threatened not only the British administration but also the upper classes' hold over the countryside. The order to don the *kufiya* therefore appeared in concert with rebel actions in support of popular interests, a "revenge of the countryside" that drove hundreds of wealthy Palestinians to seek exile in order to escape taxation and the humiliation of rule by "unruly masses."

Many effendis put the *tarbush* back on, in part due to British pressure, after the revolt ended in 1939 (Morton 1957: 98–100). In the waning days of the revolt the fez became the insignia of the Nashashibi-led Opposition, which by this time had broken with the rebel command and the official leadership and by late 1938 was openly collaborating with British efforts to break the revolt.[11] By the summer of 1939, the ruptural moment of rural hegemony over the urban had ended.

Official Palestinian nationalist accounts have generally smoothed out this discontinuous history, representing the order to wear the *hatta* as a matter of military exigency rather than as a manifestation of social antagonism (al-Muzayyin 1981: 197).[12] Even many contemporary accounts claimed that all Palestinians enthusiastically embraced the *kufiya* as their national emblem, an assertion that

official versions have repeated ever since (cf. Al-Hut 1981: 381–82). Today the event is generally celebrated as a great moment of national unity when all differences were put aside in the interests of the fight with the common enemy. When remembered in this way, it perhaps conveys current popular desires for an end to political squabbling among PLO factions. The story also reflects the interests of the Fatah-led nationalist mainstream, which resolutely excludes social ideology and programs—which might occasion disunity—from its platforms and stresses an exclusively nationalist political line. People who recounted this tale—I heard it many times during my stay in the West Bank—usually said that men put on the *kufiya* spontaneously or obeyed the order freely and "forgot" that rebel fighters often imposed it by force upon reluctant effendis.

But I did hear some accounts of this event with a subaltern inflection. One was related by a Palestinian friend from Nazareth, whose grandmother told him that peddlers hawking *kufiyas* in the streets of Nazareth during the fall of 1938 chanted: "Hatta, hatta bi 'ashr 'urush / In'al abu illi labis tarbush" (Hatta, *hatta* for ten qurush [piastres] / Damn those who wear the *tarbush*). Another friend, Sami Kilani, related another anecdote which he heard while in jail in the late 1970s. One of his cellmates, an elderly peasant serving time for "security offenses," had fought in the struggles of 1936–39. Abu Muhammad made his younger comrades chuckle when he told them about what happened after the order was issued to put on the *kufiya*. The urban effendis, who often didn't know how to wear it, were unable to keep the symbol of the nation from slipping off their heads.

The *kufiya*—and the *fallah* as well—once again became national symbols in the mid-sixties, with the rise of the fedayeen, the Palestinian guerilla fighter.[13] When the Palestinian national movement was reborn in the mid-to-late sixties, the guerillas took up the *kufiya* as their sartorial emblem. The adoption of the peasant and his black-and-white checkered *kufiya* as nationalist signifiers represented an attempt to recall earlier struggles and to give the national movement a popular dimension. (It was also at this time that, thanks to the spectacle of hijackings, the Western mind began to associate the *kufiya* with "terrorism.")

But as the leadership of the Palestinian national liberation movement gradually took on a more respectable, middle-class and bureaucratic cast, and as diplomacy began to take precedence over

popular struggle, the memories of ruptures, at first evoked by the guerillas' donning of the *kufiya*, were covered over in the interest of national unity. Both the peasantry's former social marginality and the popular character of its struggles were forgotten as the *fallah* achieved symbolic centrality. Indeed, current official accounts present the fedayeen's adoption of the *hatta* in the late 1960s as a matter of military expediency, a means of providing anonymity (al-Muzayyin 1981: 196). Adorned in his elaborately arranged *kufiya*, PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat invests himself with the trappings of the people-nation-peasantry, making himself simultaneously one of the people while asserting his position as their natural representative. On Arafat's head, the *kufiya* dissimulates differences between the leadership and the people, between rich and poor, and unites them all in horizontal comradeship. When worn in the West Bank in the mid-eighties, the *kufiya* signified either rural identity (when put on by older men) or—if donned as a scarf by urban youths—solidarity with the leadership and the fedayeen vanguard "outside" Palestine who, it was hoped, would liberate Palestinians living under occupation. (In the meantime the *tarbush* was gradually abandoned.)

But the nature of national unity, and the relation between the people and the leadership, are being renegotiated as the *intifada* progresses, and in turn the *kufiya* itself takes on new meanings. The image of the *hatta* flashed up again during the *intifada*, as the people of the Occupied Territories redefined the notion of national unity as something imposed from below, and as the heads of the middle-class leadership were, as in 1938, left somewhat exposed. In this moment of rupture, popular organizations in the Occupied Territories play a more determining role in the national movement than at any time since the PLO was founded (cf. Hiltermann 1991).

In the course of the uprising, activists have resemanticized the *kufiya*, which until recently was the symbolic property of the guerilla and the PLO leaders. The youthful activists or *shabab* wrap their faces in *kufiyas* in order to hide their identities when confronting soldiers. The army responded in the summer of 1989 by widening its shooting policy so that anyone so "masked" could be shot on sight; since then, many young men have been shot to death for merely being "masked" by a *kufiya* (Vitullo 1989a).[14] Usually Palestinians (both men and women) wear it today without the *'iqal*, loosely draped over their shoulders—as a badge of national identity

and activism rather than in solidarity with guerillas. They continue to draw, however, on the mythical powers of peasant tradition and the memories of an earlier confrontation with the world's greatest imperial power. These activists have also remade the notion of struggle, turning it from a vanguard into a popular activity. A conception of struggle that includes not just dramatic confrontations with Israeli troops but day-to-day activities like education (teaching in underground schools), expressive culture (organizing folk-dance troupes), and economic self-sufficiency (setting up cooperatives to produce yogurt, honey and canned vegetables). And through a disciplined struggle which (until recently) has resolutely forsworn armed violence, a new generation of *kufiya* wearers denies Israeli officials the power to affix the name terrorism to their fight for national self-determination.

Let us now turn back to the U.S. Here, there is a kind of official "iconography" of the *kufiya* rather than an official "history"; the narratives, official and oppositional, are more dispersed than in Israel. To my knowledge, the *hatta* first appeared in the U.S. within the movement against the war in Vietnam. Activists in the late sixties and early seventies, on the fringes of the anti-imperialist U.S. left, put on *kufiyas* in conscious solidarity with the Palestinian national liberation movement. *Kufiyas* appeared—virtually unnoticed—in anti-war demonstrations amidst other more visible and numerous signs of international solidarity—the NLF (Viet Cong) flags and posters of Che Guevara which, according to Todd Gitlin, so alarmed the U.S. "establishment" (1980: 181). Those heady moments, when masses of activists imagined that the entire world was in the throes of coordinated and interrelated revolutionary struggle, are now almost forgotten due to the reimposition of what Michel Foucault (1989) terms a "geographical *cordon sanitaire*" around popular consciousness. Third World struggles no longer seem to give off sympathetic echoes. The remaking of memory was not complete, however, for pockets of solidarity with Palestinians lived on in the post-Vietnam "new social movements": in the movement against intervention in Central America, in anti-nuclear and anti-apartheid groups, and in African-American circles, the *kufiya* retained a certain currency.

The early eighties, however, brought the *kufiya* into an apparently apolitical arena, the domain of urban street style. The literature on English and U.S. subcultures and the sartorial practice

known as "retro" offers some suggestions that might help us understand the *kufiya*'s stylistic uses. (Here I am thinking of "style" as a means of refusal, an everyday practice of appropriating and repossessing of commodities that challenges hegemony obliquely by displaying contradictions at the level of signs [Hebdige 1979: 1–3; 16–18.]). Retro or vintage clothing, it is argued, revitalizes old garments and places quote marks around them, showing that the past can be apprehended only in textual form. By repositioning objects from earlier eras, retro forces us to reread them in new and potentially radical ways. Kaja Silverman argues, for instance, that retro style draws connections, by means of juxtaposition, between the brassy "vamp" fashions of the 1940s and 1980s feminism. Youth subculture uses retro to give images from the past a new life; by decomposing and reassembling identities, retro traverses, blurs and experiments with sartorial, sexual and historical boundaries (Silverman 1986: 150–51; Hebdige 1979). The *kufiya* too is caught up in such border crossings and identity reconfigurations.

Walter Benjamin is also suggestive. The objects produced in the industrial world, he asserts, are "dream images of the collective." Critics must interpret and make explicit the nature of that dream, he argues, in order to turn dream images into dialectical images with the power to jolt people into political awakening (Buck-Morss 1983: 214–15). Objects from the past with an afterlife in the present are the means by which the collective unconscious communicates across the generations. History, in Benjamin's understanding, is not the unfolding of a continuous narrative but is composed of discontinuous moments of rupture, of shocks bursting across time. The past is perceived and seized on through dialectical images which suddenly and unexpectedly flare up, like flashes of lightning, at moments of danger (1969).

Following these critics, we might view the *kufiya* as an image, moving across the boundaries of time and space, remaking identities; as a flash — at a ruptural moment — which communicates across the generations and offers dreams of collectivity. Yet the *kufiya*'s various uses suggest that the theories of our Western cultural critics themselves require refashioning. For their conception of generations, collectivities, boundaries and history are unconsciously bound by the limits imposed by Western nation-state ideology. Blindered by eurovision, these critics fail to theorize how jolts of recognition and transgression might shoot across national and cultural bounda-

ries, especially the imaginary yet seemingly unbreachable divide separating East and West. My suggestion is that despite the ideological and institutional weight of Orientalism—such communication can occur; but, due to our sanctioned ignorance of other histories, only after careful and considerable translation work.

Let me offer some suggestions. The *kufiya* first infiltrated the U.S. style subculture in late 1983, not long after the Israeli invasion of Beirut and the beginning of the great terrorism panic. To put on the *kufiya* at that moment was an act of staged sartorial treason (albeit often unconscious). But because the *kufiya* was incorporated within a politically indirect post-modern subculture rather than a spectacular one like that of punks or skinheads, its impact was muted, barely noticed or understood. The *kufiya*'s appearance in U.S. urban subcultures represented a mild provocation, an ironic embrace of a forbidden image. To put it on was not so much a gesture of identification or "romantic alignment" (Hebdige 1979) with the Palestinians as a critical statement about the orchestrated hysteria and vilification surrounding all things Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim. The *kufiya*'s presence in downtown U.S.A. problematized official representations of the Palestinian terrorist by an act of playful embrace. And this forcing of the Arab *kufiya* into a "Western" sartorial discourse of cut-ups and reassemblages also involved a recognition—however inarticulate—of the linkages between U.S. and Palestinian cultures and histories.

The *kufiya* was available for use as a vehicle of stylish critique, not by some obscure accident but because groups in solidarity with Palestinians—Arab-American, African-American, and leftist—sold them. (This was before street vendors on every corner of New York City began hawking them.) This brings us back to the subject of "the sixties." The stylish *kufiya* wearers of the mid-eighties recalled earlier moments of international solidarity and utopian desires for a global collectivity. But they reappropriated that past by refashioning it for the current conjuncture rather than replaying it nostalgically. At that moment of terrorism panic, they made their political statement not through overt political solidarity with the Palestinians but by means of an ironic critique of official representations of the "crisis."

It is certainly the case that by late 1987 the *kufiya* was partially cannibalized by the dominant order: another item incorporated into the endlessly recycling post-modern machine, its history mostly

erased. Yet the *kufiya* still *must* have retained a trace of danger, since it was sold chiefly by street vendors and almost never in fashion boutiques.[15] Even if it functioned only as a "quote," this citation still carried the scent of gunpowder. The *intifada*, and later the Gulf War, endowed it with new, if fleeting, oppositional meanings, as the past was remade once again. The streets of New York and Nablus continue to pass enigmatic messages back and forth.

In contrast to early 1988, when sympathy for Palestinians was on the rise, during the Gulf War of 1991 the public again began to perceive the *kufiya* as the garb of the enemy—despite its nightly appearance on TV atop the heads of "our" most visible Arab coalition allies, the Kuwaitis and Saudis. (And every television correspondent in the Gulf appeared to be outfitted by Banana Republic—as if demonstrating that the war was a late twentieth-century realization of the colonial nostalgia lodged in Banana Republic gear.) Although the *hatta*'s presence in the world of street style may have fallen off a bit by the nineties, it was ubiquitous in the brief but vigorous anti-war movement of the winter of 1991. Its apparent public meaning—identification with Palestinians-Arabs-Muslims-terrorists—was so obvious that Arab friends in New York reported they stopped wearing it for fear of violence. In mid-February, as I pulled a *hatta* over my head for protection from the Seattle rain, a group of teenaged boys who spotted me on the street yelled "Nuke Iraq." Yet the *kufiya*'s adoption by the anti-war movement perhaps demonstrated a new level of solidarity with Palestinians, and an assertion of the need to make explicit the linkages that U.S. official discourse refuses to admit, the linkage that is essentially U.S. foreign policy.

I am suggesting that the *kufiya*'s uses are embedded in a U.S. politics of style that works along an unstable continuum. The range of uses includes (1) political solidarity or romantic alignment with the Palestinian struggle; (2) a critique of official U.S. policy; (3) a "quotation" with a whiff of danger; (4) exoticism. To comprehend these various meanings of the *kufiya* requires thinking two histories—U.S. and Palestinian together: connected not through equivalence but through difference and dislocation, attraction and repulsion. As cultures bound together by networks of economy, migration, information, exploitation, and violence. To think or see these relations requires double or even multiple—not euro-vision. Rather than rest or focus on a single centered narrative, double

vision shuttles constantly between two distinct yet overlapping narratives.[16]

But theory, as ever, lags behind practice. The guerillas of style who hijacked "terrorist" items into the foreign territory of the U.S. street urge cultural theorists to cultivate double vision to refashion dream images into (multicultural) dialectical images. Images which, according to Benjamin's principle of montage, "interrupt the context into which [they] are inserted" and thereby "counteract illusion" by defamiliarizing the familiar and creating similarities between the dissimilar (cited in Buck-Morss 1989: 67).[17] The juxtapositions we find in tracking the *kufiya* are not just examples of fashion or postmodern pastiche, but instances of the breaking down of official barriers, expressions of real but repressed connections. The cultural critic's task is to bring such linkages to consciousness, to clarify the connections between these juxtaposed artifacts and to make explicit the histories and political-economic conditions that make such a montage possible.

Practice also races ahead of theory on the West Bank. Consider Alan Nairn's 1988 *Village Voice* account of a visit with a Palestinian refugee woman, recently wounded by an Israeli soldier. Tacked to her living-room wall was a poster of the sacred shrines of the Ka'ba at Mecca and the Dome of the Rock at Jerusalem. Beside those holy images, her son had mounted a photo of his favorite singer—the Boss, Bruce Springsteen. Another son showed Nairn a "found object" (also Born in the USA[18]) from the camp's narrow alleys: an expired teargas cannister on which was inscribed, "Should not be fired directly at persons as death or injury may result . . . Federal Laboratories, Saltsburg, Pennsylvania" (Nairn 1988: 30). Another juxtaposition of images, indicating particular economic and political linkages which enable such a strange montage to take place. And double vision advancing ahead of theory—enabled, yet menaced, by noxious fumes.[19]

If culture, as James Clifford suggests, is "migrating as well as rooting" (1987: 126), we should also remember that "culture" often travels in both ways and in tandem with violence. In tracking the *kufiya* as signifier across time and space, we might learn to become less surprised to encounter traces of the exotic at home and traces of ourselves in the field—and to rethink and dissolve such arbitrary categories as the other, the West, the "field," and especially "cul-

ture," concepts which dampen rather than ignite the potential charge of dialectical images.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Earlier versions of this paper were presented at the Institute for Culture and Society, University of Oregon (June 1991), the Anthropology Department at the University of Michigan (February 1991), the Middle East Center at the University of Washington (May 1988), and the American Ethnological Society annual meeting in St. Louis (March 1988). Thanks to Ruth Frankenberg, Jane Henrici and Fred Pfeil for insightful comments and suggestions. This paper is based in part on fieldwork and archival research conducted in England, Israel and the West Bank during 1984–85, with grants from the Social Science Research Council and the University of Texas at Austin.

NOTES

[1]An apt anglicism for this nostalgia-laden colonial discourse.

[2]At least so it seemed until the Gulf War, when U.S. television correspondents were decked out in what looked like Banana Republic wardrobes. But since the war was fought, officially, against a modern incarnation of Hitler and (in part) on behalf of Israel, the correspondents' Banana Republic outfits are consistent with my argument.

[3]The Paratrooper Briefcase has been pushed more subtly since the *intifada*: "A cotton canvas carrier so durable, it might have remained a military secret if we hadn't discovered it" (advertisement, *New York Times*, September 7, 1989). According to Jonathan Boyarin, Banana Republic toned down its ads in response to protests from the International Jewish Peace Union.

[4]But not immune from censorship. Israeli military authorities banned one Palestinian artist's drawing of a dove because it was painted with the checkered pattern of the *kufiya* (Cockburn 1987: 256).

[5]The Ottoman *ulama* dissuaded Sultan Mahmud II from outfitting his army with peaked Western hats, since a peak "would prevent soldiers from touching the ground with their foreheads during prayer" (Mortimer 1982: 94). The fez, of course, was rimless.

[6]Kayyali (1978: 212) suggests that the uniforms of the 1936 rebels imitated those of King Faysal's followers in 1918; photographic evidence seems to confirm this (Khalidi 1984: 46; 208–209; 214; 219; 221). The *kufiya* was an integral part of the Faysalist outfit.

[7]Dr. Elliot Forster, a British physician living in Hebron, noted on September 7, 1938 that the order to wear the *kufiya* took effect in about a week. "The rule," he

observed, "has given a great feeling of solidarity to all the Arabs, and perhaps not least, has given a convincing practical demonstration of the power of the rebels over the people" (Private Papers Collection, Middle East Centre, St. Anthony's College, Oxford). The U.S. Consul General at Jerusalem, writing the Secretary of State on September 6, asserted that, excepting religious dignitaries, not one in 100, including Municipal Councilors, wealthy merchants, Government clerks, chauffeurs and porters, had failed to adopt the "national headdress." He also reports an American merchant's claim that 20,000 *kufiyas* were sold in Jerusalem and perhaps three times as many were shipped to the provinces within a week of the order (National Archives, Washington, D.C., 867 N.01/1147).

[8]Communiqué signed by 'Arif 'Abd al-Raziq, September 4, 1938, Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem, S/25/4960.

[9]Memo enclosed in Consul General Jerusalem to Secretary of State, Sept. 19, 1938, National Archives, Washington, D.C., 867 N.4016/64.

[10]Public Records Office, London, C.O.733/372/4.

[11]According to a British report on the High Commissioner's meeting with a deputation from the Nashashibi-led National Defense party in May 1939, "All [7] members . . . wore the tarbush, except [Abd-el-Fattah Darwish]" (Israel State Archives, Box 2, X/1/39, C.O. correspondence to High Commissioner regarding Annual Report, 1939).

[12]Sirhan notes that rebels forced *tarbush* wearers to don the *hatta* but discounts class difference within Palestinian society. For instance, he asserts that there was little to distinguish the clothing of a rich man from that of a poor man except the quality of fabric (1989: 640; 643).

[13]Poets and novelists like Mahmud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim, and Ghassan Kanafani had symbolically linked the peasant to the Palestinian national struggle in the early 1960s.

[14]Accounts of Palestinian youths shot dead merely for being "masked" are found in Vitullo (1989a; 1989b) and Rabbani (1990).

[15]*Kufiyas* seem to be sold primarily in shops owned by South Asian immigrants, whose opinions about Middle Eastern politics diverge from the Palestine U.S. mainstream.

[16]Paul Gilroy writes that when Africans were "detached from an identifiable location in space and time" and became "Negro" slaves in the West, where they were located but not organically of, they acquired the "double vision" required by a subordinate position (1990: 279–80). Du Bois describes the African-American's "double-consciousness" as the "sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others" and feeling of one's "twoness" as "an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings" (1969: 45). I propose a double vision that learns from the subaltern sense of "twoness" and deliberately blurs mono-vision.

[17]One could also track the *kufiya* elsewhere; to North Africans in France who wear it as a badge of ethnic identity; to African-American communities where solidarity with Palestinians is not unacceptable (3,000 African-American soldiers stationed in the Gulf reportedly converted to Islam [information from Lata Mani]); to Arab-American communities, etc.

[18]Thanks to Ruth Frankenberg for this formulation.

[19]By October 1991, 91 Palestinians had been killed by the teargas that Israeli soldiers often (illegally) toss indoors in attempts to suppress the intifada. An unknown number of pregnant women have aborted after teargas attacks. Federal Laboratories Company, owned by Trans-Technology, is the largest supplier of tear-

gas to Israel. Efforts by the Pittsburgh-based Stop the Tear Gassing of Palestinian People (STOPP) and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee successfully persuaded Trans-Technology to stop teargas shipments to Israel in 1988. STOPP launched a new campaign against Federal Laboratories and TransTechnology when it was discovered in early 1990 that shipments of teargas had resumed (Seger 1990).

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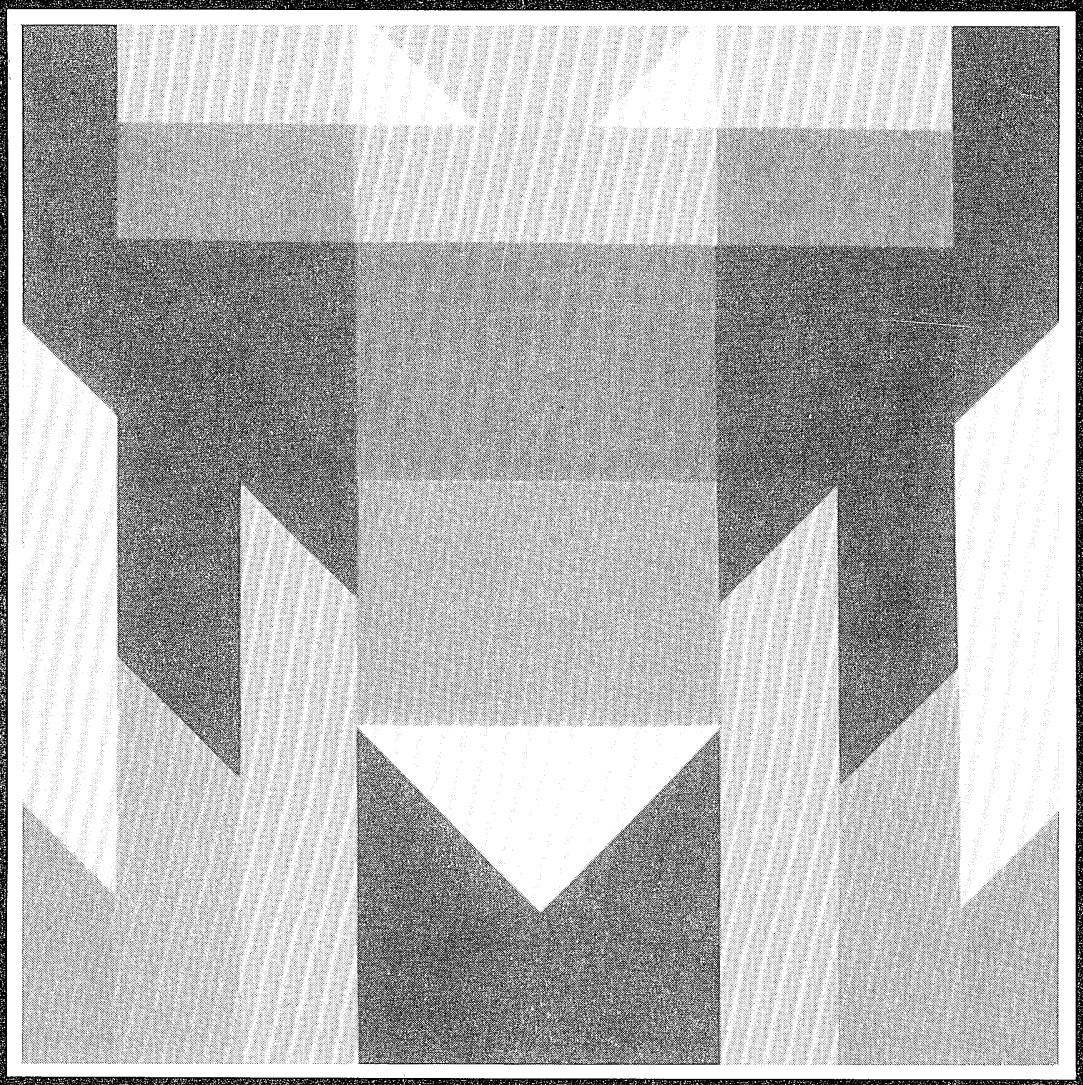

Kamal Boullata, *Gethsemane Gate*, 1991
Acrylic on paper. 18″ × 18″