

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. Blinded by eurovision, these critics fail to theorize how jolts of recognition and transgression might shoot across national and cultural bounda-