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[Title] The Anti-Monumental Cemetery: Ghosts in Jean Genet's 'Quatre heures à Chatila'

[Running Heads] *verso* CLARE FINBURGH DELIJANI

recto GHOSTS IN JEAN GENET'S 'QUATRE HEURES A CHATILA'

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<MT>The Anti-Monumental Cemetery: Ghosts in Jean Genet's 'Quatre heures à Chatila'

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<ABH>*Abstract*

<ABT>This article asks how Jean Genet's essay 'Quatre heures à Chatila' (1982) conjures the past by evoking ghosts. Genet provides an exemplary model for how those killed during atrocities might not just be buried, but actively be remembered. Rather than commemorating with the decorum of monuments, Genet's essay becomes a cemetery without monuments, replacing the stability of history with a decomposition of the binary opposition between the dead and living, enabling ghosts to rise up and demand amends. Textual analysis reveals how the corpses that Genet witnesses after the massacres of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps appear restless, as if they might revolt, and demand restitution. Contrastingly, the Palestinian Fedayeen rebels with whom Genet spent six months a decade earlier, appear haunted by a spectre of the future. Death looms, overshadowing their lives. Genet disrupts the historical facts he provides, his negation of certainty ensuring that the past remains open to enquiry, that injustices are not buried along with the dead. I also provide the first detailed account of director Alain Milianti's important stage adaptation of Genet's essay (1991), illustrating how it embodied the author's shadowy hauntings in concrete yet evanescent ways.

<ABH>*Résumé*

<ABT>Cet article propose d'analyser comment l'essai de Jean Genet, 'Quatre heures à Chatila' (1982) convoque le passé en évoquant les fantômes. Genet fournit un modèle exemplaire de la façon dont les morts disparus lors d'atrocités peuvent être commémorés de manière active, et non pas seulement enterrés. L'essai de Genet devient une sorte de cimetière anti-monumental, refusant la certitude ou la stabilité de l'histoire, les remplaçant ainsi par un

flux radical qui décompose l'opposition binaire entre les morts et les vivants, permettant aux fantômes de se lever et d'exiger des réparations. Une analyse textuelle détaillée de l'essai de Genet révèle comment les cadavres qu'a vus Genet après les massacres de Palestiniens dans les camps de réfugiés libanais de Sabra et Chatila en 1982, semblent s'agiter, comme s'ils pouvaient se soulever et demander la justice. En revanche, les jeunes rebelles palestiniens fedayin avec lesquels Genet avait passé six mois une décennie plus tôt, qu'il décrit également dans l'essai, semblent hantés par des spectres. La mort menace, éclipsant leur jeunesse. Je montre également comment Genet présente de manière biaisée les faits documentaires et historiques qu'il fournit, sa négation de la certitude assurant que le passé reste ouvert à l'enquête, et que les injustices ne sont pas enterrées avec les morts qui les ont subies. Je donne également le premier compte-rendu détaillé de l'importante adaptation théâtrale de l'essai de Genet, par le réalisateur Alain Milianti (1991), illustrant comment il a incarné les hantises obscures de l'auteur de manière visuelle et concrète, mais évanescence.

<TX>Bare walls towered on all sides as if inside a mausoleum. On the ground, fragments of concrete were exposed through what was left of the broken flooring. A mosaic of small tiles surged, then cracked. Between the broken pieces appeared some fingers. Then a hand clutching the side of the hole it had made in the floor. Then a shoulder, a torso, until a figure crawled out from the rubble. Moving towards a path of dust, sand, and stones, from the dirt she unearthed a scrap of clothing, a faded photograph...

<P>This was the start of *Quatre heures à Chatila* (*Quatre heures*), stage adaptation by director Alain Milianti, of Jean Genet's 1982 essay 'Quatre heures à Chatila'.¹ Premiering in March 1991 as Milianti's inaugural production at Le Havre's Maison de la Culture before transferring to the Petit Odéon in Paris and touring France, *Quatre heures*, which won the

¹ Genet, 'Quatre heures à Chatila', in *Œuvres complètes*, 6 vols (Paris: Gallimard, 1952–91), VI: *L'Ennemi déclaré: textes et entretiens*, ed. by Albert Dichy (1991), pp. 243–64 .
Abbreviated here to 'QH'.

Syndicat de la critique prize, was performed nearly two hundred and fifty times and seen by thousands.

<P>This is an essay about the politics of ghosts. Examining Genet's text and Milianti's stage adaptation, I ask how, in different ways, they conjure the past by evoking ghosts. Less literal than the gothic phantoms, supernatural spirits, and petrified cadavers discussed for example in Monique Borie's *Le Fantôme ou le théâtre qui doute*, their ghosts are not paranormal presences.² Genet's hauntings provide an exemplary model for how the dead of atrocities might actively be remembered, and not fade into oblivion. Rather than commemorating with the decorum of monuments, Genet's 'Quatre heures à Chatila' becomes what I term an 'anti-monumental' cemetery. Literary theorist Leo Bersani, . describes Genet's narrative style as 'antimonumental'.³ I argue in this article that 'Quatre heures à Chatila' becomes an 'anti-monumental' cemetery, the hyphen enabling both the monumentality of commemoration and its negation to be highlighted.⁴ refuses the certainty or

² Monique Borie, *Le Fantôme ou le théâtre qui doute* (Arles: Actes Sud, 1997). Also see *La Lettre et le fantôme: le spectral dans la littérature et les arts*, ed. by Élisabeth Angel-Perez and Pierre Iselin (Paris: Presses de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2006); and *Dramaturgies de l'ombre*, ed. by François Lecercle and Françoise Lavocat (Rennes: Presses universitaires de Rennes, 2016). For an analysis of war ghost stories see Heonik Kwon, *Ghosts of War in Vietnam* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

³ Leo Bersani, 'The Gay Outlaw', *Diacritics* 24 (1994), 5–18 (p. 9).

⁴ Alain Milianti reported in an interview that during a round table discussion held when *Quatre heures* was on tour at the Théâtre de Gennevilliers in 1992, Jacques Derrida used the image of a cemetery without gravestones to describe Genet's text. In many ways, this reported trope has inspired my article, and I would like to acknowledge this here. Participants in the discussion included Jacques Derrida, Albert Dichy, Jérôme Hankins, Alain Milianti, Leila Shahid and Elias Sambar.

stability of history, replacing it with a radical flux and flow that decomposes the binary opposition between the dead and living, enabling ghosts to rise up in the present and demand restitution. This essay examines the politics of ghosts via both an analysis of Genet's 'Quatre heures à Chatila', and the first detailed account of Milianti's important theatrical adaptation of Genet's essay, which embodied the author's shadowy hauntings in concrete yet evanescent ways.

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<TX>The ghost, writes Fiona Barclay in her work on haunting, 'shimmers endlessly between ontological certainties.'⁵ Colin Davis indicates the ghost's capacity to traverse perceived barriers, describing the revenant as 'both what returns and what cannot return [...] what survives and what has died'; a 'perfect image of this survival-in-death and death-in-survival.'⁶ Genet does not explicitly mention ghosts in his essays and letters. But he alludes frequently to liminal spaces between life and death which, I argue, can be haunted by ghostly figurations of the past. In his 1967 essay 'L'Étrange Mot d', Genet proposes that crematoria, relegated by modern planners to urban outskirts, and considered in contemporary European culture as 'une pensée honteuse', be located in city centres.⁷ Given that they mark the site of the passage from life to death, cemeteries bring the living into the closest proximity with the dead. Throughout Genet's works, 'ontological certainties', such as dead/alive, male/female, criminal/correct, hero/traitor, black/white, colonizer/colonized, are clouded or contorted, in

⁵ Fiona Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France: Haunting, Literature, and the Maghreb* (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011), p. xxiii.

⁶ Colin Davis, *Haunted Subjects: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis and the Return of the Dead* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 100.

⁷ Jean Genet, 'L'Étrange Mot d', in *Théâtre complet*, ed. by Michel Corvin and Albert Dichy (Paris: Gallimard, 2002), pp. 879–88 (p. 879).

his radical, committed deconstruction of hierarchy. In ‘Lettres à Roger Blin’ — Genet’s correspondences with the director of his plays *Les Nègres* (1958) and *Les Paravents* (1961) — he writes that his productions must ‘crever ce qui nous sépare des morts.’⁸ For Genet, penetrating the barrier between life and death — this passage is enacted literally in *Les Paravents* when characters who perish in the anti-colonial struggle tear through flimsy paper screens — constitutes the ultimate refusal of Manichean dichotomies. Genet continues in ‘L’Étrange Mot d’’, explaining that, in a world ‘qui semble aller si gaillardement vers la luminosité analyste’, death — a realm that, by implication, remains entirely unknown to the living — adds ‘un peu de ténèbre.’⁹ To obscure the distinction between life and death constitutes the ultimate rejection of Enlightenment ontological clarity, reason, and realism for Genet. We must not just hide or find refuge in the shadows: we must actively work at finding a mystery that is ‘fraîche et torride’ (ibid., p. 886); delve into obscurities beyond the living known. In this essay I examine how Genet’s invitation to stray across these foggy borderlands between life and death opens a space between waking and sleeping, memory and forgetting, conscious and unconscious — one that might be haunted by ghosts.

<P>From the beginning, Genet’s works were populated with the ostracized and oppressed: foster children, juvenile detainees, vagrants, servants, immigrants, all of whom originate in what Jérôme Neutres terms the metaphorical ‘South’ to which Genet dedicated his energies: groups governed by the exclusionary principles of colonization and oppression.¹⁰ From the late 1960s Genet’s political engagement became overt and explicit. He wrote ‘L’Étrange Mot d’ ’ shortly before evolving from poet, novelist, and playwright into

⁸ Genet, ‘Lettres à Roger Blin’, in *Théâtre complet*, ed. by Corvin and Dichy, pp. 845–77 (p. 845).

⁹ Genet, ‘L’Étrange Mot d’ ’, p. 886.

¹⁰ Jérôme Neutres, *Genet sur les routes du Sud* (Paris: Fayard, 2002), p. 15.

activist and agitator, and its tone is ontological and aesthetic rather than political. The political significance of Genet's insistence on the proximity to death in 'L'Étrange Mot d'' can be understood retrospectively, via Derrida's notion of spectres.

Derrida's exposition on ghosts, *Spectres de Marx*, is inspired by Marx's enduring quest for justice, equality, and emancipation.¹¹ Genet, too, was a profound influence on Derrida who, twenty years before *Spectres de Marx*, had written the most penetrating and poetic work on Genet, *Glas*, the title of which denotes the slow knell indicating someone's passing.¹² For Derrida, 'to be', as the most famous line in English theatre begins, means to inherit: 'Toutes les questions au sujet de l'être ou de ce qu'il y a à être (ou à ne pas être: *or not to be*) sont des questions d'héritage.'¹³ Civilization can be defined as a memorial to ancestors, a remembrance, and reminder that we must right the wrongs they suffered: in Derrida's words, a *hauntology* must open the *ontology* of the present to the past. The spectre of Old Hamlet, who visits his son Prince Hamlet to demand he avenge his murder by his brother Claudius, haunts Derrida's *Spectres de Marx*. Ghosts are the troublesome presence of the past, a threatening force, who call the living to account. Ghosts haunt the living because they themselves are haunted by the injustices perpetrated against the people they were in life, whether, in Derrida's words, they be they victims of wars or extermination, nationalist, racist, or sexist violence, or imperialist or capitalist totalitarianism (*ibid.*, p. 16). With specific reference to ghosts on stage, theatre expert Michel Corvin argues that, while appearing as fabrications of human consciousness, ghosts are 'truer' than all the image and appearance

¹¹ Jacques Derrida, *Spectres de Marx: l'état de la dette, le travail du deuil et la nouvelle Internationale* (Paris: Galilée, 1993).

¹² Derrida, *Glas* (Paris: Galilée, 1974), p. 103. One of the last texts that Derrida wrote was also dedicated to Genet's work: 'Countersignature', trans. by Mairéad Hanrahan, *Paragraph*, 27 (2004), 7–42.

¹³ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 94.

from which life is spun: the ghost ‘intervient comme porteur de vérité, moins pour sa qualité d’être surnaturel que parce qu’il échappe paradoxalement au monde de l’illusion dans lequel est enfermé le *theatrum mundi*.’¹⁴ Revenants, for Corvin, as for Derrida, conduct a post-mortem on the past, returning to shame the living by demanding truth, and justice.

<P>In ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’, the specific members of the ‘South’ to which Genet devotes his ‘affections, les tendresses, les amours’, are the ‘Palestiniens qui n’y répondraient plus’ (‘QH’, p. 220). In a long essay entitled ‘Les Palestiniens’, Genet mentions that his awareness of the Palestinians’ plight was raised in 1948 with the establishment of the state of Israel, which led to the exodus of an estimated three quarters of a million Palestinians.¹⁵ He alludes in ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ to Israel’s subsequent occupation of territories on its borders, describing it as ‘colonisateur comme on ne l’ose plus guère’ (‘QH’, p. 244). He also recounts how in 1970, at the invitation of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), he visited Palestinian refugee camps, and joined the Palestinian Fedayeen guerrillas in Jerash and Ajloun in Jordan, spending six months in their mountain bases from which young fighters made incursions into Israeli-occupied territories.¹⁶ His presence during the Sabra and

¹⁴ Michel Corvin, *L’Homme en trop: l’abhumanisme dans le théâtre contemporain* (Besançon: Les Solitaires intempestifs), p. 233.

¹⁵ Genet, ‘Les Palestiniens’, in *Genet à Chatila*, ed. by Jérôme Hankins (Paris: 1992), pp. 99–168 (p. 111). Jo Roberts cites conflicting figures in *Contested Land, Contested Memory: Israel’s Jews and Arabs and the Ghosts of Catastrophe* (Toronto: Dundurn, 2013), p. 267. For information on the expulsion of Palestinians, see the essays in *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory*, ed. by Ahmad H. Sa’di and Lila Abu-Lughod (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007). For a concise and detailed history of the Palestinians, see Genet, ‘Les Palestiniens’.

¹⁶ Genet was explicit about his support for armed groups; see Genet, ‘La Question terroriste’, in *Jean Genet, Le Monde hors-série* (April–May 2016), pp. 82–88. His interest in the Palestinian cause is expressed in various articles in *Œuvres complètes*, VI: *L’Ennemi déclaré*,

Shatila massacres in September 1982 at the Beirut home of his friend, the Palestinian diplomat Leila Shahid, was coincidental, but was also the culmination of his sustained investment in the Palestinian cause.¹⁷

<P>In ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’, Genet provides historical detail of the massacres. After shelling continuously since the summer, in September 1982 the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) lifted its siege of PLO-dominated West Beirut.¹⁸ The PLO leadership, Genet explains, agreed to go into exile, leaving a multinational force of US, French, and Italian troops to protect the Palestinian population left behind in the camps.¹⁹ He notes that on the Monday before the massacres, the multinational force withdrew. On the Tuesday, Lebanon’s newly elected president, Christian Phalangist militia leader Bashir Gemayel, was assassinated. On the Wednesday, Genet watched from Shahid’s balcony as IDF tanks rolled back into West Beirut (‘QH’, p. 247). As night fell on Thursday 16 September, Genet reports someone identified as S. telling him that rockets illuminated the sky. Another witness, H., testifies that the Israelis let two companies of Phalangists into the Palestinian camps of Sabra and Shatila, lighting their way, providing them with food and drink, and encouraging them to conduct a

ed. by Dichy, notably ‘Les Palestiniens’ (pp. 89–100), ‘Près d’Ajloun’ (pp. 177–84), and ‘Les Femmes de Djebel Hussein’ (pp. 139–40).

¹⁷ For a concise account of Genet’s political life and involvement with the Palestinians, see Marie Redonnet, ‘Jean Genet et la politique’, in Élisabeth Boyer and Jean-Pierre Boyer, eds, *Genet*, catalogue for the Genet exhibition, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Tours (Paris: Verdier, 2006), pp. 223–30, and Hadrien Laroche, *Le Dernier Genet: histoire des hommes infâmes* (Paris: Seuil, 1997).

¹⁸ ‘QH’, p. 256. For other factual information provided by Genet, see ‘Entretien avec Leila Shahid’, in *Genet à Chatila*, ed. by Hankins, pp. 23–78. Historical accounts of the massacre are also offered by Bayan Nuwayhed Al-Hout, *Sabra and Shatila: September 1982* (London: Pluto, 2004); and *Israel since 1980*, ed. by Guy Ben-Porat and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁹ Genet describes ‘les enfants, les vieillards, les femmes’ (‘QH’, p. 256).

‘massacre’, in Genet’s words, that lasted three days and nights (‘QH’, pp. 254–56). Allowed into the camp the day after the massacre ended, Genet provides graphic detail of how the victims were not only murdered, but also tortured. ‘J’avais passé quatre heures à Chatila. Il restait dans ma mémoire environ quarante cadavres. Tous — je dis bien tous — avaient été torturés’ (‘QH’, p. 263).

<P>The Israeli army denied having seen or heard anything: ‘les Israéliens, soldats et officiers, prétendent n’avoir rien entendu’ (‘QH’, p. 245). However, specifies Genet, since Wednesday they had occupied the Kuwaiti Embassy opposite one camp entrance, and the Acca Hospital only 40 metres from another (‘QH’, pp. 245, 257, 259). They must at least have seen the murderers entering the camps, even if they did not actively invite them in. In any case, since the Israelis had re-occupied Beirut on the multinational force’s departure, they held command responsibility for the civilians (‘QH’, p. 247).

<P>Genet returned to Paris. A month later, his essay on the Sabra and Shatila massacres, treated also by a number of other authors and artists, appeared in *Revue d’études palestiniennes*.²⁰ It was translated into Arabic by Palestine’s most celebrated poet Mahmoud Darwish, and became the template for Genet’s last and arguably greatest work, *Un captif amoureux*, completed the day before his death four years later.

²⁰ These include Palestinian artist Adnan Yahya’s drawing and painting series *Sabra and Shatila* (1980–90); Sami Mohammed’s bronze sculptures *Sabra and Shatila* (1982), discussed in Zahra A. Hussein Ali, ‘Aesthetics of Memorialization: The Sabra and Shatila Genocide in the Works of Sami Mohammed, Jean Genet and June Jordan’, *Criticism* 51 (2009), 589–621; Lebanese author Elias Khoury’s *Gate of the Sun* (2006); Palestinian author Adania Shibli’s novella *Touch* (2010); British novelist Mischa Hiller’s *Sabra Zoo* (2010); Egyptian novelist Radwa Ashour’s *Specters* (2010); poems in Moroccan author Tahar Ben Jelloun’s collection *La Remontée des cendres* (2011); and Mahmoud Darwish’s *In the Presence of Absence* (2011).

<P>An unprecedented 400,000-strong Israeli protest in Tel Aviv, along with demonstrations abroad, pressured the Israeli government into establishing the Kahan Commission, whose 'Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Events at the Refugee Camps in Beirut' appeared in 1983, concluding that the Phalangists bore direct responsibility and Israel indirect responsibility, given that certain senior officers, including Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, were aware of the intended massacre. This led to Sharon's and Prime Minister Menachem Begin's resignations, although in 2001 the former was elected Prime Minister. The death toll, thought to be 1,000, has never been established. Estimates vary wildly between 800 and 3,500.²¹ To date, no individual or group has been prosecuted.

<XTV>I do not wish to speak about the bulldozer and the red dirt
not quite covering all of the arms and legs²²

<TX>In 'Quatre heures à Chatila', Genet cites a gravedigger working at a recently bombed Beirut cemetery: 'Tous les os des morts sont à l'air' ('QH', p. 250). His essay is divided into six sections, alternating between his time spent with the Fedayeen in Jordan, and his account of the massacres. When depicting Beirut and the massacres, Genet creates the impression, also offered here in African-American poet June Jordan's verses about Sabra and Shatila, that the dead are not properly buried. In 'Quatre heures à Chatila', it is as if, I feel, the dead bodies cannot rest in peace: they are restless, about to rise up, to demand restitution. An elderly woman's corpse has been left 'sans confort' on a heap of twisted metal and rubble; it cannot repose. One corpse, grimacing, 'hurle d'un hurlement silencieux et ininterrompu' ('QH', p. 248). Another smiles, his bulging eyes staring straight at Genet ('QH', p. 259).

²¹ Neil Caplan, *The Israel–Palestine Conflict: Contested Histories* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), p. 186.

²² June Jordan, 'Moving Towards Home', in *Living Room* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 1985), p. 132.

Genet goes so far in his allusion to the corpses' livid vigour, as to liken their poses to copulation. 'L'amour et la mort [...]. Les corps, dans les deux cas, n'ont plus rien à cacher: postures, contorsions, gestes, signes, silences mêmes appartiennent à un monde et à l'autre' ('QH', pp. 245–46). A number of the male corpses' belts are missing, their trousers gaping. Sex, ultimately the most life-affirming, life-giving act, is conflated with death. Even the process of putrefaction is described as active, almost energetic, since in the heat, heads swell to the size of watermelons and limbs burst through trouser legs. The swarms of flies, described as 'furieuses', offer the impression that bodies are teeming, pulsating. First, it is as if, accusingly, these individuals scream out, stare out, stand up, reminding the reader of the injustice they have suffered, and demanding justice for the crimes perpetrated against them.

<P>Second, in accordance with Genet's obfuscation of ontological certainties, the apparent agitation, disquiet, alertness, energy, and sexuality of the corpses, confounds the binary distinction between death and life, past and present. By extension, I argue, the corpses become ghosts. Genet describes how, unlike other eyewitnesses who, understandably, choose to avert their gaze from the carnage, he bends down gently to lift an arm or a finger. 'Quatre heures à Chatila' politicizes the essential proximity to death that in 'L'Étrange Mot d'' is expressed in predominantly philosophical, rather than political terms: the dead 'survive in death', to use Davis's expression, so the world cannot fall silent about the Palestinians who are '[m]orts n'importe comment. Morts laissés à l'abandon', in Genet's words ('QH', p. 256). The corpses become ghosts, ventriloquists speaking the unspeakable truth. Gilles Ernst, specialist in representations of death in literature, concludes his entry on death in the *Dictionnaire Jean Genet* by expressing the peace and contentment of Genet's ghosts, since at the end of *Les Paravents* colonial soldiers and colonized victims alike enjoy equal status in

death.²³ *Contra* Ernst, I feel that the non-hierarchization Genet illustrates in death serves further to underscore the gross inequalities that subjects suffer in life. There is nothing calm or restful about the dead in ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’. Eyes wide open, agape, perhaps menacingly, they call the living to account. As long as the past is not settled, they cannot settle. In *Les Paravents* Madani, the medium through which the murdered Si Slimane communicates with the main character La Mère during the anti-colonial war, warns, ‘Quand un mort accepte de parler ce qu’il a à dire est terrible.’²⁴

<P>While the tortured and dead from the massacre appear to rise up, demanding amends, a different haunting takes place in the sections of ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ treating the Fedayeen. Genet establishes a connection between the young, vivacious Fedayeen rebels with whom he spent time between 1970 and 1971, and the camp massacres. After he left their mountain hide-outs, Genet heard little from the Fedayeen, save that they had moved to Lebanon. He mentions that the Israelis no doubt re-occupied West Beirut in 1982, knowing that some Fedayeen had hidden there after the PLO’s exodus (‘QH’, p. 244). There is an assumption that the youthful Fedayeen to which Genet introduces the reader, or at least their families, perish in the massacres: ‘mon affection pour leurs cadavres pourrissants était grandes aussi parce que je les avais connus’ (‘QH’, p. 263). The sections of ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ concerning the Fedayeen, however jubilant, are haunted by spectres auguring the future atrocity of the massacres. Ghosts recall what happened in the past, but can also presage what might happen in the future, explaining their often menacing appearance. In ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ death looms, overshadowing even the joyous life of the mountain camps. This is explicit towards the end of the essay, when Genet concedes the ‘fragilité de l’édifice’

²³ Gilles Ernst, ‘L’Au-delà’, in *Dictionnaire Jean Genet*, ed. by Marie-Claude Hubert (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2014), pp. 43–46.

²⁴ Genet, *Les Paravents*, in *Théâtre complet*, ed. by Corvin and Dichy, pp. 571–756 (p. 616).

of the Fedayeen dream of revolution ('QH', p. 264). The essay ends as Genet recounts how he encountered some teenage Fedayeen at Beirut Airport. They had escaped the massacre, but he knows their lives will nonetheless be brief. Derrida remarks that a '*non-contemporanéité à soi du présent vivant, sans ce qui secrètement le désajuste*', a dislocation from the present, is essential in order to accommodate ghosts.²⁵ Barclay, making reference to Edward Said, highlights the 'contrapuntal' effects of intertwined histories: 'The past thus becomes a ghostly presence, a palimpsest whose marks remain distinguishable beneath the surface of the present.'²⁶ In 'Quatre heures à Chatila', Genet's complicated chronologies allow for the spectre's *danse macabre*, which haunts the Fedayeen spring of 1971, with a cold omen of cataclysm to come, a decade later.²⁷ Genet does not just commemorate the dead by erecting hollow monuments in their honour, but enables ghosts to haunt his text, past and present to meld, so that the injustices perpetrated against the living might be recalled, and justice for the future be demanded.

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<TX>Commemorating the dead is universal to all humans, and distinguishes us from non-humans. Burying the dead is a cultural event, not just a biological function.²⁸ It provides opportunities for surviving citizens to pronounce, indeed to celebrate with defiance, dignity, and decorum, that lives were not lost in vain, that the dead are afforded respite.

Commemorative rituals, habitually taking place in the heart of the city, not in cemeteries on the outskirts, are a repetition of closure aiming to assimilate the past's grief, suffering, and

²⁵ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 16; original emphasis.

²⁶ Barclay, *Writing Postcolonial France*, p. xx.

²⁷ Interview with Alain Milianti, Marseilles, June 2013. I thank Alain Milianti for sharing his precise and detailed recollections of his production..

²⁸ See David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), pp. 15, 41.

anger in the interests of communal, consensual acceptance, appeasement, and (often national-political) unity.

<P>Genet insists that cemeteries be located at the heart of cities. This is in order, as I have explained, to blur the edges between life and death; it is not, however, in order to erect official monuments commemorating this or that person or past. Indeed, in ‘L’Étrange Mot d’’, he declares that monuments in cemeteries must be reduced to ruins: ‘Raser les chapelles. Peut-être conserver quelques ruines: un morceau de colonne, un fronton, une aile d’ange, une urne cassée’.²⁹ The stones and mortar of monuments are designed to remind us of the past, but they can neutralize and anaesthetize the past’s pain. As the inscriptions on gravestones disappear, so the memories of the dead, presumed to have left for a better place, can fade. For this reason, no doubt, Genet describes in *Un captif amoureux* how annoyed he felt when a young Palestinian solemnly showed him the first monument to Shatila’s ‘martyrs’.³⁰ I do not think that Genet denies people the right to mark the passing of their loved ones. Rather, he senses that monuments and commemoration can fix the past, mummifying its subjects, enclosing them in tombs or mausoleums. In *Mal d’archive*, Derrida highlights the irony that monuments precipitate forgetting rather than remembrance: ‘l’oubli et l’archivolithique’ lie ‘au cœur du monument’.³¹ Commemoration that wilfully ignores history is what literary and cultural theorist David Simpson calls ‘an inhibition on inquiry’: ‘nothing is more amenable to political and commercial manipulation than funerals, monuments, epitaphs, and obituaries.’³²

²⁹ Genet, ‘L’Étrange Mot d’’, p. 884.

³⁰ Genet, *Un captif amoureux* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), p. 348.

³¹ Derrida, *Mal d’archive: une impression freudienne* (Paris: Galilée, 1995), p. 27.

³² Simpson, *9/11*, pp. 49, 1.

‘Monument’ derives from the Latin *monere*, ‘to remind’. But by declaring what is remembered, sanctioned memorials can preclude alternative acts of memory.³³

<P>In addition to enacting erasure, monuments and cemeteries are pointless for the Palestinians who, since 1948 have perforce been a diasporic people with an ever-decreasing chance of returning to their homeland. Genet notes this wryly in *Un captif amoureux*: ‘Tombe, tombeaux, cimetières, monuments, tout devait être démontable, adapté à la vie nomade’.³⁴ In ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ he alludes to how the ground beneath the Palestinians’ feet is never solid or firm (‘QH’, p. 253). Genet’s essay refuses to brick the dead inside commemorative mausoleums on the outskirts of cities and forget them. Instead, it offers the portability of a prayer, the fluidity of a lament.

<P>In *Glas*, Derrida writes of Genet: ‘Sa tombe, il n’aime que ça. | Que ça tombe en ruine.’³⁵ Genet destroys any ‘[m]onumentalisation pierreuse’ (ibid., p. 33). Tomb-like certainties are ‘ruined’ by Genet’s unstable aesthetics. In *Un captif amoureux* he explains that while the Fedayeen combatants with whom he stayed ‘veulent [les traces] dans le marbre’, instead, he ‘laisse sur l’eau les traces déjà brouillées.’³⁶ The very aesthetics of ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ can be described as an anti-monumental cemetery, which refuse the monumentalism of memorials, and enable the ghosts of an unsettled past to roam.

<P>Genet’s essay offers factual information on the massacres, and meticulous eyewitness accounts of the aftermath, which I have cited. It also provides the historical contextualization that Simpson considers central to any enquiry. Against what Palestinian

³³ A study of grassroots-initiated ‘counter-memorial’ movements is provided by Katherine Hite, *Politics and the Art of Commemoration: Memorials to Struggle in Latin America and Spain* (London: Routledge, 2012).

³⁴ Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, p. 386.

³⁵ Derrida, *Glas*, pp. 225–26.

³⁶ Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, pp. 447–48.

historian Nur Masalha calls the ‘memoricide’ resulting from Israeli control of the historical archive and attempted erasure of the memory of Palestinian culture,³⁷ Genet cites the following as key moments from the massacres’ historical context: the British Balfour declaration (1917) that established a ‘national home’ in Palestine for Jews whose lives were threatened by anti-Semitism in Europe, and which reaffirmed the Jewish myth that Abraham had, by divine right, inherited the ‘promised land’ (‘QH’, p. 255); the 1948 expulsion of Palestinians; Israel’s subsequent expansion into Palestinian territories. However, Genet’s narrative technique is neither that of an historian, nor a journalist. His essay refuses the deceptive assuredness of monuments, which exercise a selective memorialization whereby certain people and events are commemorated, while others are excluded, forgotten, erased.

<P>Blanks and holes are essential to what Derrida calls a ‘politique de la mémoire’, since they admit to the violence of forgetting.³⁸ Perhaps for this reason Genet describes the Palestinians as ‘spectres apparaissant, disparaissant’.³⁹ His memory of living among them is haunted by inevitable forgetting. In the very first paragraph of ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ he both describes the air and the colour of the sky, earth, and trees, and also admits that the ‘légère ébriété’ of his experience could never be captured (‘QH’, p. 243). He ends the essay,

³⁷ Nur Masalha, ‘The Memoricide of the Nakba: Zionist-Hebrew Toponymy and the De-Arabisisation of Palestine’, in *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* (London: Zed Books, 2012), pp. 88–119. Edward Said critiques Joan Peters’s book, *From Time Immemorial: The Origins of the Arab–Jewish Conflict over Palestine* (London: Joseph, 1984), which seeks to prove that Palestinians are really Arabs from neighbouring states who, attracted by the prosperity of Zionist settlement, arrived between 1946 and 1948: Edward W. Said, ‘Conspiracy of Praise’, *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, ed. by Edward W. Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 1988), pp. 23–32.

³⁸ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, pp. 15, 144.

³⁹ Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, p. 493.

conceding, ‘Cette ville en miettes et par terre que j’ai vue ou cru voir, parcourue, soulevée, portée par la puissante odeur de la mort, tout cela avait-il eu lieu?’ (‘QH’, p. 263). And in spite of the forensic detail with which he describes the corpses, he confesses, ‘tout s’embrouillait’ (‘QH’, p. 260). His account of the massacres is interrupted by multiple questions: ‘De nombreuses questions restent posées’ (‘QH’, p. 257). He wonders under what circumstances one of the victims might have died: ‘peut-être avait-il été surpris la nuit ou à l’aurore? Il se sauvait?’; or, with regard to another victim, what weapon might have been used: ‘Origine de la plaie; une baïonnette, un couteau, un poignard?’; or who the perpetrator was: ‘le tortionnaire comment était-il? Qui était-il?’ (‘QH’, pp. 245–47). Hesitation takes the place of certainty: ‘Et peut-être non’, appears on the first page, establishing Genet’s tentative tone; ‘Et pourtant [...]’, ‘Ou plutôt non’, follow (‘QH’, pp. 243, 250, 261). Facts are reported second-hand, hearsay replacing investigative journalism: ‘me dit un écrivain libanais’; ‘C’est ce que me dit un autre Libanais’ (‘QH’, p. 248). The witnesses are anonymized — S. or H. — perhaps to protect their identities, but also to emphasize Genet’s almost evasive approach (‘QH’, pp. 254–55). Any objective, chronological account is disordered by fleeting uncertainties, elliptical hesitations, staccato scraps, and gaps.⁴⁰ The dead — the massacred victims of Sabra and Shatila or the living dead in the Fedayeen mountain bases — frustrate Genet’s ability to speak of/for them, disrupting, fracturing his writing.

⁴⁰ In ‘Aesthetics of Memorialization’, Hussein Ali employs Dominic LaCapra’s term ‘middle voice’, developed in *Writing Trauma, Writing History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), to account for the ways that Genet modulates objective description with ambivalence, refusing the reader the consolation of certainty. And Catherine Brun calls Genet’s approach ‘un témoignage artistique’, citing Genet himself in *Un captif amoureux*; Catherine Brun ‘Tu n’as rien vu à Chatila’, in *Jean Genet: du roman au théâtre*, ed. by Marie-Claude Hubert and Michel Bertrand (Aix-en-Provence: Presses universitaires de Provence, 2011), pp. 183–93 (p. 183).

<P>On the one hand, in Davis's words, this inability to afford the dead an articulate voice means they 'are killed again'.⁴¹ On the other, Genet's historiographical discourse of incompleteness testifies to the fact that the archive is never complete, the enquiry not over, justice not done. 'Quatre heures à Chatila' becomes what Palestinian social scientists Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod call, with reference to the production and preservation of Palestinian memory, 'counter-hegemonic counter-memory', a 'counter-history'.⁴² Leila Shahid states, 'le texte de Genet [...] est mille fois plus beau que toutes les stèles, que tous les Monuments aux morts et que toutes les flammes que l'on peut mettre sur tous les Arcs de triomphe.'⁴³ Genet contrasts the stability and immobility of stone monuments with shadowy evanescence, or what Genet specialist René de Ceccatty calls, in relation to *Un captif amoureux*, a 'spectral' quality.⁴⁴ The juxtaposition of two chronologies, in addition to the disrupted chronologies and unsteady veracity within the accounts of both the massacres and the Fedayeen fighters, lays the text open. Genet does not seek to found commemorative monuments on what he describes as the 'cimetière très plat' of Sabra and Shatila. Erect, phallic monuments to the past — marble tombstones, obelisks — are replaced by a Genetian flux and flow, by detail and deletion. With his disrupted, dislocated prose, which he himself describes as 'décousu', Genet creates a place to recall, not bury, the past.⁴⁵ Disjuncture,

⁴¹ Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, p. 142.

⁴² Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, 'Introduction: The Claims of Memory', in *Nakba*, ed. by Sa'di and Abu-Lughod, pp. 1–24 (p. 6).

⁴³ Leila Shahid's words in the round table discussion, as recollected by Alain Milianti and confirmed by Leila Shahid..

⁴⁴ René de Ceccatty, 'Le Spectre, le neutre, le vide', in *Toutes les images du langage: Jean Genet*, ed. by Frieda Ekotto, Aurélie Renaud, and Agnès Vannouvong (Fasano: Schena, 2008), pp. 26–34 (p. 30).

⁴⁵ Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, p. 350.

writes Derrida, ‘ouvre la dissymétrie infinie du rapport à l’autre, c’est-à-dire le lieu pour la justice’.⁴⁶

<P>The efficiency of slick, coherent prose might be reassuring; dissonance and disruption might appear to expose lacunae, ignorance or even the erasure of memory. But certainty can bury the fact that we forget. Given that the multiple questions that Genet’s text asks remain unanswered nearly four decades after the massacre, the need to make room for ghosts to haunt the present is all the more apparent. In her study of mourning, performance scholar Peggy Phelan remarks, ‘The work of mourning is never clear, never complete, never solid.’⁴⁷ She is inspired by Derrida, for whom mourning must be ‘en droit interminable, sans normalité possible, sans limite fiable’.⁴⁸ With reference to Derrida, Davis remarks, ‘The only way of not killing the dead again is, then, to protest against the amnesia of mourning and to accept melancholia as an ethical obligation to the deceased other.’⁴⁹ He describes how Derrida separates melancholia from pathology, transferring it to ethics. ‘L’amour et la mort. Ces deux termes s’associent très vite quand l’un est écrit’, writes Genet (‘QH’, p. 245). According to his ethics of radical equality, everyone dies; everyone is worthy of love; everyone deserves to be grieved and remembered. For both Derrida and Genet, the infinity of mourning, for every death always, the negation of forgetting, are an injunction. Oppression begins when the act of mourning is considered complete, and justice is thought definitively to be done. But mourning in Genet’s ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ is both infinite — ethical and open-ended in the Derridean sense — and also finite, political, and radical, since through the militancy of mourning, concrete political gains must be made for the Palestinians. This dual

⁴⁶ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 48.

⁴⁷ Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 171.

⁴⁸ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 160.

⁴⁹ Davis, *Haunted Subjects*, p. 148.

quality of mourning is illustrated by Genet's writing style which, by turns, is delicately ephemeral and pragmatically factual. Genet's act of memorialization, of counter-memory, remains incomplete both from an ethical perspective, since the obligation to do justice to the other can never finally be settled; and from a political perspective since, as long as justice is not obtained, mourning — for the dead of Sabra and Shatila, for the dead revolutionaries — must be perpetual, so that the restitution of justice might be possible.

<SB>

<TX>Ghosts are a hauntological and aesthetic principle that structures Genet's essay.

Milanti's stage adaptation more explicitly and visually embodied haunting and ghosts.⁵⁰

When I interviewed Milanti he explained, referring to his production's scenography, a description of which opens this essay, 'nous sommes partis de l'idée d'un espace le plus vide possible, comme si les bulldozers étaient déjà passés, qu'ils avaient tout rasé et qu'il faille entreprendre une fouille archéologique pour extraire des objets enfouis, retrouver des traces.'⁵¹ With his scenographer Daniel Jeanneteau, Milanti completely stripped the cavernous cylindrical auditorium designed by architect Oscar Niemeyer back to bare concrete, transforming it into a kind of burial vault. Genet explains how, after the massacre, the Lebanese authorities and International Red Cross 'les effaçait aussitôt, les ruines des maisons comme celles des corps' as part of the clean-up ('QH', p. 259). Whether the intention of this sanitizing operation was to inter bodies within twenty-four hours in conformity with Islamic tradition;⁵² or to dispose of criminal evidence; or to make way for property speculators since the camps were on prime real estate — an explanation offered by

⁵⁰ My examination of theatre here complements Melina Balcázar Moreno's *Travailler pour les morts: politiques de la mémoire dans l'œuvre de Jean Genet* (Paris: Presses Sorbonne Nouvelle, 2010), which focuses mainly on Genet's novels..

⁵¹ Interview with Milanti.

⁵² This explanation is proposed by Shahid, in Genet, 'Entretien avec Leila Shahid', p. 44.

Genet ('QH', pp. 248, 257) — the bodies were not buried in graves. The expansive void of Milianti's stage appeared to represent not just a vault, but also a forsaken wasteland where the dead were never properly buried.⁵³

<P>Since there was no backstage, Clotilde Mollet, the sole actor, who performed Genet's essay in its entirety as a kind of soliloquy, emerged from a pit under the floor of the acting space. Before each show, she climbed into the hole, which stage technicians tiled over, the cement not having time to set before the show began. She rose up, like one of the corpses Genet describes in 'Quatre heures à Chatila', or like a revenant who had witnessed hell. The expanse of the stage seemed to convey the extent of the atrocity. Milianti describes the single figure on the stage as a spectre.⁵⁴ In some respects, the very function of theatre, as Borie argues, is to conjure ghosts; actors, like ghosts, occupy an indeterminate space between inanimate character and animate body, abstraction and concrete materialization.⁵⁵ Like ghosts, theatre fuses multiple spatialities – an invisible elsewhere, staged here – and temporalities – an imagined past or future, staged now. These categories appear in theatre as quasi-simultaneous, yet remain irreconcilably separate. Mollet, like all actors, presented these ghostly qualities of the theatrical medium. In addition, she played a more classically recognizable ghost-figure. She seemed to be revealed like a body exhumed from a mass grave. Or else, she emerged like Virgil or Dante from the Underworld, and surveyed a terrain of devastation. Or, barefoot like a Japanese Noh performer, she conjured the spirits of the dead. Clambering out of her hole, she defied absence, disappearance, and forgetting with the

⁵³ For details on and photographs of the scenography, see Michel Jacquelin, 'Notes sur les scénographies de Daniel Jeanneteau pour *Quatre heures à Chatila*', *Théâtre/Public*, 105 (1992), 69–73.

⁵⁴ Alain Milianti, 'Spectateurs de spectres', *Du théâtre* (March 1996), pp. 75–77.

⁵⁵ Borie, *Le Fantôme ou le théâtre qui doute*, p. 10.

literality and insistence of her own bodily presence, just as ghosts embody both ‘what survives and what has died’, in Davis’s words.

<P>Scratching audibly in the dirt and rubble surrounding the tiled floor, with forensic care the ghost-figure began her excavation, as if searching for clues — clothes, photographs — after the passage of the tanks that had sought to erase all evidence. The anti-monumental cemetery on stage could have represented what Masalha terms ‘toponymicide’.⁵⁶ For Palestinian historian Elias Sanbar, 1948 was the date on which ‘a country and its people disappeared from maps and dictionaries’; it marked ‘the replacement of a community’, when the Palestinians’ physical environment, wealth, dignity, and influence vanished almost overnight.⁵⁷ Political sociologist Ronit Lentin describes how the Israeli myth that before 1948 Palestine was ‘a land without people for people without land’, forms a selective, ideologically driven version of history shaped by the occupier, and mobilized to bolster the state.⁵⁸ After the 1948 expulsions, to which Palestinians refer as the Nakba, or ‘catastrophe’, pre-1948 Palestinian place names were substituted with a newly coined Zionist Hebrew toponymy. Anthropologist Susan Slyomovics describes how, for example, no trace remains of the Palestinian village of Qula, destroyed in 1948 and replaced with an Israeli national park complete with monuments to the Jewish war dead, picnic site, and children’s playground, all indicated with Hebrew-language signs.⁵⁹ In ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ Genet writes,

⁵⁶ Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba*, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Elias Sanbar, ‘Out of Place, Out of Time’, *Mediterranean Historical Review*, 16 (2001), 87–94 (p. 87).

⁵⁸ Ronit Lentin, *Co-memory and Melancholia: Israelis Memorialising the Palestinian Nakba* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010), p. 10.

⁵⁹ Susan Slyomovics, ‘The Rape of Qula, a Destroyed Palestinian Village’, in *Nakba*, ed. by Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, pp. 27–52 (p. 42). Also see Nadia Abu El-Haj, *Facts on the Ground: Archaeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

<XTT>Dans les camps, après vingt ans d'exil, les réfugiés rêvaient de leur Palestine, personne n'osait savoir ni n'osait dire qu'Israël l'avait de fond en comble ravagée, qu'à la place du champ d'orge il y avait la banque, la centrale électrique au lieu d'une vigne rampante. ('QH', p. 255)

<TX>He also notes how, when in 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon, they brought with them their 'inscriptions hébraïques' ('QH', p. 250). For Sanbar, the spectral figure's excavations in Milianti's *Quatre heures* connoted the Palestinian desire to dig below the layers of Israeli settlements and state institutions, in order to allow the memory of a Palestinian culture to re-emerge.⁶⁰ The production's empty space and the figure's feverish raking could have been seen as a concrete synecdoche of the resistance to 'toponymicide', 'memoricide', and other symptoms of witting collective amnesia, that Sanbar and Slyomovics highlight. In *The Ghosts of Modernity*, Jean-Michel Rabaté proposes, 'To haunt signifies to "frequent" a place, to inhabit it frequently, but to do so in the mode of an obsessive absence, of nameless remorse'.⁶¹ For the duration of the performance, the ghostly figure haunted the stage restlessly, tirelessly refusing to leave and to be forgotten.

<P>On the one hand, Milianti's central figure, who resembled a ghost literally, rendered explicit and tangible the spectrality that in Genet's essay exists implicitly on aesthetic or narrative planes. On the other, Milianti maintained Genet's ambiguities, resisting filling its blanks and gaps. In 'L'Étrange Mot d'', Genet militates not only for cemeteries at the heart of cities, but also for theatres at the heart of cemeteries. Not overgrown, picturesque graveyards, but cemeteries populated by teams of gravediggers, or crematoria overshadowed

⁶⁰ Elias Sanbar's words in the round table discussion, as recollected by Alain Milianti and confirmed by Sanbar

⁶¹ Jean-Michel Rabaté, *The Ghosts of Modernity* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1996), p. 4.

by smoking chimneys. The cemetery, for Genet, invites visitors to explore obscurities and mysteries beyond the known and the living. Locating the theatre in the cemetery in turn encourages theatre-makers and audiences to reach beyond realism: ‘seul viendrait au théâtre qui se saurait capable d’une promenade nocturne dans un cimetière afin d’être confronté avec un mystère’.⁶² Performance scholar Élisabeth Angel-Perez notes that a significant strand of contemporary theatre is ‘spectral’ owing to this refusal to value clarity above all else, and its orientation towards obscurity, an approach which had been championed by Genet in the 1960s.⁶³ Milianti’s production in turn respected this obscurity. The tiled floor could have denoted a bathroom or kitchen — a sink stood to one end of the acting area, evoking the Palestinian homes that were raided — except that it covered so great an expanse as to render the space strange. Neither images nor sounds were literal. The acoustic effects at the start — a low, faraway hum that began, then faded — could have echoed the distant rumble of Israeli tanks entering Beirut. The blinding lights from the three passageways leading onto the stage and the single bulb that blew with a puff of powder in the crepuscular light, could have denoted the IDF flares that lit the Phalangists’ way.⁶⁴ But sound, scenography, and costume — a baggy beige cardigan and old black-and-white patterned dress like the ‘robe à fleurs roses et grises’ worn by one of the corpses Genet describes (‘QH’, p. 248) — made no direct reference to Sabra or Shatila, the scenic space creating an ‘ailleurs qui est un nulle part’ in the words of one critic.⁶⁵ Equally, Mollet’s acting style — she was described by one critic as ‘une

⁶² Genet, ‘L’Étrange Mot d’’, p. 884.

⁶³ Élisabeth Angel-Perez, ‘Éloge de l’ombre: les paradoxes du corps spectral dans le théâtre anglais contemporain’, *Miranda*, 8 (2013), <<https://journals.openedition.org/miranda/3354>> [accessed 16 June 2020].

⁶⁴ Lighting design was by Bruno Boyer.

⁶⁵ Micheline B. Servin, ‘Genet, Anski et Calderón’, *Les Temps modernes*, 538 (1991), 176–91 (p. 177).

des rares de sa génération dont on peut dire qu'elle possède un style, ce qui la décale automatiquement de tout réalisme'⁶⁶ — meant that, far from testimony or documentary, Milianti's *Quatre heures* summoned momentary memories, nightmarish outbursts, oneiric flashes, thereby shattering monolithic certainty. The immensity of the stage enabled Mollet always to remain eerily remote from the audience, adding to the sense of otherworldliness. Estrangement was emphasized, too, by the fact that Genet's essay, written by a man, was performed in the first person by a woman, dislocating witness and statement, text and voice. Moreover, thanks to her soft, solitary delivery of the monologue, Mollet's utterance at times resembled a prayer. Like a wound or scar, the pit from which she emerged gaped throughout the performance; at one moment she seized a club and smashed the floor, sending tiles ricocheting across the stage and reducing the set to rubble. Like partial traces of the past, like the poetic shards of Genet's prose, this hollow, along with the shattered tiles, illustrated how Genet's essay shattered fact with affect, history with elegy.

<P>Crucially, as well as loss and mortality, vivacity was conveyed in Milianti's production, as it is in Genet's essay, in relation to the Fedayeen. The ghost-figure's emergence from the ground was accompanied by lighting that rose gradually as she did. Like a larva from an egg or a butterfly from a cocoon, she appeared, quietly defiant. At one stage she wrapped herself in a military blanket and stumbled through the rubble, survivor rather than victim. Early in the play's run, in a sequence subsequently cut, she crawled into her pit and took out a small pine to which she set fire, standing the charred tree skeleton on the stage. Like the olive groves that remain a Palestinian symbol of hope and resistance; like the twisted trunk in Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*; like the performer herself... this tree stood tall, vertical. Critics describe how Mollet's gestures resembled dance, how her agile rising, shifting, pirouetting on the vast circular stage brought a joie de vivre to the haunted, annihilated

⁶⁶ Jean-Pierre Han, 'Histoire rêvée, Histoire vécue', *Les Lettres françaises* (May 1991).

wasteland.⁶⁷ The dignity and composure with which she delivered the text in a neutral, tearless voice, highlighted an insistence on resistance that appeared to capture the Fedayeen life force described by Genet. ‘Tout laisse pressentir son effondrement, et pourtant elle résiste’, wrote theatre critic Georges Banu.⁶⁸

<P>This emphasis on celebration was pertinent for two reasons, the second of which I address presently. First, fleeting exultation in the production reflected the fact that, as Genet describes in ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’, during the 1970s the Palestinians enjoyed a high(er) point in their struggle, transforming themselves from refugees into revolutionaries, reclaiming their identity and land. The PLO, founded in 1964, had gained considerable recognition, especially since 1967 when an Israeli invasion provoked international condemnation. ‘Quatre heures à Chatila’ recounts how in 1971 a Palestinian revolution felt like a reality both for the guerrilla men, liberated from the humiliation of the refugee camps, and women, who sought emancipation from patriarchal domination (‘QH’, pp. 244, 252, 262). Genet even describes this liberty as a kind of resurrection, the living, who had not fully been alive, now rising up: the ‘joie des corps, des visages, des cris, des paroles qui cessent d’être mortes’; he also describes how ‘une liberté neuve se fraye à travers les peaux mortes’ (‘QH’, pp. 261, 251). Yasser Arafat’s 1974 speech to the United Nations General Assembly expressed an optimistic revolutionary zeal; the 1988 Declaration of Independence promised a secular, democratic Palestine. In *Un captif amoureux* Genet explains the origins of FATAH, the name of the political wing of the PLO: ‘F.T.H., trois consonnes, forment selon cet ordre, une racine trilitère signifiant fissure, fente, ouverture’.⁶⁹ The translation of Harakat al-Tahrir

⁶⁷ Jean-Pierre Léonardini, ‘Genet au-dedans du Volcan’, *L’Humanité* (1 April 1991), <www.humanite.fr/node/20447> [accessed 16 June 2020].

⁶⁸ Georges Banu, ‘Comme un petit buste sur double socle’, in *Genet à Chatila*, ed. by Hankins, pp. 187–92 (p. 190).

⁶⁹ Genet, *Un captif amoureux*, p. 31.

al-Watani al-Filastini is Palestine Liberation Movement. Grammatically, the acronym should be HFT, but the PLO reordered the initials, since FATAH means victory. Lebanese author Dominique Eddé notes how Genet did not realize that, in addition, HAFATH actually means death.⁷⁰ The very name FATAH claimed victory from the jaws of death, like Genet's Fedayeen who shed their dead skin.

<P>The Palestinian context is very different now from 1982 when Genet wrote his essay or even from when Milianti staged his adaptation. Since the Oslo Accords, signed two years after Milianti's production, and the end of the second Intifada in 2005, there has been increasing despair, expressed by Palestinian theorists such as Edward Said and Israeli historians like Ilan Pappé, that an independent Palestine has not been formed.⁷¹ In 2005 Israel dismantled its settlements in Gaza. However, they left a destitute Palestinian population in what Pappé calls 'the biggest prison on earth'.⁷² Given that, as Wole Soyinka remarked in 2004, the problems of dispossession and humiliation in the Middle East hoist a 'banner of morbidity' across the world in the form of violent attacks on civilians, Palestinian restitution is vital to everyone.⁷³ So, to borrow Derrida's terms from *Spectres de Marx*: Where

⁷⁰ Dominique Eddé, *Le Crime de Jean Genet* (Paris: Seuil, 2007), p. 131.

⁷¹ Edward Said, *The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After* (London: Granta, 2002); Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

⁷² Ilan Pappé, 'The Ultimate Maximum Security Prison Model: The Gaza Strip', in *The Biggest Prison on Earth: A History of the Occupied Territories* (London: Oneworld, 2017), pp. 213–29.

⁷³ Wole Soyinka, 'Climate of Fear: The Quest for Dignity in a Dehumanized World', Reith Lectures, April 2004,

<http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/rmhttp/radio4/transcripts/20040428_reith.pdf> [accessed 16 June 2020], p. 7.

tomorrow? Whither? Ghosts, Derrida reminds us, invite us to ask not only ‘d’où vient le *ghost*’, but also, ‘va-t-il revenir? [...] Quoi de l’avenir?’⁷⁴

<P>In *The Question of Zion*, Jacqueline Rose responds to Edward Said’s *The Question of Palestine*, arguing that for Jews as well as Palestinians, victimhood must never become a pathology or essentialized identity.⁷⁵ A nostalgia for the bucolic idyll of olive groves, as well as a self-pitying fetishization of the Nakba, can preclude the possibility for a realistic future. Genet mentions that Palestinian refugees were in danger of becoming ‘passéiste’, fixated on the past (‘QH’, p. 256). Anthropologist Diana Allan describes a ‘cottage industry of commemoration’ and ‘collectivized narrative of suffering’ surrounding the Nakba and Sabra and Shatila massacres, noting how in 2004 she heard a Shatila survivor at a rally outside the United Nations building in Beirut shouting, ‘Shit to the right of return — we want to live!’⁷⁶ Is the answer to the erasure of pre-1948 Palestinian culture and history simply to cast present-day Palestinians as casualties of the past? Collective amnesia, ideological forgetting, and ‘memoricide’ can be over-compensated by an atrophied obsession with the past — with *Al-Awda*, the return to a land with which second-and third-generation Palestinians are no longer familiar — often driven by what Allan calls a ‘quasi-institutionalized coercion of memory’ (ibid., p. 257). Memories of the past, its injustices, and atrocities must, as the title *The Future of Memory* proposes, be future-oriented.⁷⁷ Ghosts must be kept close, but at a sufficient distance that the living can face forwards, as well as backwards.

⁷⁴ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 69.

⁷⁵ Jacqueline Rose, *The Question of Zion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

⁷⁶ Diana K. Allan, ‘The Politics of Witness: Remembering and Forgetting 1948 in Shatila Camp’, in *Nakba*, ed. by Sa’di and Abu-Lughod, pp. 253–82 (p. 279, n. 12).

⁷⁷ *The Future of Memory*, ed. by Richard Crownshaw, Jane Kilby, and Antony Rowland (New York: Berghahn, 2010).

<P>So, to the second reason why Milianti's emphasis on resurgence was imperative: these future-oriented perspectives complement the perpetuation of mourning in the present and future offered by Genet's essay, with what Jill Dolan calls a 'utopian performative', where hope and possibility might be envisaged.⁷⁸ The production ended as the ghost-figure disappeared through a doorway leading to a long passage from which a glaring light shone. This created a path, that she followed. The hard white beam could have denoted the Israeli searchlights illuminating the Phalangists' way. Or else, it could have symbolized an afterlife, a life after, one to come. 'Quatre heures à Chatila' was also adapted in 2005 by Tunisian director Mahmoud Saïd.⁷⁹ In his production, as in Milianti's, a minimalist décor and bare stage foregrounded Genet's text, which in Saïd's adaptation was delivered alternately by a female and a male actor. At the end of the performance, the two climbed a staircase. Both shows left audiences with images of the affirmation of life in the face of death, as actors rose, resplendent. Both adaptations ended by accompanying Genet's eulogy to the 'cadavres sans prières' as he puts it ('QH', p. 256), with a hymn to liberation, hope, the future. They respond to the Palestinians' 'desire not to give up' in Edward Said's words, their 'despair without fear, without resignation, without a sense of defeat' in the words of another Middle East commentator, John Berger.⁸⁰ In Genet's essay, death and loss haunt life and hope.

Concurrently, 'Quatre heures à Chatila' is implicitly future-facing, thanks to the flashbacks to

⁷⁸ Jill Dolan, *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

⁷⁹ Performed at Paris's Théâtre du Nord-Ouest, starring Gaël Mahric and Myriam Zghal. Stéphane Olivie-Bisson also staged the text at the Théâtre Monnot de Beyrouth (2014); and Taoufik Jebali adapted it into *Les Palestiniens*, combining it with extracts from *Un captif amoureux* and staging it at the Rencontre internationale festival in Tunis (2003).

⁸⁰ Edward Said, 'The Palestinian Right of Return: An Interview with Avi Shavit', *Raritan* 20 (2001), 34–51 (p. 42); John Berger, 'Undeclared Despair', *Race and Class*, 48 (2006), 23–30 (pp. 23–24).

the Fedayeen who, though subsequently defeated, are portrayed with a strength and vigour that offers the chance for resurgence. Genet's refusal simply to commemorate past atrocities with mawkish monumentalizing, and his insistence that mourning endure endlessly, or at least until justice be done — which, realistically, amount to the same — maintain a dynamism that projects the past into the present, and the future. In visual and very recognizable ways, in both stage productions, life appeared to continue; coping brought hope, resistance, and claims to legitimacy.

<SB>

<TX>I write this on 27 January 2020, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp, where the Nazis exterminated over one million people, mainly Jews. Remembering the dead — all the dead always — is central to any viable model of civilization. Ghosts are projections of the ethics of the living. Ghosts incite the living to offer restitution and redress for crimes and injustices perpetrated in the past. Derrida insists that spectres must be kept close not only because of where justice is no longer, but because of where it is not yet; justice must be sought not only for those who are already dead, but for those who are not yet born.⁸¹ Ghosts represent both remembrance, and regeneration; they are both retrospective, and prospective. According to the editor of Genet's *Théâtre complet* Michel Corvin, Genet's works are pervaded with a 'thanatocentrisme sans transcendance'.⁸² For Ernst, Genet's writings are a '*thanatographie*', a 'Requiem constant'.⁸³ Death and spectres in Genet's essay do not, I think, represent a nihilistic avowal of the vain enterprise of life; a melancholic obsession with the past. Genet's oblique, non-prescriptive, non-didactic

⁸¹ Derrida, *Spectres de Marx*, p. 16.

⁸² Corvin, 'Introduction', to *Théâtre complet*, pp. xi–lxxvii (p. xlii).

⁸³ Ernst, 'L'Au-delà', in *Dictionnaire Jean Genet*, ed. by Hubert, p. 437 ; original emphasis.

politics would preclude him from providing a ‘road map’ for Israel-Palestine.⁸⁴ But Genet’s essay looks backwards from the devastation of the massacres to the rousing revolutionary past of the Fedayeen, opening the possibility to look forwards to a future where the segregated, the invisible, the inaudible might be included, seen, heeded, valued. Genet’s essay and Milianti’s stage production provide exemplary models of how to accommodate ghosts, whether they be of the Sabra and Shatila massacres, of Auschwitz, or of the many other atrocities committed throughout human history. They propose how we might speak truth to horror, denial, and impunity. They show us how to open remembrance to the future. Not one in thrall to the past, but one still to come, still to imagine.

⁸⁴ For nuanced accounts of Genet’s ‘oblique’ commitment to Palestinian politics, see Colin Davis, ‘*Un captif amoureux* and the Commitment of Jean Genet’, *French Studies Bulletin*, 23 (1987), 16–18; Scott Durham, ‘The Deaths of Jean Genet’, *Yale French Studies*, 91 (1997), 159–84; and Juan Goytisolo, ‘Genet et les Palestiniens: ambiguïté politique et radicalité poétique’, *Revue d’études palestiniennes*, 83 (2002), 74–83.