FRESH BLOOD,  
A CONSIDERATION OF BELONGING

by

Yael Barbour

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Fresh Blood. A Consideration of Belonging

Master of Arts. 1997
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Abstract

Fresh Blood. A Consideration of Belonging is the script and theoretical treatment of a critical video essay by the same title and under my preferred name, b.h. Yael. Fresh Blood is an autobiographically derived examination of subjectivity in the intersections of racialized identity, nationality, gender, sexuality, and religious affiliation. The artist returns to a land of remembering and forgetting, to the Israel of her birth with an examination of memory in connection with Jewish-Iraqi heritage as well as Holocaust memory. The video and script of Fresh Blood attempts to reposition Arabness as a cultural rather than solely a national identification and examines issues of racialized identity, inside and outside Jewishness. The textual analysis of this writing considers additional elements that are implicated in cultural production: multiculturalism, autobiography, the economy of art production, narrative and documentary formal practices. These non-linear and fragmented elements are woven into an analysis that attempt to disrupt hegemonic constructions of identity and linear narratives.
Acknowledgments

The means of production dictates a work's creation and dissemination. Its formation has been assisted by many voices, by critique and encouragement. In the final analysis I am enriched by the community of friends and advisors who assisted in its formation. If I started this project with the question, 'where do I belong', I conclude it with the sense of an extremely amorphous community of friends and associates who constitute my belonging. This belonging cannot and is not realized along the formations by which we have traditionally formed community; it is not ethnically or racially constituted, not professionally formed; it does not depend on the geography of neighbourhood; it is not simply contained by family or religion. It is at the same time informed by all these aspects and more.

Over 100 people participated in the production of this video. These individuals are not credited through footnotes or in the bibliography, but were indeed valuable contributors. I will be listing their involvements with many thanks at the end of this thesis and script under the heading of Credits. I would like to especially thank Rob Morgan and Roger Simon at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for their valuable critique and feedback. As well thanks to Wendy Coburn for her editorial suggestions. Most of all thanks to Wendell Block for his support and encouragement. Those credited at the end of this document were the bellydancers and midwives for Fresh Blood. A Consideration of Belonging.
# Table of Contents

Abstract  
Acknowledgements  
Preamble  
Introduction: Script  
  Genealogies and Questions  
  End of Introduction  

Chapter 1: Gathering  
  Looking to Displace Narrative  

Chapter 2: Lost in Language  
  Thoughts on Memory. Received  

Chapter 3: In My Sex  
  Queering and Complicating Autobiography  

Chapter 4: The Colour of Me  
  Signifying the Racialized Body  

Chapter 5: Sight and Memory  
  Memory Sites: Video and History  

Chapter 6: Palestine and Israel  
  Shifting the Ground: Arabs and Jews
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Father and Blood</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Witnessing Holocaust Memory</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Baptismal Waters</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Multiculturalism as Cultural Hegemony</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Breaking Sodom's Salt</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Constructing Documentary</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mizrahi. Redefining Arabness</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Politics of Art Production</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Bellydancing</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Theory and Practice. Academic Performance</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Epilogue</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Videography</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Credits</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preamble:

*Fresh Blood. A Consideration of Belonging* is an audio-visual thesis, a critical essay that draws on autobiographical moments and theoretical concerns in considering the many facets of identity.

I have had an apprehension in returning within an academic context to revisit this piece, to theorize its existence and to expand upon from the theoretical influences of the video's making. I wrote the text, documented the experience, raised a lot of money, a lot of questions, wrote and rewrote, produced and consulted, shot and shot and then edited and edited.

In the end a text exists, on its own, independent of its maker, intrinsically apart, very much like a child taking its own place in the world. My revisitation in this academic context is like coming back to analyze one's offspring, but from a distance.

I consider the video, *Fresh Blood. A Consideration of Belonging* as my thesis. The written component is the evidence of its process. I use the script as a structuring device for considering my choices and the many implications of its construction, for teasing out some of the groundwork, the strategies and theoretical basis for the work.

In writing this component of the thesis, I have taken a less linear approach, as is reflected in the video itself. The video script is interwoven throughout this document, interrupting the defense, its
rationalizations, the incidents of influence and sometimes generating the response. There is no equivocal correlation between the script and the text that follows. Sometimes I reference the preceding script segment, sometimes I expound on an element of formal or economic production without making any of the obvious connections. I did not want to come to this writing with an expectation that I would explain the significance of each inclusion, or the connections made between different aspects of identity and the identifications that disrupt these formations.

*Fresh Blood* is a hybrid documentary: it is a formally experimental text that resists conventional forms. Since the video also deals with hybrid identity and challenges notions of national belonging, the form and content of this paper and the audio-visual text are intrinsically dependent on one another.
Fresh Blood, A Consideration of Belonging

Introduction: Script

Scene 1:
CLOSEUP OF HAND WITH FINGER CYMBALS. GESTURES USED IN BELLYDANCING. CLOSEUP IMAGES OF BELLDANCER’S BODY AND FABRIC/SHAWL.

INTERCUT WITH INTERIOR: BLACK STUDIO
LONG ZOOM - YAEL IS STANDING IN A BLACK STUDIO SPACE WITH A FROWN THAT BECOMES MORE AND MORE APPARENT. HER HAIR IS PULLED BACK.

ARABIC MUSIC. FRAGMENTED CALLS.

CAMERA FINISHES ZOOM AND STOPS ON FULL FACE.

YAEL
I am thinking.
I always frown when I am thinking.

Scene 2:
EMPTY 50’S STYLE SUITCASE. BEING PACKED. OVERHEAD SHOT.

V/O:
I am about to board El Al. Something is tugging at the edges of my awareness.
V/O: SECURITY
Did anyone give you anything to bring to someone else?

V/O: YAEL
A bottle of ketchup. A little one.

V/O: SECURITY
Are you carrying any weapons, any electronic devices?

V/O: YAEL
Swiss army knife and a video camera.

V/O: SECURITY
Can I see the knife and the bottle of ketchup?...

Scene 3:
SUITCASE BEING CARRIED
TEXT: ‘TORONTO’
SUPERED OVER VISUAL
IMAGES OF AIRPORT SIGNS: “INTERNATIONAL DEPARTURES”.
DEPARTURES MONITOR. YAEL WALKING IN AIRPORT. “EL AL” SIGN.

V/O:
This is high-security. The place of my childhood fears. Arabs, dogs, snakes.
Scene 4:
IMAGES OF CLOUDS FROM AIRPLANE VIEW. DISSOLVES INTO CLOSEUP OF YAELE’S FACE.

V/O:
On the plane I reach my seat. Two women are sitting together. They smile. I smile. One says: “Oh good, we were hoping for a....”

YAELE MOUTHS ‘WOMAN’.
SHE BEGINS TO CONTORT FACE AS IF INTO A MIRROR.

V/O:
I have scrutinized this face all my life.

When I was twelve I looked into the mirror and cried.

It may have been a short while after my teacher told me that I could never be trusted because I had such close set eyes.

VISUAL OF CONTORTED FACE DISSOLVES INTO CLOUDS. SLOW DISSOLVE OF BELLYDANCER’S FACE, ROTATING IN A DANCE MOVE. DISSOLVES BACK TO CONTORTING FACE IN MIRROR.

V/O:
I consoled myself that I would look distinctive.

When I am old I will have two indelible lines, like quotations marks in the middle of my face.
This trip is the fine thread back to my first seven years, a time I can barely conjure up. Not me, another little girl.

FADE TO BLACK

TITLE/TEXT: FRESH BLOOD

A CONSIDERATION OF BELONGING

ARABIC MUSIC. WITH ELLULS.

FADE TO BLACK

Genealogies and Questions

*Fresh Blood, A Consideration of Belonging* starts with a story. While attending, as a programmer, the Invisible Colours film and video festival in Vancouver in 1989 I noticed that a number of ‘anglo’ or ‘white’ women asked me if I had work in the festival. I also observed that none of the Aboriginal, Black, Latino or Asian women attending the festival asked me. Clearly, within the demarcated discourses of colour, I did not belong to either side and was perceived by each unconstituted group to belong to the other.

These festival encounters were crystallizing moments of the dilemma I had experienced in relation to discourses around issues of colour
and the positioning of Jewishness, as well as Arabness, within these discourses. These moments also spoke to my experience of being marked by Jewishness in the way I look, but not specifically in or through my experience.

My own positioning as an outwardly identified Jew clashes with my internal identifications and refusal of such identification. Am I Jewish because my parents are? If my parents are from very different geographical backgrounds, does one part of my identity obscure or obfuscate another? Am I Jewish if I haven't been brought up Jewish, and more so, Christian? Am I Israeli by virtue of my birth in the land of Israel or do my politics and the fact that I have grown away from that country exclude me from that specific belonging? If my familial culture is Arabic, does this make me more Arabic than Jewish? Being acutely aware of how I am constructed in Canada, my country of residence and then in Israel, my country of birth provoked these many questions about identity within geographical, political and philosophical terms.

The beginning of Fresh Blood attempts to set the stage of embarking on a journey, not only a literal voyage, but one that metaphorically travels between the past and the present, all culminating in the image of my face. The face is part of the body we gravitate towards most often, reading the signifiers of belonging.

---

1 'Outwardly identified' refers to how others see me as opposed to how I position or identify myself.
While working on the script and the production of the video it became necessary to identify the pervasive alienation that I had experienced growing up. This alienation was not solely one of a personal nature or constituted by family structures, but one that was infused by larger discourses of belonging.

My experiences at the Invisible Colours festival became my gateway into theory. In questioning my own constructions, partly as a woman, but more so as a racially constructed woman, certain theoretical discourses have illuminated my own self perceptions and contributed to changing the way I experience myself in the world. There was an initial exhilaration that came with beginning to understand how discourses shape our lives and therefore our experiences and to see how these are manifest in the specificity of experience. Experience is only part of the submerged tip of an iceberg.

Years ago in Newfoundland, I happened on a trip with a number of artists to see an iceberg floating off the coast of a little fishing village outside St. John’s. We circled around the iceberg in a fishing boat, amazed at how this form changed significantly from each subsequent angle of the wide circle. The shape was in constant metamorphosis as varying edges and extensions appeared and disappeared simply through our own changing location. And what was not evident was the shape and magnitude of the ice that lay below the surface of the water. In the water around the boat occasional chunks of the berg had broken off and floated by. We ‘caught’ a couple of these chunks and sucked on bits of ice that had been formed thousands if not
millions of years before. Many air bubbles had been captured in the frozen formation we ingested.

This image has a remote connection to the context of *Fresh Blood* and the issues it takes up. However I tend to see the project itself much as I did the iceberg. I have had the chance to sculpt the video, to change the way I might look at my own identity from various positions. I am at the same time acutely aware of the omissions and losses inherent in this sculpting and editing process. I am also aware of the many aspects that are submerged and not available to the viewer in terms of process: as in all artistic and academic work, what comes to the fore is but the tip of what one has engaged and experienced.

There is a desire to see the work in its entirety and yet that can never be. Neither can one ever see oneself in such a way. If all was exposed the iceberg would not be. it would not float. it would not be what it is.

At times there are possibilities of taking on little bits and ingesting these. Tasting age-old formations and the ways we theorize their existence.

The iceberg may also be like “the gradual eclipse of the revolutionary anticolonial era”, which as Aamir Mufti and Ella Shohat contend “has been accompanied by the emergence of new forms of selfhood, political allegiance, capital accumulation, imperial power, and mass
migration, forms whose contours are perhaps still only half-visible.” (Mufti/Shohat, 1997, 2)

The conference moment seems to be a clear story that traces the genealogy of the search and expedition: the Invisible Colours event suffices as the point of departure, but it is not the only originary moment by far. The narrative has its many contexts. In Toronto a number of events had taken place in the art community through the 80’s which posited certain fundamental epistemological questions: Which memories and histories have been acknowledged and commemorated and whose have not? What are the implications of racism within a multicultural society such as Canada? Which works and whose art have been seen? Who has been benefiting from the funding systems available to artists?

End of Introduction

Scene 5:
SUPERIMPOSED SPEEDING LANDSCAPE IMAGES WITH CHILDHOOD PHOTOGRAPHS

V/O: CHILD
AS IF BY ROTE, A LITANY:
I was born in Israel. My mother remarried when I was seven. I grew up north of Montreal in the Laurentians, in Canada. My mother is from Iraq and my father
from Poland.

TEXT: a video by b.h. Yael

V/O: CHILD
I was born in Israel. My mother remarried when I was seven. I grew up north of Montreal in the Laurentians, in Canada. My mother is from Iraq and my father from Poland.

FADE TO BLACK
Chapter 1: Gathering

Scene 6:
CLOSEUPS OF BELLDANDER’S BODY SUPERIMPOSED WITH IMAGES OF WATER BEING TRAVELED OVER. AND THEN DESERT HILLS.

V/O:
I have heard whisperings and salutations.
I have had glimmerings of her.
She comes to me in my dreams, at the corner of my eye.

Scene 7:
TRAVELING LANDSCAPE SHOT DISSOLVES INTO PAN OF TWO WOMEN LOOKING OVER MOUNTAIN EDGE AT DESERT LANDSCAPE.

V/O:
I have arranged to meet my mother and my sister in Israel. Together we travel to Eilat at the northern tip of the Red Sea.

Scene 8:
LANDSCAPE SUPERIMPOSED WITH IMAGE OF YAEL ATTEMPTING BELLYDANCING MOVES.

TEXT: “Discovery” is always late.

Anne McClintock. (1995, 28)
Scene 9:

TEXT: ‘Eilat’

SUPERED OVER APPROACH AT NIGHT TOWARDS WINDOW OF MEETING HALL. SINGER CAN BE SEEN THROUGH WINDOW. ARABIC MUSIC FAINTLY HEARD.
IMAGE DISSOLVES INTO HALLWAY IN WHICH PEOPLE LINE THE WALLS INTO THE GATHERING.

V/O:
My mother isn’t sure she wants to be part of this gathering of Iraqi Jews. “Iraqi culture is too sensual” she says. She doesn’t trust the rule of passion and desire; “the trick” she insists “is not to come away with longing.”

VISUAL OF LARGE GATHERING OF PEOPLE IN HALL. A WOMAN SIGNALS TO COME IN.
CUT TO IMAGES OF PEOPLE CLAPPING. AMAN SINGING. CLOSEUP ON MUSICIANS AND DRUMS.

V/O:
There is no interest in Israel for this Iraqi culture. It will die with this generation” says Mum. “These reunions are the last attempts to keep the culture alive.”

To this gathering, my sister Joyce and I represent a hope. I come wanting to know the culture my mother came from.
BELLYDANCER. IN BLACK AND WHITE OUTFIT. SASSY. WITH ATTITUDE. IMAGES OF PEOPLE CLAPPING AND ENJOYING THE PERFORMANCE. TSAHI DANCING IN BRIGHT ORANGE SHIRT: PEOPLE DANCING IN CROWD. LARGE WOMAN IN LAVENDER DRESS. WOMAN IN BLACK LACE TOP

Scene 10:
ELI AMIR STARTS AS VOICE OVER.
VISUAL CUTS IN. HE IS SITTING IN HIS OFFICE IN BLUE SHIRT. INTERCUT WITH IMAGES FROM IRAQI GATHERING.

TEXT SUPER:     Eli Amir
                Jerusalem

ELI AMIR
I think that the Iraqi community. the Babylonian community I would say. is the most ancient Jewish community in the world. We have been living there for 2,700 years. So this is one thing that is unique of its kind and from Babylonian. from Babel. from the modern state of Iraq as we call it now. they spread out to other nations in the world. Until the middle ages. the Babylonian community was the spiritual and religious Jewish centre of the whole world.
Scene 11:
ELLA SHOHAT SPEAKS ON PART BENCH, BRIGHT ORANGE SHIRT.
TEXT SUPERED: Ella Shohat
Givat Haviva

ELLA SHOHAT
It is an Arab culture. it is a Jewish Arab culture: the
religion was Jewish but it was part. a symbiosis
that took place over thousands of years in the Arab
Muslim world. Nobody doubts the Christian Arab
identity or the Muslim Arab identity. there
shouldn’t be any doubt about the Arab identity.

Scene 12:
C/U BLACK LACE CUT WITH YAEL DANCING. IMITATING
BELLYDANCE MOVES-DISSOLVES TO HANDS HANDLING LACE.

V/O:
When I first bought this lace dress I thought of the lace factory my mother used
to work in when I was five and six. Delicate lace would pour out of big
thunderous machines.
My black lace is one among many at this Iraqi gathering. As I wear it I wonder if I
have put on more than I know.

Scene 13:
TSAHI DANCING WITH BELLYDANCER. HE IS IN A BRIGHT ORANGE
SHIRT. DANCING GRACEFULLY.
V/O:
Tzahi says he's the only male bellydancer in Israel, but I have heard of others. He doesn't dance in drag. This is pure pleasure.
"I can come to Canada. I can teach." He says. "Tell your friends."

TSAHI DANCING DISSOLVES INTO BELLYDANDER IN BLACK AND WHITE. TWIRLING IN SLOW-MOTION.

FADE TO BLACK.

Looking to Displace Narrative

Like Teresa de Lauretis I have been suspicious of and attracted to narrative forms. Narrative and narrativity have the "capacity to inscribe desire and to direct, sustain, or undercut identification" (1987, 109). De Lauretis and others have employed psychoanalytic theory, as Laura Mulvey states "as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form" (1975, 746).

Though fundamental problems persist in the invocation of representation of the female form as a symbolically castrated being, and though it is important to consider within psychoanalytic influences the discourse that accepts this symbolic image as the place from which to theorize, it has nonetheless been helpful to have a
critique of the way that women have been positioned within the patriarchal order and within the symbolic structuring of gender in cinema.

Much of this analysis comes from film theory, grounded in a critical and enamoured dance with Hollywood's offerings. Experimental filmmaking predated feminist and psychoanalytic theory with its own critique of the positioning of the image within narrative convention and the limitations that narrative imposes on associative, poetic and lyrical expressions and formal devices through which the very material aspects of the medium could be manipulated and pushed. A theoretical conceptualizing that can speak to multiple realities has been important to the development of film and video practices that challenge linearity and predominant conceptions of reality.

Films such as Maya Deren's *Meshes of the Afternoon*, completed in the 1940's, have been important influences in early experimental work that attempted filmic representation of internal and psychic realities, layered and complex. Writing in 1960, Deren's encourages the development of a "full-fledged" art form in cinema:

It must relinquish the narrative disciplines it has borrowed from literature and its timid imitation of the causal logic of narrative plots, a form which flowered as a celebration of the earthbound, step-by-step concept of time, space and relationship which was part of the primitive materialism of the nineteenth century. Instead, it must develop the vocabulary of filmic images and evolve the syntax of filmic techniques which relate those. It must determine the disciplines inherent in the
medium, discover its own structural modes, explore the new realms and dimensions accessible to it and so enrich our culture artistically as science has done in its own province (1960. 70).

Deren emphasizes as artists like Magritte had earlier that "representation" and "reality" must not be confused. The image, having a "visual likeness of a real object or person" resembles or imitates, but is not the real object or person. In what she determines as its more positive implications, reality is filtered by the selectivity of individual interests and modified by prejudicial perception to become experience; as such it is combined with similar, contrasting or modifying experiences, both forgotten and remembered, to become assimilated into a conceptual image: this in turn is subject to the manipulations of the art instrument: and what finally emerges is a plastic image which is a reality in its own right (Deren, 1960. 61).

Another way of thinking about imagemaking is in its relation to memory. As Andreas Huyssen theorizes:

All representation - whether in language, narrative, image or recorded sound - is based on memory. Re-presentation always comes after, even though some media will try to provide us with the delusion of pure presence. But rather than leading us to some authentic origin or giving us verifiable access to the real, memory, even and especially in its belatedness, is itself based on representation (Huyssen, 1995. 2).

Within cultural practice, theories of feminism and post-modernism have contributed to the analysis or representation and have attempted to avoid reproducing 'master' narratives and structures\(^2\), also drawing on memory

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\(^2\)Laura Mulvey's essay, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, was formative.
and subjective experiences as points of departure. In such work, the writer/teller engages in her own critique and theorizing, breaking narrative expectations and sometimes contributing to the disengagement of the reader, allowing for and encouraging a dialectic between the viewer and the work.

A number of filmmakers influenced by feminist theory developed work in the 70's and 80's within this same trajectory of desire: to create representations of other realities.

Highly influenced by her previous choreographic experience and by psychoanalytic theory Yvonne Rainer's works, such as *Journeys from Berlin/1971*, constructed narrative essays that probe questions of identification, pleasure and dislocation while still holding to a rigorous and experimental film form. Rainer positions such work within the second phase of women's cinema and as "descriptions of individual feminine experience placed in radical juxtaposition against historical events" (de Lauretis, 1987:120).

The analysis of the male gaze prompted a number of women filmmakers through these couple of decades to develop a filmic practice that challenges narrative hegemony as well as scopophilic experience.

Some conventional narrative film has consciously eliminated "intrusive camera presence" preventing a distancing awareness for

* in analysing the relation of narrative construction to gender identifications.
the audience. Many experimental feminist film practitioners have attempted to play through many forms with strategies that would promote a critical distance. Early work influenced by psychoanalytic theory often ignored and rejected the very elements of the medium that were pleasurable. Direct address, broken narratives and camera techniques and narration that constructed audiences differently to dominant filmic forms were some of the strategies that feminist producers played with, among others, to challenge an ideology of representation that privileged verisimilitude.

More recently films such as *Body Beautiful* by Ungozi Unwaruh have developed highly personal and dramatic narratives that allow for the questioning of the cinematic and male gaze. The film maintains a highly pleasurable position for the audience in both viewing and identifying with the multiple positions of a woman of mixed race and her English mother. If Yvonne Rainer's work represents the second wave of feminist film practice (informed by women's writing in the 70's), Unwaruh's work is the finest example of the third wave of feminism, drawing on autobiographical material and subjective perspectives. Onwaruh weaves a narrative that includes the casting of her own mother in a highly informed critique of the Western culture's constructions of body image, femininity and racial identity. First person narration and reconstructed memory, along with fantasy (such as giving her elderly mother a young black lover) are some of the elements that contribute to this analysis.

As Laura Mulvey notes it is possible to have an alternative cinema
"which is radical in both a political and an aesthetic sense (and) challenges the basic assumption of the mainstream film" (Mulvey. 1975. 747).

*Fresh Blood*, as with my other film and video work, has been an attempt to play with narrative elements through a hybridized form that can incorporate several points of view, voices or parallel stories. *Fresh Blood* does not so much present conflicting points of view as a journalistic form of documentary requires, but rather builds a number of critiques into its thesis, providing the possibility for a number of elements to be considered at the same time or further interrelated and implicated in one another. Political perspectives can be presented both beside and as a part of first person narrative, reconstructed memory, interviews, and documentary and travel footage.

In such video pieces as *Jain Walks the Line. My Mother is a Dangerous Woman* and in my film *Is Dad Dead Yet*, I have used direct audience address and various formal strategies to build on this theoretical ground, desiring to position the audience within a much more informed and critical perspective. With each work I have included humourous elements and narrative scenarios, all interwoven and fragmented, reflecting a disjunctive sense of reality.

At the same time I sought the pleasure of the image, the formal elements of compositional pleasure, the desire to complete the art form's promise of providing an easy entry or identification into
another's perspective.

*Fresh Blood* starts with its first line as one of direct address with "I'm thinking, I always frown when I'm thinking." This opening remark attempts a number of different purposes. One is to point to the act of looking and being looked at, to the easy assumptions of the gaze and how it may construct an 'other'. Another intention was to reposition the Cartesian "I think therefore I am" into a more physical presence. The statement also signals that this is an essay, a result of consideration and contemplation, and possibly displeasure. One more purpose was an attempt at humour: as the build up of the rhythm and editing of a dolly shot approaching the face. the assumption would be that something significantly profound will be uttered.

Though narrative can indeed be complex, it sometimes alludes to the possibilities for a political analysis and provides a distance that allows for a more considered response. This aspect is too often relegated to subtextual readings and breakdown. My desire with *Fresh Blood* was to provide moments of narrative identification that still allowed the audience to maintain an engagement, as well as a distance, with the subject, clearly positioning these in the suspect terrain of memory. In intercutting these moments and reconstructions with live documentary footage as well as interviews and commentary, the overall form allows for an engagement that can be at once emotional and critical, intellectually engaged, and pedagogical.
In this section, 'Gathering', which sets up the historical context of Jewish Iraqi exile, the positioning of the audience to the looking, to being active participants in a cultural 'gaze' is an important aspect of the work. With the choice of bellydancing as a central metaphor and motif through the video, it was important to allow for the pleasure of viewing the body by both male and female viewers and for a means by which to subvert the gaze as well. One of the important moments in this segment, as the camera enters the dance hall, is the gesture of one of the women at the gathering that indicates "come in". This functions practically for me as videographer, through her acknowledgment of the camera's presence, but more importantly signals to the audience that they are welcome to 'participate', to look.

Another subversion of the traditional 'male' gaze is the insertion of Tzahi, the male bellydancer who moves gracefully and who challenges the possibility that pleasure in looking could only be derived through an objectified female body. The voice over provides a subjective position for Tzahi as a potentially eroticized body as well.

In revisiting some formative texts, such as Mulvey, it is important to note that the issues raised are still valuable for feminist practice, despite the fact that many feminist filmmakers have attempted to go beyond this influential work by considering other points of subjectivity, (identifications marked by cultural or sexual orientations) through which an audience is constructed.
NOTE TO USERS

Page(s) missing in number only; text follows. Filmed as received.

UMI
Chapter 2: Lost in Language

Scene 14
CLOSE UP ON POPPIES

TEXT: Language was not lost but remained....
in spite of everything. But it had to pass through
its own answerlessness......

Paul Celan

ROOSTER CROWS IN BACKGROUND

Scene 15
EXTERIOR SHOT OF ROAD

TEXT: Nahalat Yehuda

Scene 16: INTERIOR:

SUPTA (GRANDMOTHER) IS IN THE KITCHEN. YAEL BEHIND CAMERA.
CLOSE UP ON SUPTA PREPARING DISH.

V/O:
i come here to search out my grandmother
To unlock the past, to confirm memory.

YAEL

Supta, you know I remember this house.
SUPTA
What?

YAEL
I remember

CUT AWAY TO PAN OF HOUSE OVER ROUGH FOOTAGE

SUPTA
What. I...

YAEL
This house. Ze ba-it. I remember. I can. uh..

YAEL
Yah. I remember eating here. wh..

SUPTA
Yes.

YAEL
Eggs and eggplant and salad.

SUPTA
What?
YAEL
I remember eating with Saba.

SUPTA
Yes. yes. yes. Saba Sasson

CUTAWAY TO PHOTOS OF SASSON AND SUPTA.

YAEL
I remember the house to be bigger..

SUPTA
Yes.

YAEL
...because I was so small

SUPTA
I have photograph

YAEL
of me?

SUPTA
Oui...I have..
you want to see it?
YAEL
O.K. Thanks

SUPTA
Boi. et-ochlit.
Ochel. Now eat.

Scene 17:
PAN OF HEDGE OF HIBISCUS. YOUNG GIRL SPEAKS OFF CAMERA AND THEN ENTERS FRAME.

TEXT/SUBTITLES: Shalom
You don’t speak Hebrew?
I don’t speak Hebrew.
English.

SCHOOL GIRLS PLAYING IN PARK - THEY WAVE INTO THE CAMERA V/O:
Strangers on the street take my forgetting as a personal affront. Even more, they see this loss as a cultural rejection.

I wonder at the speed with which I forgot, almost as if I willed myself to. In a new land, I sensed that my knowledge of my first language implicated me.

Now I come back. The language, like memory, is in my body.
I cannot reconfigure its fragments, yet there is an underlying familiarity beyond
the sounds and the gutteral force.

HAND WAVES IN FRONT OF SEPHARDY GIRL

Scene 18:

ELLA SHOHAT:
When my family came here and they saw European Jews they were sure they were Christian European because they simply did not believe that Jews looked European. that Jews spoke this language. Yiddish. or this kind of Hebrew that was not Semitic pronunciation. that they ate this kind of food. Because Jewishness was perceived as indigenous to the Middle East. and it is. (29:15)

Scene 19:
(7:38:30 - 40:15) SUPTA COMES OUTSIDE BRINGING PHOTOS OF ME AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

SUPTA
Yael. you know this. What is this?

YAEL

Oh that’s Smadar
SUPTA

Bravo.

Scene 20:
INTERIOR. SUPTA'S KITCHEN.
YAEL IS STANDING IN DOORWAY TO KITCHEN ASKING NOGA WHAT SUPTA HAD SAID. NOGA SAYS. "BINTIK HELWA - IT MEANS YOUR DAUGHTER IS BEAUTIFUL" YAEL TRIES IT.

YAEL

What was the word she used? Was it in Arabic?

NOGA

Helwa.

YAEL

Helwa. It's a lot like ...

MAKES ELLUL SOUNDS.
NOGA. SHAKES HEAD.

JOYCE. off camera

Who was she talking to mum?
NOGA.
She was talking to herself and to you.

JOYCE
Oh to me.

NOGA
She was saying that she’s beautiful. No she was saying you have a beautiful daughter.

YAEL
Oh ya. Supta. what did you say?

JOYCE
Should I turn the camera on myself at this point?

CUT AWAYS. PHOTOS OF FAMILY IN IRAQ: GREAT-GRANDMOTHER. SUPTA WITH HER CHILDREN.

Scene 21:

ELI AMIR
We are the last generation to speak that language which served the Jews and was the culture of the Jewish people there for so many centuries. And this special dialogue is a mixture of special Arabic.
and Aramaic. the language of Aramit. Aramaic and Hebrew words. and it’s so Juicy.

**Scene 22:**
**INTERIOR. SUPTA’S KITCHEN**
**YAELE PRACTICES ‘BINTIK HELWA’. THERE IS MUCH LAUGHTER.**

**TEXT:**

_BINTIK HELWA_

Your daughter is beautiful.

_JOYCE_

Oh do that to me

_YAEL_

Bultik helwa.

**YAELE IS REPEATING IN AN EXPRESSIVE MANNER**

_NOGA_


**TEXT:**

_BULTIK HELWA_

Your pee is beautiful.

EVERYONE BREAKS OUT INTO LAUGHTER. YAEL GRABS CROTCH AND RUNS OUT. SUPTA LAUGHS WITHOUT HER TEETH. HOLDING HER HEAD
IN HER HANDS.

FADE TO BLACK

**Thoughts on Memory, Received**

English is my second and only language. The first has been lost in the ready adolescent rush towards assimilation. The languages before my first language have also been lost. They are somehow a part, somehow familiar. somehow present in a shallow veneer of associations. completely unrooted/uprooted.

Language. like memory. is in my body. It is like the composted leaf remembering the sun.

I cannot reconfigure the particles. the blades or stalks. the veins of its form. but memory persists. I have memories of specific conversations I had when I was a child. I remember them in English. though of course they would have been conducted in Hebrew. Meaning persists.

This loss of language. has in fact contributed to a loss of contact: contact specific to those who could give me clues and information about the past from which I come.
My grandmother and I resort to broken bits of French, English, Hebrew and Arabic. Mostly we gesture. This is not enough to gather specific details. An interpreter becomes necessary. Someone with their own set of constructions and perceptions, someone who mediates through their own experience.

The rest of the family, each individually exclaim, "You don't speak..." They are saddened by our limitations to communicate. Strangers on the street are even more dismayed.

Sometimes understanding is not only language based. We pick up the inflections, innuendo, nuances, contexts, gestures and symbols by which meaning is constructed.

Sometimes, though we try to force it, memory is not language based. Memory's claims are unapparent. My body remembers - the smells, the air, the sand - once I enter the maze of memory. I begin to connect my woman's life to that of the girl who once lived here. For many years this was not possible.

My preoccupations with the past continually come to the fore. Somehow memory is both vague and always present. Specific events, details, words are always with me; what is most powerful about memory is the specific nuance, atmosphere and feeling of the occurrence, the remembered subjective experience.

The first time I went back to Israel, 23 years after having left at the
age of seven. I smelled my way around the country. Specific and familiar scents and odours triggered specific memory sites and words, a visceral connection to the place.

The greatest satisfaction was of having visual memories corroborated and verified by returning to specific sites that, though they had been transformed in the intervening years, still had the vestiges of the old structures and placings I had remembered. My grandmother's yard and house was one such place.

The return to a specific person who was once my caretaker, to the familiarity of her body, though changed over the years, has the hold that no other received memory could.

I have memories of my other grandmother, referred to later in a section in which I reunite with my father. However I have never met this woman. Short glimpses, through photographs and stories, received memories, are the evidence of a strong and intelligent woman I could never know.

Each of these women, or rather the memories of these women, occupy different places, serve the process of remembering in a different way.

We have 'received memory' which may have as many attendant responses and emotions associated with the telling of or hearing of actual event and with its reception as those who actually lived
through it. Received memory becomes even more nuanced. has an amplified theoretical and abstract significance and carries the political cachet of posterity. Because it is not grounded in actual experience other determining factors come into the complexity of its remembrance.

It may be important to preserve the memories of those who have witnessed specific events: it may even be possible to reconstruct the memory of those who are absent. All the attendant documents serve to keep our remembrance. to maintain a link with our pasts. to attach individual and collective specificities.

It is here that we start to question the mitigating forces that determine what is kept and what is supressed. What do witnesses choose to recollect: what do archives choose to keep? What is quirky and exceptional: what is common?

In present considerations. what will happen to memory when the present generation that survived the Jewish holocaust in Europe are gone? What will happen to the memory of Jews in Iraq? What has happened to the histories of other groups who have experienced genocide and diasporic survival?

Through the recollection of public events and collective memories the chance of the remembrance being sustained through repetition and recounting is greater. Despite the many differing versions. specific narrative accounts of history emerge and contribute to a core of
common belief. This video document is an example of a form that begins to transform a process of remembering.

What distinguishes personal memory from collective memory - or the significance of personal events from historical ones?

What distinguished past events from being personal pasts or collective pasts. ‘Personal’ assumes a singular position, however most often these memories are part of and implicated in and by communal significance.

In remembering specific family stories and events, we are making history. History cannot as we have accepted be left to the official scribes and keepers of records, as these are most often selective and representative of specific and often ideologically defined perspectives. Somebody else’s version of the time. Somebody else’s history:

While the capacity to remember is an anthropological given, some cultures value memory more than others. The place of memory in any culture is defined by an extraordinarily complex discursive web of ritual and mythic, historical, political and psychological factors (Huyssen, 1995, 249).

In developing Fresh Blood, I look for the stories that tell me about myself; I look not only for a cultural identity but for a psychic one as well. I absorb and then so quickly discard much of the information which I have sought - only specific images remain. I reconstruct them in such a way that they reinforce the specific and ultimate
tragedies of so many lives I am connected to.

The desire to forget that which is unpleasant, or more so, that which does not fit into one's conception of oneself may be the same as the desire to remember in order to maintain a specific conception of self.

The predilection to sustain memories trauma, while forgetting other more pleasant realities or evidences of harmonious or cooperative cohabitation is a question of how memory is taken up in cultural remembrance. The memory of trauma often prevails over everyday realities.

Collectively, through documents and institutions, we select specific items that serve specific agendas, specific traditions, specific spiritual and religious understandings, specific sociopolitical ends and world views.

*Fresh Blood* as a video document becomes a text that both serves to preserve memory (personal, familial and collective) while also challenging some of the significant omissions of many Jewish histories and stories. *Fresh Blood* also inserts an oppositional and complex reality, often hidden or denied. The stories of Iraqi Jews, let alone Jews from other Arabic countries, are not often told. The fact that Jews can be racists against and within their 'own' constituency is another dimension not often engaged:

As generational memory begins to fade and ever later decades of this modern century par excellence are becoming history or
myth to ever more people. Such looking back and remembering has to confront some difficult problems of representation in its relationship to temporality and memory. Human memory may well be an anthropological given. but closely tied as it is to the ways a culture constructs and lives its temporality. the forms memory will take are invariably contingent and subject to change (Huyssen. 1995. 2).

Institutional failures to preserve the 'oriental' or Mizrahi cultures while privileging European cultural forms and stories is part of this process. As Andreas Huyssen asserts. "the past is not simply there in memory. but it must be articulated to become memory" (1995. 3).

In returning to search out my grandmother. that which is lost and that which remains is painfully obvious even to an audience who cannot know all the details. For some viewers. this scene carries the emotional impact of that loss and seems to outweigh the obvious affection. The connection to my grandmother is mediated through glimpses of food and photographs. through my search for her 'mother tongue' or first language and through the humour we find in my desires and fumblings with language that is both familiar and strange.
Chapter 3: In My Sex

Scene 23:
QUICK SHOT OF MOTHER ON THE BEACH- SHE TAKES GLASSES OFF TO LOOK BACK

CUT TO
JERUSALEM MARKET: VENDOR APPROACHES CAMERA.

TEXT: Heterosexuality is constructed
and.....shaped to assume a normative and
compulsory position for heterosexuality.

Judith Butler

Scene 24: EXTERIOR: ISRAEL:

IMAGES OF BLACK HATS IN THE JERUSALEM MARKET. SLOWED DOWN.
TRYING TO CATCH THEIR EYE.
V/O”
On the streets I realize again that a woman is an object of desire. I am
approached, touched, invited. On the other hand with the orthodox men, the
black hats, I am reminded of how dirty a woman is in their eyes; that they
cannot look at me for fear of being tempted.

I desperately and perversely try to catch their eyes.
Scene 25: INTERVIEW:
STREETSIDE CAFE IN TEL-AVIV

TEXT SUPERED: Hadar Namir

TEL AVIV

HADAR NAMIR

Every little thing which is out of the norm is already a big issue here...

(B o2: 48:14) Taking hair. shaving your hair? I mean this is already a thing that people would look at. I didn’t see any heterosexual woman here who is not shaving her hair. even if she’s really feminist. It’s not exist. Going without bra is an issue here.... ...Yes. I’m telling you.

HADAR LAUGHS. YAEL. OFF CAMERA. SAYS SHE’S GOT A DOUBLE TROUBLE.

HADAR

In the States if someone goes all the time in jeans and T-shirt and short hair. they say she’s lesbian or radical feminist. Here they will say she’s a kibbutznikit - she’s from the kibbutz or the moshav. That’s all. ...I know many lesbian tourists
who come here. say. what’s going on here. you have so many lesbians here and we say no - it’s just that a lot of women look like that ...

Scene 26: EXTERIOR: SCARBOROUGH BLUFFS:

BEACH SCENE. WOMAN DRESSED IN STYLISH 50’S WINTER DRESS. HAIR PULLED UP AND KERCHIEF OVER HAIR BLOWING IN A BREEZE. SUNGLASSES. 60’S LATIN RHYTHMS. SHE IS POSING.

V/O:
When I was four or five, my mother was studying to be a model. From the sidelines, I was the small observer of sexual politics, identifying and rejecting suitors on her behalf.

MOTHER’S STILETTO HEELS SINKING INTO THE SAND.
IMAGES OF MEN LOOKING. ONE BLOWS A KISS

Scene 27:
YAEL WALKS AROUND FOUNTAIN IN NETANYA.

YAEL
Even young guys think they have the right.

JOYCE, behind camera
It’s true. Fourteen year olds.
Scene 28:
CUT: INTERVIEW

HADR NAMIR
In American society you had to go more and more to the extreme to show you don’t care about heterosexist values and so on and here... that I’m talking in a coffee shop about being lesbian is...already a big deal.

Scene 29:
CAFE IMAGES. WOMEN WALKING ON THE STREET.

V/O:
On the streets my sexual identity is assumed to be secure. I come here looking for my differences.
My attractions are signals of other identifications, multiple and indivisible.

CUT
MOTHER POSES ON THE BEACH.

FADE TO BLACK.
Queering and Complicating Autobiography

My work has often been autobiographically based, sometimes more fictionally treated. Always experimental, this work involves a number of different filmic strategies which provide an essay like examination of the issues I am engaged with. Autobiography is the location through which the theoretical is absorbed and contextualized, realized and embodied. I am concerned with theory which embodies experience and likewise affects experience.

Autobiography within theory allows the teller a dialectic performance that assumes a different story or telling. It provides the writer, the teller another form, another way within which to tell the story/theory.

At the point that one tackles issues of identity, it becomes very clear that these issues do not exist in isolation. The issues engaged in *Fresh Blood* could never solely be about my ethnic belonging. It became imperative in my examination to consider how my gender, my sexuality, my religious upbringing and other factors (such as language) were intrinsically part of and interwoven into the question of how others perceived me and how I experienced these dilemmas.

In this context, I am of course thinking of film and video work as a cultural text and about autobiography's intervention into the very forms of the medium. This has led to work whose intervention is not only formal but also political. Form and politics work together to dislodge dominant cinematic and documentary notions of what is authoritative. They decenter
the subjectivity of the maker and the viewer. *Fresh Blood* and some of my other work questions the formulations and constructions of truth and considers other or differing politics of identification.

My hope is that my work would function similarly to the way Amelia Jones writes about the work of artists such as Lynda Benglis and Adrian Piper. These artists produce performance and body art within similar paradigms:

In its encouragement of spectatorial pleasures and re-embodiment of female subjectivity, feminism, and feminist art and theory, feminist body art exposes the falsely unifying claims of postfeminist discourses, with their exclusionary construction of a straight, white, upper-middle-class, contemporary postfeminist subject. The dissolution of this mythically unified postfeminist, with multifariously raced, sexed, and classed female subjects articulated in her place, radically confuses the postfeminist system, allowing for the production of a new stage for feminism and feminist theory that is empowered if self-critical, rather than "post." Feminist body art, with its embodiment of artistic production and its complex intersubjective and erotic effects, encourages feminist art discourse to open itself in an empowering way to multiplicities of feminist desire and authorial subjectivity (Jones, 1994, 37).

Perhaps the autobiographer in theory is like the subject in ideology, whose position Teresa de Lauretis defines:

Unlike Althusser's subject, who, being completely "in" ideology, believes himself to be outside and free of it, the subject that I see emerging from current writings and debates within feminism is one that is at the same time inside and outside the ideology of gender, and conscious of being so, conscious of that twofold pull, of that division, that doubled vision (de Lauretis, 1987, 10).
This subject, "I", neither one who embodies all knowledge of the world, nor one who is one small element in the world, runs the distance between differing subject positions, varying discourses of knowledge and truth.

The autobiographical subject speaks from inside experience and identity, considering the intersections of influence, identifying the incursions of hegemonic discourses, formulating the topographies and intricacies of identity and the intrinsic implications of power relations.

Autobiography is not merely telling one's story.

It is making theory with one's own self, one's own body, one's experience. Autobiography is using oneself as subject in order to extract applications or apply a system of observation; one subjects oneself as anecdotal source to a perspective of observation.

Autobiographies are constructed narratives. They are the space between the purview of knowledge and of representations of 'authentic' voices.

Autobiography is not simply re-writing subjectivity: there is something more political at stake.

Laura Marcus observes that the "autobiographical 'I'...is ..a rhetorical figure within the text supplying the illusion of full identity" (Marcus. 1987. 93). Autobiographies. Marcus puts forward, while noting the defensiveness of such a position, "serve a political function in articulating histories previously silenced" (1987. 77). 46
The individual is the site through which varying discourses are manifest. The autobiographical allows for the assertion of the individual as the composite of contested affiliation: the individual is a contradictory subject. As Elspeth Probyn notes, we are individuals, "products of being positioned in relation to knowledge with untold epistemological projects" (Probyn. 1993, 119).

Nancy K. Miller in defining autobiography as personal criticism observes that the body itself must also be considered and involved in how autobiography is positioned and how it is taken up culturally:

Personal criticism, as we will see, is often located in a specified body (or voice) marked by gender, color, and national origin: a little like a passport. (Miller, 1991, 4)

The autobiographical interrupts the possibility of homogeneity. It can say, "yes, there is a collective experience and yes, not every collective experience is the same." Attributing to collective identity a fixed meaning is erroneous.

By the risks of its writing, personal criticism embodies a pact, like the "autobiographical pact" binding writer to reader in the fabulations of self-truth, that what is at stake matters also to others: somewhere in the self-fiction of the personal voice is a belief that writing is worth the risk (Miller, 1991, 24).

Writing, and in this case producing a video, becomes the process of examining the self as the place where various discourses intersect and through which analysis becomes a political challenge to issues of truth and
knowledge. Making the connections between gender and sexuality, how I am seen and approached, what is assumed to be significant about my sexual orientation as read through my gender was an orienting structure for this section. How much to pull out of an unresolved autobiographical theorizing became more difficult.

‘In my Sex’. is the title of this segment of the video and is one of my favourite sections because of the correlation of specific elements: the reconstructed model mother on the beach, the Harredim or Black Hats in the market in Jerusalem, Hadar Namir’s insertion of the look of the ‘lesbian tourist’, etc. My struggle however in writing and constructing this segment of Fresh Blood was partly a question of how to make the connection between gender and sexuality apparent. More so it was a struggle of how to define my own sexuality.

Though my body, my gender was quite obvious to the viewer/looker, my sexual preferences are not. My desire was to signal the assumptions made while also indicating that sexual desire is much more multiply implicated. The tension for the autobiographical subject is to be critically aware of the way one is being constructed and aware of how one is constructing oneself. What is imperative to reveal and what can remain less resolved?

At a recent screening of Fresh Blood at the Gay and Lesbian film and video festival in Toronto an audience participant asked why a piece such as this was included in the festival programming. Such a question fails to see the connections between homophobia and racism, bigotry and misogyny and assumes that identity politics can only be singularly constituted. More
directly. it assumes that being gay and lesbian. and more precisely queer is only about sex. as opposed to all that sexuality holds within the purview of our lives. The question also assumes that one only goes to see films and videos about sexuality at a Gay and Lesbian film festival. as opposed to seeing the many ways in which our lives. sexuality and all. are implicated in the many discourses that form our identities.

At the same time the question signaled what was not too apparent: it indicated that for some viewers the text was too open-ended and less definitive in staking a sexual identity. whether political or personal. This point could be easily debated: however my intention was to provide enough of a political and personal insertion for these connections to be made. The final voice over states “My identifications are multiple and indivisible”. In this section constructed around gender and sexuality this is determinably a political position. not overtly stated as queer. but definitively combined as such.

In this autobiographical moment I am less inclined to embrace a specific labeling that identity politics often requires. Each term, bisexual. lesbian. queer or heterosexual is politically mired. Each is appropriate and ‘multiple’ brings them all together.
Chapter 4: The Colour of Me

Scene 30:
CLOSE UP ON YAEL’S FACE. HANDS COVER FACE.

TEXT: For the eighteenth and nineteenth century scientist the “blackness” of the Jew was not only a mark of racial inferiority, but also an indicator of the diseased nature of the Jew....

being black, being Jewish, being diseased and being “ugly” come to be inexorably linked.

Sander Gilman (1991,173)

Scene 31:
WAILING WALL - PEOPLE DISSOLVE IN AND OUT
V/O:
My location is unclear. I am between colour and white, between power and persecution. What’s inside and outside keeps shifting.

Scene 32: INTERVIEW: ELLA SHOHAT

(20:25)
I’m really concerned about third world minorities whose lives have been so much determined by colonialism: the fact that Iraqi Jews for example
ended up being refugees from Iraq, is very much connected to colonial partitions. the fact that Palestinians were refugees out of Palestine is very much connected to British and later on American imperialism in the area...and then when we come as immigrants as a result of those partitions and racism that is going on here and then there and yet we are not defined as quote. unquote. minorities or people of colour. it's quite a shocking experience.

IMAGES OF YAEI IN FRONT OF MIRROR. CLOSE-UP ON NOSE. MOUTH.

Yes. we were given all those signs about our ugliness. or sometimes about something opposite which is the exotic look. And talking also to African-American friends or Latina friends in the U.S.. I saw how similar it is growing up in Eurocentric society in which norms of beauty are still held as European.

ETHIOPIAN JEWISH GIRLS BY WAILING WALL

ELLA

Especially for me growing up as an Iraqi in Israel was so traumatic. For me it was very easy to understand what was going on for African
Americans. In fact I knew a lot about it growing up here. We had a Black Panther movement in the 70's which was named after the African-American movement because we are called Blacks. (21:27) The negative term by Ashkenazis is Schwartzis. but also as part of our raising consciousness we called ourselves as Blacks.

Scene 33:
VISUALS OF JEWISH MEN: YOUNG BOY RUNS DOWN STAIRS TO WALL. SOLDIERS ON STAIRS. IRAQI BAKERS. YOUNG MEN IN PARK.

V/O:
For some writers like Franz Fanon, the Jew is a white man. For the eighteenth century scientist the Jew is black. In North America, the Jew is white again. In each new landscape we are differently constructed. For some, such as Ethiopian Jews, the consequences are exacting.

Scene 34:
MUM SITTING OUTSIDE IN EILAT WITH ETHIOPIAN GUYS

YAEL

What's he saying mum?

---

NOGA

I asked if he's happy here. how long has he been here...and he said four years. he has been in the army ...and I asked him if he's happy ...he said no...there's a lot of prejudice and discrimination.

Scene 35:
HANDS COVER FACE AND BEGIN TO COME OFF.

V/O:
My belonging is negotiable, it is peripheral.
It is based on who I am and who I am not

FADE TO BLACK

Signifying the Racialized Body

The discourses and politics of racial identity in the past few years have indeed opened up various spheres of theoretical mappings and cultural production within the larger arts and social communities and within my own framework. The possibility of dialogue within work that engages autobiography allows for examinations of intersections of such issues of racial constructions, nationality and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, age and religion.
Though, as mentioned previously, I have benefited and utilized the critiques and formulations of theory's challenge. I have found that it cannot do everything, nor can it address the totality of my own experience.

Though I may bring feminist theory to my own personal and artistic polemic, feminism cannot meet all the ways in which I must consider my identity, in which I can/must recognize myself. The issues of racial constructions and identities, class inscriptions, sexual markings and social inculcations must also be addressed. Though feminist theory has contributed to my process of considering the politics of the personal, the familial and the cultural, these considerations did not initially challenge their own formation through the hegemonic forces of racism and bigotry, classism and heterosexual privilege.

Elizabeth Spellman identifies the dismay and the limitations:

There are startling similarities between the disappointments, not to say the anger of feminists about Western philosophy and responses to much of their own theory. Many women who have turned to the history of mainstream feminist thought for enlightenment about the conditions of their lives have found that there was no mention of women like themselves, a silence that extends their exile from humanity as defined by the philosophers (Spellman. 1988, 8).

More pointedly, as Judith Butler notes:

Though there are clearly good historical reasons for keeping 'race' and 'sexuality' and 'sexual difference' as separate analytic spheres, there are also quite pressing and significant historical reasons for asking how and where we might read not only their
convergence, but the sites at which the one cannot be constituted save through the other (Butler. 1993. 168).

My desire with this document. *Fresh Blood.* was to create a text that embodied Butler’s theorizing and that functioned as an intervention into the ways we understand these issues as being separate. How one is constituted racially can be seen in its implications on one’s gender and sexuality as well.

Identification becomes a pre-figuration to identity. The distinction must be made between how I am seen by others and what visual bodily markers determine how I am read, and the identifications that I might make myself within the more complex implications and structures of who I might be.

Identifications belong to the imaginary: they are phantasmatic efforts of alignment, loyalty, ambiguous and cross-corporeal cohabitation: they unsettle the “I”: they are the sedimentation of the “we” in the constitution of any “I”. the structuring presence of alterity in the very formulation of the “I”. Identifications are never fully and finally made: they are incessantly reconstituted and, as such, are subject to the volatile logic of iterability (Butler. 1993. 105).

Butler positions this identification that happens within a relation of structure of law such that identification is marked through prohibitions and exclusions: it functions as "resistance to the law."

In much the same view, Kaja Silverman posits the necessity to sever ‘the look’ from the gaze, recognizing that what is significant to a notion of identity or identification is “how we are perceived by the
cultural gaze’ (Silverman, 1996.19). How the subject constitutes herself and in turn is constituted by signifying systems and larger political interests is what is at stake in collapsing and taking apart notions of identity and identification.

Contextualizing my experience within larger discourses of racialized identity has assisted in countering the forces of cultural hegemony that work to obscure differences. Having a sense of how Jews have been constructed as racialized beings facilitated an understanding of my own experience within North America as well as the resultant treatment of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel, Europe and North America.

As Sander Gilman states.

Race is a constructed category of social organization as much as it is a reflection of some aspects of biological reality (Gilman, 1991. 170).

Gilman analyzes the historical construction of Jewish bodies:

To begin to answer that question we must trace the debate about the skin color of the Jews, for skin color remains one of the most salient markers for the construction of race in the West over time. The general consensus of the ethnological literature of the late nineteenth century was that Jews were “black” or at least “swarthy” (Gilman, 1991.171).

‘Blackness’ and ‘colour’ are mutable and unstable categories, shifting within the context of political expediency, economics and other power and class imperatives. Its legacy as Anne McClintock outlines in Imperial Leather is part of a colonial agenda, institutionally and
structurally embedded into all aspects of everyday life. Such large trajectories become especially evident in how we/one is 'seen'.

Edward Said's analysis of how the 'orient' has been produced by Western discourses of race, maintaining a notion of an 'other', that is at one and the same time inferior and exotic, aberrant and noble, is part of this analysis pointing to the seeming contradictions that are part of the same trajectory of imperialism and colonization.

Jews have been racialized within European discourses of race as a 'semetic' race. Though Jews have experienced the outcomes of such erroneous conceptions, centuries of persecution in Europe, resulting in the horrors of the Jewish Holocaust, they have also been affected by these same discourses and are responsible for reproducing these racist assumptions and systems of power, within and outside the state of Israel.4

In Israel itself. European hegemony gets played out in the way that Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews as well as Palestinians are structurally and culturally positioned within the economies and systems of power that determine privilege:

Within Israel, European Jews constitute a First World elite dominating not only the Palestinians but also the Oriental Jews. The Sephardim, as a Jewish Third World people, form a semicolonized nation-within-a-nation. (Shohat. 1997. 40)

In her article on Sephardim in Israel, Ella Shohat provides quotations

4I do not mean, with this statement, to indicate that these forms of racism are analogous.

57
of utterances of Israeli leaders, from Ben Gurion to Abba Eben to Golda Meir that betray a view of Sephardim as "savages" and primitives, questioning the "spiritual capacity and even the Jewishness of the Sephardim." (1997, 42) The entrenchment of western values have affected the education and work opportunities of Sephardic Jews and have led to a disproportionate number of incarcerations of Sephardic Jews in Israel. This is but one indicator of structural racist practices which have correlations to the United States’ treatment of African Americans. In Canada as well Aboriginal and First Nations people are likewise disproportionately represented in prisons. Economic indicators also point to the economic disadvantage all these 'others' occupy within their nations' social structures.

In putting myself into the video text as a Jew, in voicing "'We' are differently constructed" as the script indicates. I have made a significant shift, given my past rejection of my Jewish background.

Seeing myself implicated within dominant discourses has precipitated a recognition and has allowed me to accept the multiple feelings, traditions, locations, and celebrations in which I can claim Jewishness. However this reclamation is never unambivalent, never resolved in any social space or subsequent interaction. Within Jewishness I am always implicated by 'colour' and Sephardi identity and identification. Outside Jewishness I am always racialized.
Chapter 5: Sight and Memory

Scene 36:

ORIENTAL HANNUKIAH. CANDLES LIT. CAMERA PANS DOWN AS TEXT COMES UP

TEXT: Memory.....accommodates those facts that suit it....
History....calls for analysis and criticism.....

Pierre Nora

Scene 37:

MEN'S FEET WALKING BY ON DUSTY ROAD. A MAN IS JOSTLED IN A CROWD

V/O:
In 1941, fueled by Nazism, nationalism and other anti-Jewish sentiment, a massacre of many Jews occurred in Baghdad. This Farhud became a turning point for many Iraqi Jews.

Scene 38:

ELI AMIR
(12:30) Muslims invaded the Jewish quarters and they killed 180. around 180, the numbers are not exact. 180 Jews. they killed and raped and wounded about 2,000 Jews. And this event was a
very traumatic event -

IMAGES OF MAN BEING ABDUCTED OR BEATEN.

Scene 39:
SUPTA IS SITTING IN HER NIGHTGOWN TALKING ABOUT THE MASSACRE. MUM IS TRANSLATING OFF CAMERA. YAEL ASKS IF MOST OF THE VICTIMS WERE JEWS. 14:02

YAEL, off camera
The Jews that they killed. were they mostly poorer Jews?

SUPTA SPEAKS IN HEBREW & ARABIC

NOGA:
They were not discriminate. Yael.
Those who were not hurt. were just lucky.

IMAGES OF SCUFFLE AND STRUGGLE AGAIN.

Scene 40:
ELI AMIR
For the first time they realized that they can be massacred by Muslims. that they can’t trust them as they did in the past.
I have to say, for their benefits, it was a very short period. by a mob and Muslims helped Jews even to escape...(13:34)...

Scene 41:
YAEL SLEEPS. A CHAMSA SWINGS BACK AND FORTH.

V/O:
I have always remembered the Farhud and the incident which caused my grandfather's blindness during a nationalist demonstration to be the same event. I was wrong.

Scene 42:
FEET RUNNING BY MAN WHO LAYS ON GROUND.
PHOTO OF SASSON
DISSOLVE INTO STAGED IMAGES OF MAN BEING JOSTLED IN CROWD.

V/O: CHILD
My grandfather leaves the bank, lots of protesters are outside the front doors. He is anxious on getting to the school to pick up his children and does not think about the nationalist rage that runs from heart to heart within the angry mob.

IMAGE OF GRANDFATHER LYING IN ROAD. DISSOLVE TO PHOTO OF SASSON IN LATER YEARS.

V/O:
Only later in the quiet desperation of his home does he realize that he is quickly
losing his sight.

Scene 43:
YAEL LYING ON PILLOWS. MIRROR OF GRANDFATHER ON ROAD.
V/O:
I have collapsed memory. Two traumas became one. The events in fact were years apart.

BELLYDANCER COMES IN LAYING HAND ON SLEEPING YAEL.
DISSOLVE INTO SKIRT OF BELLYDANCER AND CHAMSA.

V/O:
She gives me a hand, five fingers for memory. She reminds me, memory has two parts, remembering and forgetting.

CUT TO ORIENTAL MENORAH WITH CANDLES

FADE TO BLACK

Memory Sites: Video and History

Video has been perceived as the poor cousin to film, its image quality and production values secondary to the depth of field, to the image resolution and to the systems of dissemination that film has. Video as an art medium has a more recent history grounded in activist
strategies and portapak heaven.

My choice to produce *Fresh Blood* as a video has been significantly influenced by this history. It has allowed for aesthetic variability and a directness of approach. Video is less constrained by the history of aesthetics that weigh on film: one can be less reverent with the medium.

The issues of memory's place in history and the ways in which individually and collectively these stories are talked about and remembered are primary issues within *Fresh Blood*. Since it is a video document however, it is also important to consider how the medium itself, film or video, contributes to the ways in which events and stories are maintained, formed and enter the public discourse of memory:

Since its invention, the camera has figured centrally in the desire to remember, to recall the past, to make the absent present. Photographic, cinematic, and video images are the raw materials used to construct personal histories: events remembered because they were photographed, moments forgotten because no images were preserved, and unphotographed memories that work in tension with camera memories. The memories constructed from camera images are not only personal, but collective. History is represented by the black-and-white photographic or cinematic image, and increasingly by a faded color film image or low-resolution television image. The camera image produces memories, yet in offering itself a material fragment of the past it can also produce a kind of forgetting (Sturken, 1996. 1).

Marita Sturken acknowledges the works of independent video as
“deliberate interventions in history and conscious memory constructions.” In her article she analyzes such works as Rhea Tajiri’s *History and Memory*, in which Tajiri challenges popular and cinematic memories of World War II and Japanese internment in America and her own personal and familial memory. Tajiri attempts to construct ‘countermemories’ providing her own representations, readings and analysis, a ‘retroactive witnessing’. *History and Memory* is a valuable pedagogical tool that I often use in teaching contemporary issues. The video provides a number of possible sites of memory: collective, popular and media based, personal, familial and those that only have the “spirits of the dead” to witness:

There are things which have happened in the world while there were cameras watching, things we have images for. There are other things which have happened while there were no cameras watching, which we restage in front of cameras to have images of. There are things which have happened for which the only images that exist are in the minds of observers, present at the time, while there are things which have happened for which there have been no observers, except the spirits of the dead. (Tajiri, 1991)

Tajiri’s *History and Memory* not only challenges the memory gaps between these many sources, but more importantly challenges the political framework by which these memories are preserved or have disappeared, the ways in which they are popularly resurrected and often politically neutralized. *History and Memory* is one among many independent videos, which has been influential in my own formation and formulations for *Fresh Blood*. 

64
Video art and independent production has had a significantly different history from that of film. In Canada and the United States, with the portapak 'revolution' of the late 60's and 70's (the precursor to consumer video), technology that provided the means to record events and histories with much cheaper and more portable equipment changed the way that many artists worked with moving images. Artists and many community groups hoped for increased broadcast and narrowcast capabilities and saw this new medium as the possibility for increased and indeed revolutionary access to a broader audience. Many undertook to use video in community educational and activist projects. Artists often worked with community groups or developed their own specific formal devices, playing with time and other elements, to stretch the medium's capabilities.

Some of these strategies have stretched the "binary relationships of filmmakers/subjects and products/audiences" (Frota. 1996. 259) to promote more indigenous and participatory practices:

Many of the best examples of political and artistic video production have developed out of the desire to transform images into useful arbiters of change and education. Underlying this process is the notion that electronic images will stop having a rarefied and distant relationship to viewers, and instead, images will become the "site" of transformative activities (Burnett. 1996. 283).

Video art has a twenty-five to thirty year history of counter hegemonic representations. The sites at which it has been produced, the participants who have been involved and often the venues of its
dissemination have often been alternative and critical interventions. The formal strategies have sometimes attempted to challenge the way viewers perceive the work and images and in turn themselves; sometimes these strategies have been difficult to watch for an audience accustomed to television culture. The means and economy of production has sometimes necessitated rougher documents with lower production values.

Although I think of my own practice as having been formed by some of these influences. I have always wanted to have an audience that would be fully engaged by the work. Production quality and images that are accessible is one part of this agenda. Editing has necessitated the interweaving of a number of formal elements, allowing for a more dense and multi-voiced presentation. Fresh Blood is most certainly a video in its aesthetic and structural form, and borrows in some instances such as the memory segments some the compositional concerns of film language.

The reconstructed memories were shot on 16 mm. film to make them seem much more visually tangible and vibrant than any of the other footage. Each element in the video has its own orienting format and filmic strategy. The documentary images shot in Israel were all shot on Hi-8 video for ease of travel, access and economy. In Israel I shot at least 40 hours of footage with numerous family gatherings, interviews, travel footage and events. These images have the immediacy and ease that a small format provides, allowing for spontaneous moments. The remaining material, gestural and
imaginistic, as well as the final bellydancing lesson, was shot on Betacam which necessitated a more staged and formal production.

Video in its many hybridized forms can allow for this mixing of formats as well as a mixing of very different elements. Independent video artists have mixed all kinds of different sources, manipulated these images and appropriated many to form complex and critical analyses of contemporary culture. Television has been highly influenced by these many artistic strategies, often appropriating the forms into its own hegemonic agenda while discarding the political and aesthetic values.

*Fresh Blood* is an intentionally hybridized, arts based, activist, academic and historical documentary. The issues engaged are very much about a hybrid identity and the difficulty of finding belonging in one specific location. Likewise, I wanted the video form, and music as well, to reflect this same impetus. These elements combine, not allowing for one aspect to be privileged over another; instead they weave together to provoke a more complex reading and provide evidence of the medium’s construction.

Since their advent, film and video, as well as photography, have been important contributors to history’s construction. Visual documents can mobilize sympathies, shape a perspective, provide propagandistic weight and serve as "screen memories that both substitute themselves for the personal memories of survivors and supersede documentary images in signifying history (Sturken. 1996. 7)."
Sturken promotes the use of video and film as a means of "retelling and reconstruction". She proposes the term 'cultural memory' as a marker of processes "that stand outside official history and mainstream culture" and suggests that these kind of memories are 'living memory'. "produced at sites of disruption in history: it intervenes and tangles with history-making (Sturken. 1996. 2)."

This segment of Fresh Blood. 'Sight and Memory'. attempted to both provide an orienting framework for the exodus of Iraqi Jews from Iraq, and to question the way in which memory of that event has been taken up. This functions on a personal as well as a historical level. My grandfather's loss of sight occurred within the political ferment of Iraq in the 40's: the personal and familial memories, passed on in stories and silence are evidence of familial trauma and forgetting. The truth of the events may be preserved without the specific details or data being correct.

History assumes that recorded events are factual and that truth is evident in the accounting of these events. The differing subject positions are obscured in the telling, and more so are the political implications of these differing worldviews. Much documentation and many cultural productions reproduce the memory of Jewish oppression in Europe. Little evidence exists of similar events in countries that are considered backward or less important. Stories that evidence centuries of harmonious co-existence are also eclipsed in history's retelling. Though the Farhud became a significant event
in the lives of Iraqi Jews at mid-century. its significance as a traumatic event provides much fodder for memory's slippery terrain. For me it became the site for the collapse of memory and history.
Chapter 6: Palestine and Israel

Scene 45: BLACK STUDIO:
IMAGE OF YAEL IN FRONT OF MIRROR. TRYING ON A KEFFITYAH.

V/O:
A friend has given me a present. I wonder if I am being tested. Where are my politics in this battle in which I have something at stake?

TEXT:

In the political economy of memory in the West.... there's no room for the Palestinian experience of loss.

Edward Said (1994, 95)

Scene 46:
IMAGES OF PEOPLE ON THE STREETS OF OLD JERUSALEM FADE IN AND OUT: FALLAFEL VENDOR. BOYS BY DAMASCUS GATE. WOMEN WITH HJABS. MEN IN BLACK HATS AND FORELOCKS. SHOPPERS. SOLDIERS.

V/O:
All of the smells, trinkets, food, expressions, music resound in me. This is something I know, something that belongs to childhood, cultural, even cellular memory. The sounds are laden with familiarity, but no meaning.
These languages, Yiddish, Hebrew, Arabic are foreign and mine.

On the streets, we look into each other's faces, reading the outward signifiers to give us clues. Is this person a familiar one? Do you belong to me?

Scene 47: INTERVIEW

TEXT/SUPER: Aida Soliman Touma

AKA

INTERCUT WITH WRITING IMAGE (‘Palestine’ in Hebrew, ‘Israel’ in Arabic)

AIDA SOLIMAN TOUMA

AKA

(7:24:04) We feel belonging here for the land and the people and the history. We belong here. But for this state it's very hard for us, because all the ideas and the symbols of this state...got a big contradiction to what we think and what we believe and what we feel. We didn’t have a part of establishing this state and its symbols.

IMAGES OF CACTUSES IN ROADSIDE LANDSCAPES
Scene 48:
CUT TO IMAGES ON STREETS OF JERUSALEM. KIDS PLAYING IN THE STREETS. SHOPKEEPERS. TEEN GIRLS. PEDESTRIANS

V/O:
Belonging is my shifting ground.
In discussions with my mother I advocate for complete removal of Jewish settlers from the West Bank. I argue for a non-Jewish state. I talk about democracy representing all who live on the land.

When I talk to friends who say Israel should not exist as a religious state, I fall back on the fears I have learned.
I ask what would happen to my family?

Scene 49: INTERVIEW
TEXT/SUPER Dalia Sachs
HAIFA

DALIA SACHS
Today’s situation will not allow to have a two nation state without one nation oppressing the other.
Looking around not only in Israel
I realize and it as a very painful realization that people who go through oppression without awareness or understanding of their oppression.... many times, they may become the oppressor very quickly....
CUTAWAY TO IMAGES OF NIGHT TIME SCUFFLE.

...because we are in such an inequality situation today.....there will be here two states. there’s no other solution.

Scene 50: INTERVIEW:

INTERCUT WITH ROADSIDE IMAGES OF WEST BANK LANDSCAPES

AIDA SOLIMAN TOUMA

(36:27) If it is like this, and at the same time you didn’t work with the people. you didn’t try to change the ideas that they have till now. and you’ve got a peace contract between the governments or the two people.. but on the levels of two people living in this two states. the Palestinians and the Israel’s, how will they manage together if you didn’t have prepared them from the beginning? If you didn’t try to change the stereotype they have. everyone on the other. it’s just...it’s not just stereotypes. it’s also blood was shed here. It’s a lot of pain. from the both sides (38:00)

Scene 51:

LANDSCAPE FROM CAR

CUT TO DEMO FOOTAGE OF WOMEN IN BLACK
V/O:
Like my grandfather I have feared losing my sight.
It was a blind man, my mother says, who told her never to get involved in causes and demonstrations.

Scene 52:
IMAGE OF YAEL TYING KEFFIYAH ON.

FADE TO BLACK

Shifting the Ground: Arabs and Jews

Like many Jews who have experienced familial loss as a result of the Jewish holocaust and who have a remembrance of many other persecutions experienced by Jews over the centuries, it is impossible to accept that the people with whom I am identified would perpetuate their own oppressive regime.

In dealing with the miasma of Middle East politics the danger would be to fall into the pit of sociological or political analysis. the narratives of oppression that dominate nightly newscasts. The first versions of this script were much more polemical. I wanted to express the outrage I have felt about the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and of the inequitable treatment that Arabs in
Israel experience. My naive and yet still sincere question of how a once oppressed people could/would reproduce systems of inequity and outright brutality stays with me. My own complicity is part of the question and equation, especially as I know the investments I do have in a land that not only birthed me, but that sustains many of my family members. It was important within this segment, ‘Palestine and Israel’, to acknowledge my divided position, pulled between political conviction and personal fear.

My story resounds in the experience Edward Said reports of meeting Matti Peled, a retired Israeli general and war hero.


Said recounts another incident of encountering a taxi driver who informs him that he did not serve in the Israeli army. These are powerful moments of conviction, an ascendancy of personal and political commitment in the face of huge forces that would create enemies and drive people apart.

Arabs and Jews have been ideologically constructed and popularly represented as opposing groups. One cannot be constituted without the other in any discussion of the Middle East, and Israel and Palestine specifically. We in the West and the East, accept as a historical, cultural and ‘natural’ fact the hatred that Arabs and Jews
have had for one another.

These conceptions and the political policies that are enacted do not take into account the experiences of many indigenous to the land who have had friendly and cooperative relations during, and especially prior, to the recent political climate of the last forty to fifty years. Moreover, in analyzing the practices of such players as the colonial powers and their assistance in constructing such animosities within the region of the Middle East, the specific ideological practices of ‘power brokers’ could be made apparent.

Issues such as immigration and an accounting of historical movements in the Middle East (a near impossible task) could produce a piece that is itself without location or grounding: a survey of generalities. Producing an ‘objective’ voice is impossible I decided to put myself in the video to provide a subjective, while still ambivalent focus through which the various discourses intersect.

Ideological forces. such as Zionism and colonialism have deliberately obliterated and destroyed such representations and conceptions in order to achieve specific political ends. Identities of these groups are similarly formed and constituted such that we can say “Arabs do/want this” and “Jews do/want this” and they are opposed. Dorothy Smith encourages a questioning of such social relations:

Examination of the relation between the ideological uses of the forms of thought and the actualities of living individuals is subject to that very rule that Marx recommends, namely, to
think of this relation not merely in the conceptual or theoretical mode but as an enterprise in discovering how it is mediated in people's practical activities, hence as an explication of our everyday experience (Smith, 1990, 57).

The paradigm of Arab/Jewish antagonisms have been fostered by the colonial powers in the region in the last hundred years. Like many long-time hatreds, lines have been drawn and simply being born into the one camp or the other determines one's relation to the other.

However, it is not so much or soley ethnic hatred that has fueled animosities in the Middle East but material practice. The very substance of resources and how these are divided, who has access to land and who does not, who has the privilege of citizenship and who does not; such are the mechanisms of everyday practice that have allowed these dimensions of hatred to be fueled; inherent ethnic and familial belonging are only some of the factors. It is important to look at injustices that Palestinians face and how a Jewish state through its own laws disenfranchises those it does not acknowledge as having the right to property, public positions or any resources of value. It is through these mechanisms that power is exercised and refused.

What is helpful to me in Smith's approach is to look at power as something that is grounded in people's activities, otherwise power becomes an amorphous and uncontestable entity. "Power is always a mobilization of people's concerted activities" (Smith, 1990, 80).

Smith connects "facticity" and objective knowledge to that exercise of
power that allows for subjectivity to be broken or ignored. Institutions are mediated by objectified knowledge and produce them in a vortex of power. The individual or subjective location has no place or bearing within these structures.

The experience of Sephardi and Mizrahi Jews in Israel has been to accept a second class status and to deny their own connection to Arab culture, let alone their Arabness. European hegemonic forces have determined an internalized racism that has disallowed many Arab Jews to, on one level, claim their Arab identities and on another to express their sympathies and political alignment with and for Palestinians within and outside Israel's borders. Many Arab Jews in fact have accepted a very conservative perspective. In such a case, it is as if difference has had to be magnified to precipitate hatred.

Edward Said calls on the ways that cultural and political memory has been mobilized in the west to obscure and deny Palestinian history. In earlier versions of my script I recounted the details of arguments I would have with my mother about who has a right to the land. She would often call upon the popularly recited explanation of Palestinian exile: they simply fled of their own volition and many sold their land and left. Though of course there is always some truth to such claims, accepting these narratives serves to deny the military clout and imperial support that Jewish settlers exerted and received

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5 This is a popularly held belief about Sephardim in Israel. Ella Shohat contests this perspective in much of her writing.
in displacing Palestinians from their lands.⁶

Though I may politically disagree with Israeli state politics I am at the same time implicated and possibly complicit in Israel’s preservation and its need for security. Though I note my personal connection to family members who live on the land, it is not this alone which provokes a degree of protectionism.

History’s unfoldings have created a state in which millions of people from many different backgrounds must co-exist. I am not convinced that this must be constituted under the rubric of a Jewish state, but I do consider that all who live on the land must be safe. Israel has not worked to ensure this for all its peoples.

In the end, though divided within myself, I also remind myself that justice is served by speaking against oppression, especially when one is, as I am, implicated in a status quo.

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⁶Peretz Kidron in Truth Whereby Nations Live. (Blaiming the Victims, ed: Edward Said, 1988) recounts his experience as a ghost writer for Yitzhak Rabin’s and Ben Dunkelman’s memoirs of their participation in military actions in Palestine. Both accounts underwent serious revision after testimony surfaced that contradicted the official Israeli version of Palestinian exile.
Chapter 7: Father and Blood

Scene 52:
CHILD'S FEET IN BLACK PATENT SHOES WALKING ON A CEMENT WALL. KLEZMER MUSIC THROUGH THIS SECTION.

V/O:
When I was seven my mother and stepfather took me to Canada. I was stolen. Not only from this land but from a man who had no more than one daughter. And a history of loss. Twenty four years go by before I see him again.

MAN SMOKING BY WINDOW. CHILD WALKS ON WALL. PHOTO BEING UNCOVERED.

V/O: YAEL:
My dream was that one day, I would be sitting on the subway, or crossing a street and I would see him and we would recognize each other right away, without words. We would smile and we would know.

Scene 53:
CLOSEUP IMAGE OF BRICKS OF WAILING WALL
TEXT: ....the strongly remembered past may turn into mythic memory......It is not immune to ossification, and may become a stumbling block to
the needs of the present.

Andreas Huyssen (250)

Scene 54:

JERUSALEM: WIDE SHOT- WAILING WALL. PEOPLE WALKING IN OLD CITY. SOLDIERS.

V/O:
On the streets I am both a tourist and a potential recruit. On the streets Israelis call me to be a part of this Zionist dream: come here we are building a new land.

Scene 55:
MAN WITH SHAWL AND TFILLIM AND KIPA PRAYS.

V/O: CHILD
I'm glad they killed Eichman. right Abba. he killed your parents.

V/O: FATHER
Sssh. Hindaleh. I'm trying to pray.

Scene 56:
CLOSEUP OF TFILLIM BEINGWRAPPED ON ARMS.
V/O:
I have not pursued official histories of the Jewish holocaust. I keep putting it off. First I want my own history. His story. My own veins to be drawn from that lifestream, my own connection to be located in this vast tract of history.

Scene 57:

TEXT: TEL AVIV

JACOV AND YAEL SIT AT THE TABLE.

YAEL
I want to get a picture of Anat before I go

MUM (off camera)
It’s funny to have another sister here

YAEL
Yah. and you can really see a resemblance
(points to nose)
There’s the nose

JACOV
Jewish saxophone

YAEL
Tell him I used to get teased about my nose, a lot.
MUM EXPLAINS IN HEBREW HOW IN THE YEAR BOOK AT SCHOOL, WE LAUGH.

V/O:
When we try to decipher the distance between us, my father asserts it is for the child to come to the parent.

VISUAL OF JACOV SITTING ON COUCH WITH HIS CHILDREN OR ELSE PICTURE OF HIS MOTHER AND OTHERS.

V/O:
He is a traumatized man. A man I have had little patience for and some sympathy. His absence in my life became a symbol of his trodden soul. At last I hear his story.

Scene 58:
PHOTO OF YAEL AS CHILD WITH MOTHER AND FATHER.
DISSOLVE INTO SCUFFLE FOOTAGE. AND THEN INTO PHOTOS OF GRANDMOTHER AND JACOV BEFORE AND DURING HOLOCAUST.

V/O: CHILD
When Jacov's father was killed by the Nazis, his mother fled with him into Russia. They were shipped by the Russians to Siberia where she worked in hard labour camps. After a couple of years my grandmother was released. She made it as far east as Summerkand, where she deposited Jacov in an orphanage and died. He was then
transported to Tehran, one of the 1,000 children who were kept in an orphanage in Iran while passage to Palestine could be arranged.

ORPHANAGE PHOTOS SUPERIMPOSED WITH PAN IN CEMETERY. PHOTO OF JACOV AS ADULT.

V/O: YAEL
Because he was so sick he had to remain in Tehran. He traveled with a second shipment of children overland in trucks, through Baghdad, where, he reminded me, my mother played happily.

IMAGE OF CHILD WALKING ON WALL

Scene 59:
NOGA AND JACOV SIT ON COUCH AND TALK

V/O
After so many years my mother and father meet for the first time.
He asks her to forgive him for not having been a good husband.
She asks him to forgive her for having taken me away without his permission.

Scene 60:
IMAGE OF MAN (FATHER) PRAYING AND DOVENING. HE TURNS AROUND AND SMILES AT THE CAMERA/CHILD.

Scene 61:
(21:37 - 22:35) YAEL WITH JACOV
V/O:
I look for the facial relationships, but what else? What does blood really mean in absence? I have the dim memory of carrot juice and sugared donuts, of walking hand in hand and of saying goodbye. In the intervening years, our paths have been so different that blood may as well be water. It is the big sea, the ocean and then the lakes that divide us.

Scene 62:
CHILD'S FEET, WITH BLACK PATENT SHOES JUMPS OFF WALL AND WALKS OUT OF FRAME.

FADE TO BLACK.

Witnessing Holocaust Memory

I started working on a script around issues of belonging, knowing that I would have to somehow talk about the Jewish holocaust. We all have the images in our heads by now. For a long time I kept putting the project off.

I could not pick up the books. I did not read what I wanted to know because ultimately, official histories were not what I wanted.

This section, ‘Father and Blood’, came together very quickly and yet
it was the most emotionally tender or difficult segment to put together. The personal loss experienced because of the holocaust of World War II has had significant implications in my own life: not only through the loss of grandparents, uncles and aunts, but also through the subsequent effects that this had on my father's life and his capacity to engage with his own child.

In my teens I read fictional and biographical material about the Holocaust. The one story I remember was of the young Jewish woman who could pass for a German, who was taken in as a kitchen worker in some hotel/resort and who eventually through various liaisons and her own skills became entrenched in the hierarchy of German society. Doctors examined her and proclaimed her to be of Aryan descent, providing papers to her authentic identity. Her duplicities, her push for survival and her ever present awareness of her true identity were constant counterpoints to the events of her advancement within such a hostile culture.

The acute awareness for me of course was that, were it me, I would not have survived one minute, that my Semitic roots are visual signifiers inscribed all over my body and that this story of survival would not have been mine.

In my teens I read about Anne Frank. I saw a few documentaries and popular images of the Jewish holocaust: hollow faces, emaciated bodies, mass graves. I became overwhelmed by the immense horror and subsequently ignored further encounters with this history.
What could official histories, entrenched now in North American discourse, educational materials and museums, tell me about this event? As stated in the script, “I first wanted his story”. my father’s accounting of what had happened. I had always had bits. but never the overarching narrative that helps to place my connection to such deep and psychic trauma. This of course is not and cannot be resolved.

Dori Laub considers the possibility of witnessing for Jewish holocaust survivors and for those who hear their testimonies. Laub delineates three levels of witnessing: “the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimonies of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself” (Laub. 75).

Laub invests the meaning of witness with more than just a hearing and seeing dimension. Witnessing involves some level of responsibility and an ‘enabling’ capacity, albeit retroactive:

In fact. the listener (or the interviewer) becomes the Holocaust witness before the narrator does (Laub. 85).

Does listening to survivor testimony or producing a cultural document then apply to this third level whereby one is aware of oneself as witness in all aspects of hearing?

I could not tell in talking with my father and hearing his testimony (which took two sessions) if this process was indeed part of a healing and necessary telling or a reproduction of the trauma. He was
significantly spent through the process. Knowing that I would have few opportunities to hear his story, I persevered.

Because my blood affiliation or experience does not draw one clear line from these events to my present I can only relate to the process of witnessing in a fragmented manner. My familial association was with my Mother’s family. Iraqi and Arab culture also displaced. My ethnicity in all this was denied and when we came to Canada and my family practiced an evangelical form of Christianity. I was further removed from the possibility of an ethnic identity. In school, my name was anglicized and since an undercurrent of anti-semitism existed, I would not claim my Jewishness. Since I was removed, the Jewish holocaust had a different significance, changing through my different developmental stages, serving my ideological purposes specific to each phase. This is not unlike the way the Holocaust is taken up in a cultural context:

In Israel, the Holocaust became central to the foundation of the state, both as an endpoint to a disavowed history of Jews as victims and as a starting point of a new national history, self-assertion and resistance (Huyssen. 1995. 257).

Andreas Huyssen describes how the memory of the Jewish Holocaust is taken up differently and serves different ideological ends: in America the U.S. stands as liberator; in Israel the Warsaw Ghetto uprising is mobilized into ‘mythic memory’ as a symbol of resistance and heroism; in the Soviet Union it was collapsed into the evidence of ‘Nazi oppression of international communism.” As well,
Placing Jewish experience in a box labeled “the Holocaust” and privileging it as a special suffering confined to the Nazi years reinforces the illusion that the state of emergency under Fascism was the exception rather than the rule (Boyarin, 1992).

It is important to see the span of Jewish experience as one that has continuity and that doesn’t isolate anti-semitism and Jewish oppression to one decade of systematic annihilation. It would also be important to be able to see the victims of the Holocaust as humans, whole, distinct and not simply defined by that experience. For me that is a near impossibility in terms of my father. Because of the great distances between us I cannot but conjure the memory of holocaust trauma as the defining force that both precipitated my birth and affected the loss of my father and my family.

In this segment I search out the personal significance without considering the larger historical processes. At one and the same time I am aware of being defined by holocaust memory and resistant to the ways it has been culturally produced.
Chapter 8: Baptismal Waters

Scene 63:
DRIVING IN HAIFA.

YAEL
Joyce, I've gone the wrong way, haven't I?

JOYCE, off camera
Yes

YAEL
There are no signs.
I find it tiring. At first I really resented
people saying, You don't speak Hebrew, you
don't speak Hebrew? And I thought I don't
want to speak Hebrew. And then now...it's
just tiring being in a country...
now.... why is this guy following me....I can't
even turn around here....

DRIVERS HONK. SHE HONKS BACK.

Scene 64:
DRIVING TO MEDITERRANEAN SEA.

TEXT: Multiculturalism does not lead us very far
if it remains a question of difference only between

90
one culture and another

Trinh T. Minh-ha (1991, 107)

Scene 65:
YAEL WALKS TO WATER’S EDGE IN ISRAEL

V/O:
In Israel I am reminded of where I am from. Not here.
I know my body lies about my experience.
I am less than one generation away from denial.

Scene 66: SWIMMING POOL:

IMAGE OF BAPTISM. YAEL STANDS IN POOL WITH MINISTER WHO ASKS HER TO PROCLAIM HER FAITH. HYMNAL ORGAN MUSIC

Scene 67:
CHILD’S HAND WRITES OUT LIST OF COUNTRIES: IRAQ, POLAND, PALESTINE, ISRAEL, CANADA.
ADULT HAND CORRECTS WRITING.

V/O:
It is a simple story, not unlike many others.
I was convinced to be thankful. That I wasn’t there but here. That I was in God’s will. That Jesus loves me.
BAPTISM IMAGE. PROCLAMATION OF FAITH AND DUNKING.
YAEL LOOKS BACK AT CAMERA.

Scene 68: INTERVIEW

TEXTSUPER: Nabila Espanioly

GIVAT HAVIVA

NABILA ESPANIOLY
It's o.k. there is others. there's Black. White. there's Puerto Rican. it' o.k. ....Like in Canada for example. each one can have their own culture, but there is a dominant culture which exists and this dominant culture is the decision-making culture and this is one of the problems that I don't think that Multiculturalism should be like that (32:40)...
Scene 70:

NABILA

It's readiness to accept your self and your differences to be able to accept others. And only if you accept...if you will not accept yourself you have the dangerous of being or integrated or melted and this is not existence. it’s not co-existence. it’s not multi-existence. It’s existence of one only group which decides for me what’s the future and what is my life. and who I am and what I am and how I should dance and which music I should dance to.

Scene 71:

MINISTER BAPTIZES YAEL IN WATER.

YAEL WIPES WATER OFF FACE AND LOOKS TO CAMERA.

V/O:

Conversion is not only assimilation; For my mother it seemed the promise of eternity. For me, each new identity excluded another.

FADE TO BLACK.
Multiculturalism as Cultural Hegemony

Multicultural policies and translations for those not of the dominant culture, instead of establishing an equal basis, in fact construct identities on notions of 'difference' and contribute to ghettoized experience and racist practices. Laiwan, a Vancouver based artist illuminates this oppositional construction:

For "difference" to exist there must be a "constant" from which to differ - a dominant context against which "difference" is measured. "Constant is used here to describe a definator who freely defines what is and what is not, without influence from external force or oppression. whether this is an individual, a group of individuals or a state-capitalist-communist-democracy, etc. The "constant" becomes the definitive of "difference" (Laiwan, 1993, 22).

This same point is also reflected in Lillian Allen's critique of "multiculturalism" and the way it has encouraged discriminatory practices in the sphere of culture:

Multicultural practice....worked mostly to keep people "in their place." and did not facilitate an engagement with a "mainstream." nor create intercultural development and cross-cultural dialogue. But most significantly, multiculturalism did not facilitate equal access to resources for cultural support, nor a renewed vision of culture in Canada. Instead, it stigmatized culture and art from non-European traditions as being without artistic standard and merit in and of itself and justified a split into two classes of funding: between "standard" forms and "multicultural" forms of expression, as if European "cultured" art were not part of the "multi" in "mulicultural" (Allen, 1992, 7).

94
The ideology of preferring 'white' or Euro-centric culture and denigrating all other cultures and voices is reflected in the official politics of this country and no less in its arts communities. Within a capitalist society that commodifies arts and cultural products, such practices also encourage an exoticization of "difference", hierarchies of quality and so-called 'equality', continued alienation and ultimately, intolerance and racism.

If the policies of official multiculturalism must continue, as Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Daiva Stasiulis argue, "notwithstanding its inefficacy in redressing collective inequities and racism." its specific terms and language and orientations to issues of "access" must change.

M. Nourbese Philip notes that:

Multiculturalism, as we know it, has no answers for the problems of racism, or white supremacy - unless it is combined with a clearly articulated policy of anti-racism, directed at rooting out the effects of racist and white supremacist thinking." (Philip, 1992 185)

As Philip points out there is no reason for multi-culturalism and anti-racism to be mutually exclusive. Multiculturalism however has been constructed under a rubric that officially denies racism.

This section was originally my 'Canada' section; I wanted to make the links between Israel and Canada more apparent in the way that cultural hegemony determines the practices and possibilities of belonging and therefore cultural production. I wanted to make links
between aboriginal land titles and the indigenous land rights of Palestinians. I wanted to consider how each state is a multicultural creation that still abides by the rules of a dominant culture. This last point is probably the strongest part of what remains in this segment. Considering the issues of multiculturalism in light of assimilationist forces came together in the baptismal image.

The most consistent question that comes up at public screenings of *Fresh Blood* is around the image of adult baptism. Audiences haven't been sure whether to take the image literally, or whether it is a dream image or a metaphor. Partly, I think, it is because the image is so startling in the context of Jewish and then Arab culture, and because these spheres of belief and religion have been seen, and again constructed, as oppositional. In fact a long history of Messianic Jews and certainly Christian Arabs can be traced from the inception of Christianity. It may still however be startling to see all these come together.

For me, the image was meant as both a literal and a metaphoric one. Like the other memory footage, this shot is a stylized reconstruction of a defining moment in my life. It is also symbolic of all that my family upheld once we had emigrated to Canada. The baptism became a symbol of assimilationist pressures, though through the writing of the script I had to admit, after much discussion with my mother, that for her it was also part of a spiritual commitment. For me, it was an initiation into another culture, one not my own, but an exclusive identity that could never include or embrace all the other
possibilities of who I might be.

Another perspective on baptism, offered by Ann McClintock, is that it is a birthing rite, appropriated into and by patriarchy. Baptism she says,
is a surrogate birthing ritual, during which men collectively compensate themselves for their invisible role in the birth of the child and diminish women's agency. In Christianity, at least, baptism reenacts childbirth as a male ritual. During baptism, moreover, the child is named - after the father, not the mother. The mother's labors and creative powers...are diminished, and women are publicly declared unfit to inaugurate the human soul into the body of Christ. In the eyes of Christianity, women are incomplete birthers: the child must be born again and named, by men (McClintock, 1996, 29).

This theory was an important and seemingly ironic take on baptism and how it is offered in the tape, especially given that bellydancing's inception is later contextualized within the birthing practices of women in North Africa and West Asia.

Baptism as metaphor in this section does hold all the nuances of an adopted and dominant culture, confining and defining who I am.

Culture is accumulated significance; it is something that a society produces that is larger than the sum parts of its various artists working in all the different spheres. It is the meaning behind the song, it is the acquired appreciation, it is the residue of experience, it is the collective voice and it is, especially, the significance of the work that the readers, viewers and listeners do. The receiver is a
participant and therefore, also a maker of culture as much as the artist who produces it.

The comments of Nabila Espanioly in this section of the video, though speaking to the context of Israel, may be translated easily to the issues that face multicultural arts and political practices in Canada. The two-tiered funding system Lillian Allen refers to, though admirable as a pro-active initiative, must not be perceived as the desired end for funding bodies or for the kind of inclusiveness that a larger culture must pursue. The danger, and my fear, is that the kind of promotion that identity issues and politics have received in the last ten to fifteen years is but a little 'blip' in the initiatives needed to support true diversity and multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism, as Espanioly points out, cannot work if one cultural group is privileged above the many that are constituents of the whole. Multiculturalism does not have to be like the baptismal waters that wash difference away and promise reclamation and belonging predicated on uniformity. If it had been/could be envisioned differently, with all its constituent and representative groups, what could possible structures look like? What kind of cultural production would we see?
Chapter 9: Breaking Sodom’s Salt

Scene 72:
TALL REEDS AGAINST BLUE SKY. CLOSE-UP ON REEDS DISSOLVE INTO TRAVEL SHOT OF DESERT LANDSCAPE.

TEXT: It may be that writers in my position, exiles, or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim.....
   to look back.....
   even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt.

Salman Rushdie

Scene 73
CLOSE-UP ON BIBLE. DISSOLVES INTO REEDS.
V/O:
There is a pillar to Lot’s wife somewhere here, but I think of all of this terrain as Her.
I have heard her story many times.
When I was young it captured me.

Scene 74:
LOT’S WIFE RUNNING THROUGH REEDS.
V/O: CHILD
Two angels came to Sodom. Abraham's nephew welcomed the strangers and invited them to stay at his house.

Before nightfall the men of Sodom came to Lot's house and said, "where are those men who came here this evening? Bring them out to us, so we can know them."

"Do not be so wicked," Lot told them, "I have two beautiful daughters. I shall give them to you but you must not touch these men."

Scene 75:
ROAD TO DEAD SEA. THROUGH FRONT WINDSHIELD OF CAR.

V/O:
On the road to the Dead Sea. to Sodom. My mother and I repeat the script we always enact:

MUM
When I was in one of your parties I saw these two guys kissing and I was sick on my stomach, for a long time....

YAEL
How long?

MUM
Until now. that long ...and I never want to come to 100
your parties anymore. Why should I go to a place where it makes me feel sick on my stomach?

YAEL
But why does it make you sick. Ma?

Scene 76:
LOT'S WIFE WALKING UP THE MOUNTAIN. CLOSE-UP ON TURN. DISSOLVES TO WHITE.

V/O: CHILD
The men of the town started to fight, but the angels saved Lot and his family and said, “We have come to destroy this place. Escape for your lives and do not look back”.

God burned Sodom and Gomorrah with sulfur.
But Lot’s wife looked back and she became a pillar of salt.

Scene 77:
LANDSCAPE SHOTS OF DEAD SEA FROM CAR. ROAD SIGN POINTING TO ‘SEDOM’.

YAEL
It’s not as if it just came naturally to you, that you feel that way. It’s something that you’ve been socialized to think that way.
MUM
No. I don't just conform because I was taught. It's my own research that got me to think that way. It's my own research and my own research is to do with the Creator who made us. And he designed us to be fruitful in a specific way.

Scene 78:
LANDSCAPE SHOTS OF DEAD SEA SALT FLATS DISSOLVE INTO ROAD SIDE SCENE. MUM WALKS WITH TWO SCANTILY CLAD MEN. THEY WALK TOWARD THE SEA.
TEXT/SUPER: DEAD SEA

V/O:
I think of this as the birthplace of homophobia in Judeo-Christian culture. I want to go to Sodom - as if my standing there would negate its mythic power.
We stop to ask directions.

Scene 79:
CHIPPING AT CHUNK OF SALT FROM DEAD SEA.
ONE OF THE MEN IS BREAKING OFF BIG CHUNKS OF SALT.

MUM DISPLAYS CHUNK OF SALT
YAEL
It’s amazing Mum.

NOGA
Look it’s all salt.

MAN SIGNALS FOR US TO GATHER TO TAKE PICTURES.
VISUAL IS OF THE YOUNG MAN TAKING PICTURES. OF BEDOUIN WOMAN. MAN AND WOMAN POSE WITH SALT CHUNKS. THEY SPEAK IN HEBREW. THEN ARABIC

YAEL
You live here, ken.

MAN
Cet e Zbaida

NOGA
Zbaida. My name is Zbaida

NOGA EXPRESSES HER AMAZEMENT.

NOGA
Would you believe? My name is Nadra Zbaida.
    That’s my second name and her name is Zbaida.
NOGA PUTS ARM AROUND WOMAN AND LAUGHS.
PAN OF DEAD SEA.

V/O:
The Bedouin family we meet tell us there is no Sodom, this is it.

AUDIO UNDERNEATH

NOGA:
He’s saying there’s is no city Sodom. There is no Sodom. This is it.

YAEL
This is it?

Scene 80:
HAND DIPS INTO BASIN OF WATER. WATER SOUNDS.
DISSOLVE INTO IMAGES OF LOT’S WIFE WALKING THROUGH REEDS.
FEET SOAK IN SALT BASIN.
LOT’S WIFE TURNS IN LONG DISTANCE SHOT.

V/O
I once read a revision of the story of Lot’s wife which exalted Lot’s wife who has no name, because her turning to give a fond glance back at the town of Sodom was probably her sense of longing for those who she loved in the town, women and men, Canaanites and Perizzites, Philistines and Hebrews, travelers and dwellers.
Scene 81:
SLOW PAN OF DEAD SEA AND SALT FLATS.

V/O:
Against the petrified image she dances through my landscape. Urging me to turn and return, to shape and reshape history.

Scene 82:
NOGA AND SUPTA ARE IN THEIR NIGHTGOWNS.
SUPTA IS TRYING TO CHIP A CHUNK OF SALT. WE ALL LAUGH

JOYCE
What's Supta doing?

NOGA
She's breaking the ice.
You put your knife down backwards.

YAEL
What are you doing?

JOYCE
Ma. just throw it on the floor.

NOGA
You think so. I don't want it to break into....

NOGA DROPS THE CHUNK AND IT FALLS IN PIECES.
Constructing Documentary

If I grapple with narrative form, I must also do so with documentary.

The challenge of working as a video artist in a less specified genre or form of documentary is that each time I start on a piece, the form and its voice is less apparent or defined. Each new video work involves its own process and structure. The attempt to avoid a formulaic structure or conventional form is both conscious and integral to an internalized and less obvious method of working. As Trinh T. Minh-ha points out, this is work that "reflects back on itself" enters a void, in which meaning can become "omnipresent" and open to various positionings:

The necessity to let go of the notion of intentionality that dominates the question of the "social" as well as that of creativity cannot therefore be confused with the ideal of non-intervention, an ideal in relation to which the filmmaker, trying to become as invisible as possible in the process of producing meaning, promotes empathic subjectivity at the expense of critical inquiry even when the intention is to show and to condemn oppression (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1991, 49).

This insertion of a subject position determines a less clear cut
negotiation of the material and form and in this case a questioning of traditional documentary. When combining different elements, it is necessary to consider the effect (and possibly affect) that the autobiographical or more so subjective location has on the form:

The bringing of self into play necessarily exceeds the concern for human errors, for it cannot but involve as well the problem inherent in representation and communication. Radically plural in its scope, reflexivity is thus not a mere question of rectifying and justifying. (Subjectivizing.) What is set in motion in its praxis are the self-generating links between different forms of reflexivity. Thus, a subject who points to him/her/itself as subject-in-process, a work that displays its own formal properties or its own constitution as work, is bound to upset one’s sense of identity – the familiar distinction between the Same and the Other since the latter is no longer kept in a recognizable relation of dependence, derivation, or appropriation (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1991. 48).

Traditional documentary film relies on the idea of a re-presentation of reality, on a naturalism that denies or often attempts to hide the constructedness or manipulated aspects of film or video production.

The ‘authentic’ image relies on synchronized audio, on wide angle “objective” framing, “showing real people in real locations.” The investment of the documentary filmmaker as spectator and objective observer, though more recently critiqued, is still a dominant part of mainstream filmmaking and most certainly broadcast expectations. A more possible “rule” or raison d’être may be that:

At the core of such a rationale dwells, untouched, the Cartesian division between subject and object which perpetuates a dualistic inside versus outside, mind-against-matter view of the world. The emphasis is again laid on the power of film to capture reality “out there” for us “in here.” The moment of
appropriation and of consumption is either simply ignored or carefully rendered invisible according to the rules of good and bad documentary. (Trinh T. Minh-ha. 1991. 35)

In fact Trinh T. goes as far as to assert that "there is no such thing as documentary - whether the term designates a category of material. a genre. an approach. or a set of techniques." (29) As a filmmaker and theorist. she warns of the reified "corpus of traditions" that can constitute destruction and closure. when a piece in fact needs to be opened up and subverted within its formal presentation. Once film. like much experience. is categorized and specialized. it is expected to meet specific rules and to reinforce the discipline of its own construction.

In a video work such as *Fresh Blood*. in which the hybridized identity and multiple positionings of subjectivity was the basic construct of the piece. the conventions of the traditional documentary would have disallowed the sense of fragmentation and the conflicted ground on which identity often resides. In the making of *Fresh Blood* it was important to choose a structure and form that reflected the fragmented aspects of the identities that I am addressing.

In initially constructing the piece. I chose a chapter. or episodic. format with the hopes that the issues taken up in each section would weave and interweave through the others. Editing a work with such a large agenda became a huge challenge. The intention was that elements in the different sections could speak to other issues and be seen as interrelated. I envisioned the form of the work much like a
multi-coloured woven fabric in which some stitches and patterns present themselves, disappear, and are then picked up and recur in other segments of the weaving.

This woven structure was integral to organizing the various threads of the piece. Segments such as 'Breaking Sodom's Salt' allows for the interjection of religious myth and storytelling as another reconstructed layer of memory and possibly even as a documentary element. The story of Lot's wife allows for a different kind of witnessing: it is important to acknowledge the ways in which the legacies of myth create and hold significant power in shaping, defending and perpetuating specific categories of existence. Homophobia is but one of these. It is possible to re-read these stories and to recontextualize and restructure them to less exclusive ends.
Chapter 10: Mizrahi, Redefining Arabness

Scene 83:
CUT TO CLOSE UP IMAGE OF MAN’S HANDS CARESSING WORRY BEADS. GRANDFATHER IN PAJAMAS PACING WITH BEADS BEHIND HIS BACK.

TEXT: What does it mean to inhabit a space without a culture of domination defining how you live your life?

bell hooks (90)

Scene 84:
GRANDFATHER PACES: DISSOLVES INTO IMAGE OF SUPTA. SNAPPING HER FINGERS (IRAQI WAY) IN FRONT OF TELEVISION AND DANCING.

V/O:
Arab men on the streets remind me of my grandfather. I never understood the memory of him fingering beads as something connected to his Arabness.

I come back to her, as if she can offer me some grounding. As if she can make the act of belonging simple.
Scene 85

INTERVIEW:

ELLA (CLOSE-UP: 33:45)

The term Mizrahi however, Mizrahim in Hebrew...
...We started using it largely since the 70's. late 70's to suggest, it means literally the Orientals or the eastern ones... Since we grew up in a country, in a state that saw itself as part of the West. although it is located in the Middle East. and while we form the majority of the Jewish population and our roots are in the Middle East and Africa, we, for us, it was important to emphasize our connection, indigenous connection to this land, to the Middle East. I'm not saying.... to the Middle East as a whole and to go beyond the borders that have been set by the Israeli/ Arab conflict

Scene 86

SUPTA IS BELLYDANCING IN FRONT OF THE TELEVISION. SHE IS HOLDING A PLATE OF WATERMELON. THE WOMEN. MUM, SHIFRA, DAISY, JOYCE AND I ARE ALL CROWDED INTO A LITTLE ROOM. WATCHING A BELLYDANCING VIDEO.

Scene 87

ELLA

When I tried to argue for my Arab part of my identity and define myself as Arab Jew, it was immediately perceived as transgressing a taboo.

111
Scene 88:

MUM AND SHIFRA TRY TO EMULATE THE DANCER. HER IMAGE FLICKERS ON THE SCREEN.

MUM

When I was in Iraq, I was a Jew. Kids spat on me and called me a dirty Jew. When I went to Israel, I was suddenly Iraqi; the fact that I was a Jew didn't matter any more. I was from Iraq, backward country. And then when I came to Canada, suddenly I became tete-carre, though I didn't even know English. Finally I realized that wherever I go, somebody is going to be better than me. and I decided that I am what I am and that's it.

Scene 89

INTERVIEW:

NABILA

...(33:44) Because if you speak about Israel, we are 105 different nations, but there are, the only dominant culture is the western culture, if you speak about what is Israeli, then it is, if you speak about culture, then it's Beethoven and Mozart and all the Western culture and you don't speak about the Palestinian culture, you ignore the existence of others ...
Scene 90:
JOYCE AND SUPTA LOOK AT PICTURES. IMAGES OF FAMILY IN IRAQ. MUSIC: YA NOOR, YA NOOR.

Scene 91:
INTERVIEW

ELLA
What I did find problematic is the Jewish establishment, and I am not saying Jews in general but rather the official representatives of American Jews who are very much have no critical understanding of what is going on in Israel and if they do, they completely agree with official Israel, that is Euro-Israel, who also here refuses to see any kind of deviation from norms, from the whole question, or understanding or at least addressing, the whole question of understanding that Ashkenazy and Sephardim is a question of race and racism because does this not feed the Euro-Israeli Zionist logic which suggests that we came here to the East to liberate the land, on one level, and liberate Arab-Palestinians from their own backwardness as well as oriental Jews, Arab Jews from their own backwardness. (24:10)...
Scene 92: INTERVIEW cont’d:

NABILA
They went and identified with the Western culture. but now the problem is...
(44:44) You can’t change still your colour. your colour is there. You are still an Arab and you are an Arab who is not facing your Arabness. Because. not only that, because the Arabs are your enemy, actually you are yourself your enemy....

TELEVISION BELLYDANCER

GRANDFATHER PACES. CLOSE UP ON SUPTA.

BELLYDANCER CLOSEUP ON FACE. SHE RETURNS GAZE.

FADE TO BLACK

The Politics of Art Production

In producing this video I need to consider the arts systems that have assisted in its making and its dissemination. One important sphere for consideration is an art community that in some way promotes and legitimates this kind of art activity. Another sphere is the more
difficult aspect of distribution and the inequities that arise for the exhibitor of a piece such as *Fresh Blood*.

Art activity is determined by systems of power and money. Art as it is popularly imagined is not simply an individualized activity. Art production and its dissemination is embedded in systematically produced economies. Because I am interested in ‘alternative’ art practices, specifically in producing videos whose narratives are not determined by dominant and conventional forms. I am also implicated by these predominant systems that determine what is seen on 95% of the theatre screens in this country. Such questions as how audiences have been constructed by the entertainment and film industries such that formal innovation and experimentation is curtailed, especially in mass markets, and how audience consumption and taste is produced is of concern. Why is it that artists’ strategies, whether related to content or form, are only accessed once these innovations have been removed from their specific context? Is it only when these practices are decontextualized and appropriated that art serves mass market ends?

Other systems come into play as well: educational institutions determine specific parameters of art practice through curricular agendas and epistemological formations. Funding agencies and state funded arts councils strongly determine the kinds of works that gets produced. Though I won’t get into the questions of public art funding here, I will acknowledge the need for much greater economic support of work that is merited not simply because it is commercially viable.
but because it speaks to the many possibilities engendered by artistic and well considered experimentation.

Art movements are not sprung on us as if they ‘speak’ a specific era spontaneously. Art practices are specifically formed and shaped by organized or institutional practices such that specific works are acknowledged at specific historical moments by representatives of organizations and legitimizing structures: reviewers, critics, curators, educators, etc. Market forces and other aspects fundamental to the dissemination of art and arts discourses enter into this process: art dealers, gallery directors, festival programmers, distribution officers, etc., all work together in ways that affirm certain kinds of work and then generate more work of its kind.

*Fresh Blood* functions within these parameters: as cultural discourses addressing issues of identity have gained a growing legitimation, specific acknowledgment from those who work in academic or cultural institutions has led to more work of this kind being programmed and more being produced and supported. This discourse engenders further discourse, and hence further exploration of work about identity, its meaning and significance. This, I am sure, is not a new observation. It is easy to slip into a sense of fragmentation and isolation at times, such that the lonely artist/writer/curator is invoked as the sole beneficiary of the muse, an individual practice, motivated by alienation. However, it is more effective to see how in fact artists influence and affect each others’ practices and in turn the social system which they are a part of.
At the same time market forces and art trends have a great impact on the way work is seen or is taken up. It seems to me at this juncture in time that programming trends in the 80's and early 90's have changed, such that work about identity politics is no longer 'current'. Work about technology, the body and the end of the millennium is now the 'hot' commodity. A change of focus such as this will impact upon the venues available to works such as Fresh Blood. At the same time, discourses around identity politics are ongoing. Fresh Blood enters this fray challenging discourses of identity politics as well. It is difficult within such a large and amorphous system with competing interests to predict how this video will be taken up.

In its brief exposure so far the video has been shown in a few gay and lesbian film and video festivals and in a few festivals that exhibit experimental work. Interestingly enough, Jewish festivals have consistently rejected this work. This suppression of specific discourses or critical voices is another aspect or function of a system of identity politics whose investment lies in strategically reproducing certain representations of itself. Fresh Blood challenges too many taboos in Jewish culture by redifining Arabness, by displaying the Christian and baptismal scenes and by asserting a queer sensibility. Within this context Fresh Blood becomes a different kind of 'hot commodity', the kind that cannot be touched.

Much work that comes out of artist run culture has been about
challenging dominant assumptions, perceptions and politics. Artist run culture in which artists take economic and creative control through such organizations as artist-run galleries and co-ops has produced a system that allows artists to make work without the pressure of market forces that determine specific kinds of art. As this sector has grown in the last twenty-five years, these organizations themselves have developed and instilled their own ideologies and practices that in themselves determine the kind of art that is produced, distributed, exhibited and written about. Since these art works have often been ‘oppositional’ and since they encourage critical dialogues, these efforts must be applauded; however artists must also be aware of the power structures that have been created and that perpetuate struggles for younger artists who either cannot access or are not interested in being represented within these structures. Contemporary criticism of artist run centres is that these organizations, rather than serving as an alternative, have actually been incorporated into the overall market structure and are just another level, an introductory stage or a breeding ground for those who will soon take their place in the bonafide system.

Artists, critical thinkers and social scientists are themselves within or inside the practices and theories they put together. The principles or ideologies of art production is that art can be easily separated from the everyday lives that it supposedly represents. Knowledge forms and limits the ways in which we see experimental work, just as it forms our openness to accessing such work. So called objective
knowledge offers the comfort of knowability of something we all agree upon and share. whether or not it is accurately reflective of our experiences or not. We accept the conventional genres and know how to read them - we are a part of the knowledge that produces such texts and therefore easy readers of them.

Artists, especially those working in film and video, function somewhat as sociologists in the ways that knowledge is and can be formed through its various practices. The choice when deciding on how to approach a work is specific to issues of knowledge production and how the producer is situated in relation to these.

Within film and video practice artists and academics have been very critical of ethnographic documentaries that reproduce what has anachronistically been referred to as the 'voice of God'. an authoritative voice that imparts knowledge while reproducing hierarchies of power and class. Documentary has functioned as a sociological tool and in some ways as an extension of scientific paradigms of objectivity.

Video reflexivity is a critical position that marks out a specifically different position or location. and is part of the same impetus that questions how knowledge is in fact objectified through institutional use and through privileged texts.

Dorothy Smith critiques and calls into question sociological practices that are analogous to those produced in documentary film; not only
how authority may be constituted, but about the very information and knowledge that is produced and how it is formed, objectified and removed from those who live their subjectivity:

As the findings of a piece of research become taken for granted, they are finally incorporated into the texts of the discourse without reference to their source. Factual conventions of writing present the statement without the modifier that locates it in a particular subjectivity (Smith, 1990, 66).

Experimental works that allow for a specific subjective experience to be told may be subjected to accusations of solipsism: "to qualify a statement with the modifier "I know" is to deprive it of factual status." (Smith, 1990, 34)

These are the kind of epistemologies that many local and international artists challenge through various mediums. These works function as oppositional epistemological documents, and are not only autobiographical in practice, but significantly challenge how we construct our ideas, ideals, and ideologies and how we are in turn constructed by these. At times, as Nourbese Philip expresses, it is important to remember the inherent desires of artists:

In this drive to showcase Culture, the individual artist is forgotten and the meaning and struggle of what art is all about is lost. It is about struggle and not only financial struggle; it is about life and its twin, death; it is about politics; it is about ordinary working people and their struggles... Art can be, and often has been seminal in changing the way people think and feel (Philip, 1992, 115).
There is no direct connection between the preceding script segment of this chapter and the analysis that follows. However one specific observation may be drawn from both of these elements. The script points to the hegemonic forces that deny one part of an identity. in this case Arab identity. within a larger context that asserts its own ideological purposes. specifically Israeli and Jewish nationhood. Experimental art practice and cultural identifications function similarly within various cultures. continually attempting to disrupt dominant practices and assumptions. It is within a counter-hegemonic agenda that these two meditations come together. each asserting a practice and epistemology that struggles to be acknowledged.
Chapter 11: Bellydancing

Scene 91: DANCER'S BODY

TEXT: Could there be "community" without an agenda, a project, a fusional desire.

Avital Ronell (1991, 145)

WOMEN STANDING IN LINE-UPS.

TEXT/SUPER: Feminist Conference
GIVAT HAVIVA

CAMERA PANS PAST WOMEN INTO HALL. BELLYDANCER IS PERFORMING TO AN AUDIENCE. WOMEN ARE CLAPPING

V/O:
The last gathering my sister and I attend is a feminist conference of Palestinian and Israeli women. Jewish, Christian and Muslim women. Arabic. Mizrahi and Ashkenazi women.

Scene 92:
DISSOLVES INTO NABILA ABOUT HALF WAY THROUGH OR SO-
NABILA
...(55:32) The origin of bellydance is actually in a ceremonious dance. It's ceremonies of birth and for giving birth. And actually it was practiced in times of giving birth...There is descriptions very, very beautiful descriptions of about how women were giving birth through dancing. that women were collecting themselves all together and sitting, standing around the woman who was going to give the birth and they began to make the music in their hands and the woman in the middle, she's the one who is struggling with her... She was standing there and giving the signs of how music is hard or stronger should be or less stronger and her, the rhythm of the music was her birth rhythm. her pains and her struggle with herself. (56:40)

Scene 93:
WOMEN CLAP HANDS. SECOND DANCER AT CONFERENCE IS SHOWN.
COLLAGE OF BELLYDANCE MOMENTS IN SLOW-MOTION.

NABILA
And of course, bellydance was not as it is today produced by all this stuff of western sexualization of bellydance. Bellydance was very feminine, was very woman oriented and it wasn't done to please
the man. it was done to create a better life for the
woman and I think if we can rebuild it like this it
would be wonderful.

Scene 94: VISUAL OF WOMEN DANCING AT CONFERENCE.

V/O:
Despite the struggles over politics and differences it is here that I realize the
hope of a question I have held since childhood. Who would I be had I stayed?
Who would I have loved? Who would I have longed for?

DISOLVE INTO IMAGE OF CENTRAL BELLYDANCER. CLOSEUP ON
FACE. SHE LOOKS DIRECTLY BACK AT CAMERA/AUDIENCE.

FADE TO BLACK

Theory and Practice, Academic Performance

The conception for this writing was to ground it in the cultural
theories that had influenced my process and conceptualizing of the
video. Initially the intent was to have these theories performed by
‘oracle advisors’, as a way to make them accessible and to have
these elements function as a parallel narrative or journey within the
piece. Some of the original writing was meant as a send up and as a
way of commenting on the performative aspect of identity. This element in the script, the ‘Oracle of Belonging’, suffered from a mixed agenda and the difficulty of having non-actors ‘perform’ theory.

In the end, as this performed aspect was edited out, it was important for me to still include some of the text to indicate the dialogic aspect of producing such a work as this. I chose to return back to the text as text, and have the audience read it on screen. The challenge then was to find phrases and words that were not too long, that would communicate the questions and ideas I was engaging, and text that would read easily and comprehensively.

One of the few significant criticisms I have received about the piece is that these academic texts were not necessary to the piece: that their inclusion showed a lack of confidence, and that they are difficult to read and absorb. Strangely, all those who have provided me with these comments are academics or teachers. Many students and ‘lay viewers’ have commented on the significance of some of the quotes to their understanding of the piece and in turn, in considering their own philosophical underpinnings, in thinking about identity issues.

My choice was motivated by the desire to not only have a piece that was informed by theory and open to theorizing, but one that indicated the discursive aspects and influences within the piece itself. The accusation of lack of confidence may be an accurate one, but it is certainly not the only term by which these choices were
made. The desire on my part was to have these texts continually refer to the visuals within which they were placed, to provide some kind of ‘organic’ connection for them with the material being considered. These texts function as a meta-narrative might, or perhaps more accurately as meta-discourse, that is itself self-reflexive and apparent, rather than invisible. The video and the experiences referenced is therefore open to ‘being theorized about’ and is part of many ongoing discourses.

In situating this piece I indicate an inside/outside position within various identity formations. In *Fresh Blood* my insider/outsider status is perhaps more specifically located in terms of a racialized identity, but this statement is far reaching. I am inside and outside Jewishness, inside and outside Arabness, inside and outside Christianity, inside and outside my countries of origin and habitation. And as I continue the list in relation to other aspects of identity I also inhabit other similar paradoxes: neither straight nor lesbian; middle class in status, but not in my formative experience; all aspects of my identity or identification fall into the fissures of certainty:

Whether she turns the inside out or the outside in, she is, like the two sides of a coin, the same impure, both-in-one insider/outsider. For there can hardly be such a thing as an essential inside that can be homogeneously represented by all insiders; an authentic insider in there, and absolute reality out there, or an incorrupted representative who cannot be questioned by another incorrupted representative.... The questioning subject, even if s/he is an insider, in no more authentic and has no more authority on the subject matter than the subject whom the questions concern (Trinh T. Minh-ha, 1991, 75).
In working through a tape such as *Fresh Blood* within an academic context, I have had to consider what my location is in relation to the issues and expectations taken up. I remember my response when I was invited to attend a plenary/symposium of Jewish intellectuals a couple of years ago: I had to question my belonging both to the ‘intellectual’ group and to the ‘Jewish’ one.

Monolithic notions of identity, often shaped by defensiveness or victimology, clash with the conviction that identities, national or otherwise, are always heterogeneous and in need of such heterogeneity to remain viable politically and existentially (Huyssen, 1995, 5).

In such a case, it has been important to include within my heterogeneity another insider/outsider status as academic and intellectual. For one, the inclusion of the texts allow for continuity and a kind of intellectual genealogy or at least acknowledgment. I do not come by my processes whether artistic, personal or intellectual, by myself. I am forever indebted and formed by the discourses that have affected my life and those that I seek out.

I, like Kaja Silverman, would not want to “circumscribe the range of what is possible or important in film, video, and photography today.” I do the work I do within the same spirit of her exhortation to arts producers:

I utter only one short but passionate appeal to those now working in such areas: help us to see differently. (Silverman, 1996, 227)
I must continually challenge myself to do this within the academy and within the work I produce. Because academic study is an intimidating place at times, it requires challenges to its formations as well. I perform academics badly. This writing I am sure does not conform to logical expectations or academic form. Its attempt is to heap on the multiple expressions, analyses and experiences that are implicated by the production of a visual text. Life is a complex weaving of interlocking and often contradictory identities and practices. I am sure there are many aspects and dimensions that I have also ignored.

Hopefully academic performance can be destabilized and redefined anew, as I have attempted to do with bellydancing. Bellydancing serves as a central metaphor in *Fresh Blood*. Initially it is displayed as the exoticized feminine image we in the West are accustomed to seeing. However it is quickly transformed and transmuted into 'other' bodies, such as Tsahi, the male bellydancer, or my elderly grandmother. Nabila Espanioly provides a historical reclamation in this last segment of the video, linking bellydancing with birthing practices and with the support that women have provided for each other in such arduous moments as childbirth. This epistemological challenge affects the image of bellydancing, providing a possible agency and pleasure that is not limited to a normative 'gaze' for both the viewer and the performer.

Academic performance will hopefully accept similar challenges in the
many attempts to decenter reader and writer, viewer and subject, audience and text. meaning and power.
Epilogue

Scene 95:
TEXT:
Identity is a narrative of the self; it's the story we tell about the self in order to know who we are.

Stuart Hall (16)

Scene 96:
CUT TO SUPTA'S HOUSE. SUPTA IS IN A NIGHT GOWN.
CLOSE UP ON CANDLES SHE HAS LIT ON A TRAY

YAEL
Supta, what do you call this?

SUPTA
Nehrot

YAEL
Nehrot

SUPTA
Ken. Ze Le Ima leh Aba she li

130
TEXT/SUBTITLES: YES. THIS IS FOR MY MOTHER, THIS FOR MY FATHER

YAEL
Ken. ken

SUPTA
Zeh. Saba Sasson. hat. Moshe Rabainu

TEXT/SUBTITLES: THIS, FOR GRANDFATHER SASSON, THIS FOR MOSES

...But this Ner Neshama

V/O:
She has the calmness of everyday activity. She does not seem to be driven by the desire to be elsewhere. I have missed her, more than culture, more than language.

SUPTA TRIES TO EXPLAIN WHAT NESHAMA MEANS

YAEL
To God?
SUPTA
Neshama. Dead. Dead.

YAEL
To the ancestors. to the spirit.

Scene 97:
CLOSE UP ON CANDLES
DISSOLVES INTO CLOSE UP ON YAEL’S FACE.

V/O:
I am shaped by others’ memories and others’ lives.
I negotiate and I resist.
My belonging is a shifting ground.

FADE TO BLACK

Scene 98:
MUSIC RISES. BELLYDANCER BEGINS TO DANCE AND GIVE INSTRUCTIONS. FOOTAGE IN COLOUR. FADES TO BLACK. COMES UP BLACK AND WHITE. PLAYERS ARE DRESSED IN EVERYDAY CLOTHES AND IN COSTUME. BELLYDANCER BEGINS TO INSTRUCT THEM.

CREDITS ROLL OVER PARTY SCENE.
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**Videography**


Yael. b.h. (1987)*My Mother is a Dangerous Woman*. Distrib: V Tape. Toronto.

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