

## Abstract

This essay examines the significance of the practice of walking in Palestine through a reading of Raja Shehadeh's 2007 memoir *Palestinian Walks* alongside the built architecture of Israeli settlement. It develops a theory of the “concrete ecology,” a phrase that captures the deep human and extra-human entanglements that Shehadeh foregrounds in his decolonizing conception of a “grown together” and historically persistent land, and that registers the increasingly radical aspirations of the material architecture and infrastructure of Israeli settlement. Israeli settlement seeks not only to extend a territorial network but to build an ecology that materializes the ethno-racial abstractions of colonial ideology, and it does so through the affordance of different possibilities of spatial practice and different senses of the world for Palestinians and Israelis. In this context, Shehadeh's book elaborates the *sarha* (walk or roam) as a historically localized activity that emerges from, and reconnects to, land's depth, its saturation with living, historical, and communal presence.

## Keywords (6)

settlement

architecture

walking

ecology

infrastructure

Israel-Palestine

## Raja Shehadeh's *Palestinian Walks* and the Concrete Ecology of Settlement

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In the first of the seven walks that structure Raja Shehadeh's 2007 memoir, *Palestinian Walks: Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, Shehadeh describes stumbling upon an unusual shape carved into a rock. He clears the layers of dirt from it, to reveal what he realizes is the "hollow of a high carved seat." He sits down, and immediately finds himself settling into a "precisely proportioned chair. The depth and angle were just right, giving excellent support to [his] back. The height was also right, allowing [his] short legs to rest flatly on the ground... And [his] two elbows fitted comfortably in the dips of the armrests" (16-17). The seemingly coincidental fit between Shehadeh and this chair is evidence of a more remarkable accident, as he realizes that he has unearthed a "throne" carved by his grandfather's cousin, Abu Ameen, remembered in the family for his retreats into the hills around Ramallah. The moment dwells upon the subterranean persistence of the literally buried affordances of the Palestinian landscape for Palestinian subjects, affordances that illuminate the hills of the West Bank as a threatened ecology co-created by historical, bodily, and geological agencies. The throne is a product of the historical presence of Shehadeh's family on the Palestinian land, of Abu Ameen's formidable strength and skill in moving the rock and reshaping it so expertly, and of the geological history of the movement of rocks and tectonic pressure that formed the hills themselves (6). And through Shehadeh's labour of clearing and his act of settling into the

revealed form, a new assemblage emerges that involves the seat, Shehadeh's body, and these other, more remote agencies.

An environment, as this moment suggests, should not be considered a setting in which things happen, or a backdrop that can be easily distinguished from the agents that inhabit it — as a natural world, for instance, standing against the historical, or as a static and passive field in which movement and activity unfold in broad independence from it. As psychologist James Gibson explains in his theory of affordances, environments and their objects “afford” possibilities of action and forms of perception commensurate with these possibilities (1986, 134). The theory of affordances expresses what it means for a being to live in the world, where the being and the world are considered sharers or co-laborators of an agency that is not a property of either: Gibson writes that “[if] a terrestrial surface is nearly horizontal (instead of slanted), and sufficiently extended (relative to the size of the animal) and if its substance is rigid (relative to the weight of the animal), then the surface affords support. It is a surface of support, and we call it a substratum, ground, or floor” (127). Similarly, “[the] process of locomotion is guided by the perception of barriers and obstacles, that is, by the act of steering into the openings and away from the surfaces that afford injury” (132). Locomotion is not an action taken by a sovereign subject, but a process that emerges through a perceptual and physical interaction between the being and the environment, and Gibson even argues that what we see when we look at an object are not its qualities, but its affordances. The throne Shehadeh unearths affords sitting, for someone of precisely Shehadeh's proportions, and it affords looking, a vantage point for an aesthetic relation with the Palestinian hills. But

affordances, I want to observe, extend beyond the elaboration of merely physical or sensorial realities. They afford experiences that may be politically charged, feelings of belonging, of power, or of alienation. The throne carved in the rock affords, beyond sitting and looking, something like habitation: the feeling of being in an environment that registers and accommodates your presence.

*Palestinian Walks* is concerned with the land of Palestine, but it describes this land in a way that deliberately confronts the settler conception of raw terrain that can be parcelled up and enclosed, flattened and rebuilt, with an alternative vision of land as the irreducible substance of a world saturated with living and historical presence. Shehadeh's unearthing of the throne reflects the book's excavation of land's *depth*, its disclosure not just of what may be buried by or embedded within the literal depth of the soil, but also of its communal and historical depth, the stories and experiences it has generated and sustained, which may themselves be considered modes of cultural affordance. I want to suggest that, in the unfolding of the seven walks that structure the book, Palestine appears as an increasingly threatened *concrete ecology*. To use the phrase "ecology" is not to distinguish a natural world from the human, the built, or the cultural, but on the contrary to approach an analysis of the concrete entanglements that comprise every world, including the worlds of colonial settlement. "Concrete," as Peter Sloterdijk briefly reminds us, means things "grown together" (2013, 19). In semantic opposition to the discrete, the concrete denotes the inseparability of different things in a given manifestation, whether these substances are human and bacterial, vegetable and climatological, historical and geological. In contrast to the abstract sphere, with its clean

and separable concepts, and its different strata of being (such as those I have just listed), the concrete names the sphere of a material reality that is composed of heterogeneous and co-present things that must be approached in this co-presence. The specificity of the concept of a “concrete ecology” as I am mobilizing it also rests on its inescapable resonance in Israel-Palestine with the built world, with the role of the industrial substance of concrete in building, remaking, and destroying the world as it exists in its given and richly entangled concrete form. The idea of the “concrete ecology” therefore captures the deep human and extra-human entanglements that Shehadeh foregrounds in his decolonizing conception of a “grown together” and historically persistent land, and simultaneously reminds us of the increasingly radical aspirations of the built architecture of Israeli settlement.

Shehadeh's book excavates the doubleness of the "concrete ecology" of Israel-Palestine, the fact that these richly saturated landscapes persist alongside built worlds that increasingly threaten (and explicitly aim) to destroy them — to marshal ever more sophisticated techniques for radically reducing, simplifying, and homogenizing the world. I begin here, as I unfold how colonial planning and architecture in Israel-Palestine is world-destroying to the same extent that it is world-producing, as it imposes a settler network upon the occupied territories which, in its local and global manifestations, transforms the embodied and experiential modes of living in an environment for Israelis and Palestinians. For Shehadeh, however, land and world involves concrete elements of an ecology that will always persist, and the walk produces a mode of attention that bespeaks the lie, if not the failure, of the totalizing world-building ambition of settlement.

In its attention to land as an entangled excess, and in its reading of lines and paths that resist the logic of the fixed territorial network, *Palestinian Walks* animates a countervailing ecological theory and practice that, in Palestine, takes on its specific political charge.

### **The Concrete Ecology**

A colonial ecology is a built ecology, a constructed world that furthers the territorial interests of the colonizing power, and that affords different possibilities of spatial practice and lived experience for the bodies inhabiting the different strata of its racial and ethnic hierarchy. The colonial world is a world “divided in two,” in Frantz Fanon’s phrase from *The Wretched of the Earth* (2004, 3), and this division is something assumed and materially instituted: it is a claim of ideology, and a planned, physically constructed division that reifies, in the most concrete sense, the separation between colonizer and colonized. There are few regimes of colonial settlement that demonstrate more acutely than the Israeli occupation of Palestine the wholesale ambitions of colonial world-building, and the necessity of meticulous cartographic planning and strategic architectural innovation for materializing the abstract ethno-racial concepts that either generate or permit colonization in the first place. Israeli settlement has been described as unprecedented in its ambition to “engineer and re-design (no less) the country’s geographic, ecological and agronomic mold” (Erat 2003, 60), and despite the mythos of Zionist self-reliance this environmental redesign has been dependent upon centralized

planning. Ariel Sharon's Plan of 1950, for instance, turned within a decade from a document of principles with no statutory status to a massive infrastructural project embracing dozens of towns and hundreds of rural settlements, woodlands and national parks, ports and factories, roads and networks carrying electricity and water (64). What the Sharon Plan and many subsequent Master Plans in the years since make clear is how centralized and strategically planned Israeli territorial expansion was and continues to be, and how such planning sought to generate a division between Israelis and Palestinians via the reconstitution of the environment itself.<sup>1</sup>

As the ambition and complexity of the blueprints for settlement and their ongoing material instantiations suggests, the assumption of a racist ontology — a radically violent simplification of the world — requires an immensely extensive bureaucratic and infrastructural apparatus that does much more than simply divide. Israeli settlement demanded, especially in its early history, a dynamic calibration between the macro and micro scales, between the levels of the global settler *network* and the local settlement *point*. Sharon Rotbard explores this aspect in her reading of the *Homa Umigdal*, or “wall and tower,” which names both a specific project of the early establishment of new outposts of Israeli presence, and the actual architectural form that was built in these outposts and enabled their seizure. For Rotbard, the *Homa Umigdal* is the essential figure of Israeli architecture, because of its inherent expression of a relationship to a larger

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See B'Tselem, *Land Grab: Israeli Settlement Policy in the West Bank* for a discussion of the 1980 *Master Plan for Settlement in Judea and Samaria* and the 1983 so-called “Hundred Thousand Plan,” which extended to 2010. See Chiodelli for an analysis of the most recent Master Plan for the extension of Jewish presence in east Jerusalem, “Jerusalem 2020”.

settlement project, and because of its efficient materialization — or *affordance* — of a transformed relationship to land and space for the Palestinians and Israelis that lived in its vicinity.<sup>2</sup> Carried out in a spirit of civilian voluntarism, *Homa Umigdal* involved the construction of a specific structure in a specific order at strategic settlement points. First, a wall would be built from pre-fabricated wooden moulds, and then further fortified with barbed wire, creating a small enclosure in which a pre-fabricated wooden tower, and then four shacks housing forty settlers, would be erected (2003, 42). It was crucial to the offensive/defensive function of the structure that it could be constructed quickly, within a day or overnight, and that it was built in this specific order: first the wall, then the tower, and only then the houses themselves. This reflects the fact that the work of colonial settlement was less immediately important than the institution of a settlement point: each “wall and tower” had to be located within visual range of another, and at an optimal point within the larger cartography of a developing territorial network. The *Homa Umigdal* for Rotbard was distinguished not by how it looked or what it was but what it *did*. And what it did was expand a larger network, and offer on-the-ground affordances, generating realities, perceptions, and conceptions of protection, division, enclosure, exclusion, and surveillance. These perceptual affordances in turn map onto the values of settlement itself: as Rotbard puts it, “the observers [stand] versus the observed, a Cartesian ghetto versus a chaotic periphery, a threatened culture versus ‘desert makers,’ city versus desert, future and past versus present, Jew versus Arab” (53). The wall and tower was an

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2 Because the *Homa Umigdal* project was initiated in the late 1930s, “Israeli” is technically an anachronism here, but one justified by the state-building aspiration of Zionism prior to the founding of Israel.

efficient technology for the affordance of these relational values, and one that looked forward to their further material entrenchment: it was “the promise, the non-explicit threat of concrete” (54) — of larger, more permanent settlements, and of the highways and lines of infrastructure that would connect them together.

The *Homa Umigdal* is a wall first and foremost, but a circular one — it is not the Separation Wall dividing Israel from the West Bank, such as we take to be the fundamental material figure of apartheid.<sup>3</sup> It is instead a kind of iterable, isomorphic enclosure, whose tactical utility emerges out of its networked relation to other such enclosures, other easily built, easily defended assemblies of wall and tower. Fanon’s description of the world “divided in two” should be interpreted in this light as a generalized vision of the space-making and world-building ambitions of the affordances of colonial architecture — albeit one evocative of Algiers in particular — that finds a dramatic extension and particularization in the settlement of the occupied territories. The interest of Fanon’s description in this context resides in its evocation of how the design of an environment serves to violently organize the bodies that inhabit it and, moreover, to produce radically divergent *senses* of the world for the colonizer and colonized. The colonist’s sector, Fanon writes, is “all stone and steel,” a sector “of lights and paved roads”; its streets are “clean and smooth, without a pothole, without a stone” (2004, 4). The description evokes the textured materiality of infrastructure, as it invokes the lived experiences of infrastructure’s spatial affordances: the colonist’s feet are rarely glimpsed,

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3 The meandering, bizarre shape of the wall bespeaks the elastic nature of the border function, as its trajectory reflects last-minute settlements that were established as part of a scramble to enclose more territory within the Israeli side (Weizman 2007, 4).

protected as they are by the solid shoes that happily complement the immaculate pavement. The native sector, by contrast, is an enclosed and separated zone, a different space— “the shanty town, the Medina, the reservation” — that, internally, is a “world with no space,” in which “people are piled one on top of the other, the shacks squeezed tightly together.” The two sectors confront one another according to what Fanon calls the “dictates of mutual exclusion,” but the technologies that secure this exclusion — checkpoints, fences, and walls — afford for the colonist lived experiences of openness and unencumbered movement. The native sector is described in bodily terms that evoke exactly the opposite: it is “famished,” “prostrate,” “on its knees”; it “crouches and cowers” (4-5). Land, space, and world, as far as these categories can be distinguished, are closely imbricated: the seizure of land and the imposition of a colonial theory of land that permits this seizure underpins the building of a world that affords differentially distributed possibilities of spatial practice. And these are linked to forms of embodied experience that are not exactly spatial: the colonized subject “crouches for ever in the same old dream” in a sentence that evokes the bodily experience of the dead-end temporality of colonial subjection (14); and he is literally benighted by the absence of street lights. These environments also exhibit a metaphysical superstructure: Fanon’s colonist’s sector, thus, is “built to last,” its architectural structures asserting the concept of colonial permanence, against which stands a native sector hemmed in in a way that marks something like the troublesome persistence of a superfluous, basically biological problem.

For Fanon, between the native and European sectors, there is “no conciliation

possible” (4). Significantly, this is not a claim that resides only in the space of colonial (or anticolonial) ideology, but a claim materialized by the built ecology of the colonized world. In Israel-Palestine, this irreconcilability is not afforded by a neat division into spatial segments, but by the militarized and bureaucratized management of an increasingly complex and inextricable entanglement that, on the physical level, is expressed in three, or even six, dimensions (three Israeli and three Palestinian, as Meron Benvenisti put it (quot. in Weizman 2007, 15)). For this reason, I would argue that the highway is a more urgent figure for capturing the peculiar character of the occupation than the wall, in part because highways afford the horizontal division of each side, but also a vertical division, between those who travel it and those who see it from below. The highway is the infrastructural figure that marks what the most prominent theorist of the Israeli architecture of settlement, Eyal Weizman, calls the “politics of verticality.” For Weizman, the infrastructural practice of Israeli settlement is less one of separation than of superimposition. In a fascinating essay co-written with Rafi Segal called “The Mountain,” they write that “[l]atitude has become more than the mere relative position on the folded surface of the terrain. It literally functions to establish parallel geographies of ‘First’ and ‘Third’ Worlds that inhabit two distinct planar strata in the startling and unprecedented proximity that only the vertical dimension of the mountains could provide” (2003, 93). As a strategy of settlement, therefore, two separate ethno-national enclosures have been created that are manifested in the vertical axis: the hilltop settlement stands above the village further below, as the Israeli highway overpasses the Palestinian road.

Highways afford the same kinds of divisions as walls, still functioning to enclose Palestinian space into ever more fragmented and discontinuous segments. But highways assert a more radical disavowal of Palestinian presence than walls. In the “compartmentalized” world of the wall, there is implied a kind of contact, since a wall has two sides — it marks a separation but also inescapably a touching, the ineluctable relation between the two supposedly non-relating sides. The “superfluosness” of the “native sector” is asserted by the wall, but so is its persistent presence; a highway, by contrast, asserts, and to a certain extent *institutes* that superfluosness, since its logic is not to recognize and separate Palestinian presence, but to simply ignore it, to bypass or overpass it. From the perspective of the Palestinian, however, this logic is profoundly relational, as it effects a violent splintering of one already existing cartography and set of spatial relations through the imposition of another. The highway asserts two radically divergent senses of the world for those who use it and those who do not: from the driver’s perspective, it affords the opening of space and movement in defiance of what might have been there beside(s) the road, overtly functioning to connect the origin to the destination as quickly as possible; but from the walker’s perspective, it appears as a massive concrete structure that menaces all freedom of movement.

Part of the distinctive complexity of this spatial management emerges out of the fact that Israel has, as Parsons and Salter put it, voluntarily de-bordered itself, such that it is important to disaggregate the “boundary function” from the border itself in any analysis of the manifold ways and non-obvious sites in which Palestinian mobility is controlled (2008, 704). One might say that the relative simplicity of spatial “enclosure” thus gives

way to a deeper and ever more constrictive landscape of “closure,” to use the term from Israeli policy, which includes a differentiated system of highway access that makes clear who this infrastructure serves.<sup>4</sup> Shehadeh explains how the highways allow the frontiers of settlement to be reconstituted as the commuter suburbs of Israeli cities, since they dramatically diminish the commuting time from the West Bank to Tel Aviv and Jaffa (74). The highway “runs straight,” Shehadeh emphasizes; it does away with the curves of existing roads, “butchering” the hills. In fact, it massacres them, bulldozing “the coloured strata that flowed like veins through the rocks” and turning the geological landscape, in its wondrous legibility, into rude debris (108).<sup>5</sup> The highway imposes the uniformity of asphalt upon the variegated mixtures of the vegetable, mineral, and organic world, but it also superimposes the flatness of a *network* upon the differentiated, textured earth. Out of Weizman’s concept of the “politics of verticality,” Mbembe develops the concept of the “splintering occupation,” which can be interpreted as the splintering of one kind of line — such as the line that unfolds in the progress of a walk — via the creation and militant assertion of a network of discontinuous points, whose function is precisely to render inoperative existing paths of movement and communication between Palestinian

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<sup>4</sup> See [visualizingpalestine.org](http://visualizingpalestine.org) for a vivid illustration of the segregated roads system.

<sup>5</sup> Shehadeh’s emphasis on the alienation of this network from the materiality of the land asserts a gap between the practices of settlement and the Zionist claim to the depth of the land, where this depth should be taken literally: Nadia Abu El-Haj explains the role of archaeological practice to the constitution of Israeli national identity, in “assembl[ing] material culture henceforth embedded in the terrain itself, facts on the ground that institute particular histories” (2001, 13). The bulldozers used in the construction of the highway are thus the ironic counterparts to the bulldozers used on some archaeological sites in order to reach the earlier strata, “saturated with national significance,” as efficiently as possible (148). This archaeological context also informs the significance of the scene of excavation with which I began this essay.

communities. In fact, the production of a network whose *lines* have the same ontological priority as its *points* has explicitly been a central ambition of Israeli settlement; in an inversion of the seemingly conventional logic of a settlement being built because of what its lines of communication (seas, rivers, roads) afford, here the settlements are built in order to afford these lines. The network of highways, roads, lines of sight, and lines of communication and infrastructure (such as power lines) is not about the flow of resources in this context any more than it is about blockage; it is not about affording the emergence of a connected communal body any more than it is about the “closure” of an extant one. Part of the aim of this “closure,” as Amira Hass explains, is to produce a form of warped integration that would lead to an economic dependency of Palestine upon Israel which, coupled with the non-dissolvable Israeli presence such infrastructure establishes, weakens the viability of an autonomous Palestinian polity (2002, 7).

### **The Line and the *Sarha***

*Palestinian Walks* describes its author’s experiences walking over a period of decades in the hills of the West Bank. It is divided into seven chapters, each of which stands for a specific walk and is subtitled with a point of departure and arrival. These walks, however, do not take place on a single given day, as within the tradition of the solitary walker of which Rousseau’s *Reveries* are a major example, but are rather rough paths to which Shehadeh returns perhaps several times over a period of years, or perhaps once, a decade

or more after his first excursion. A “walk” in this book is not a contained evental thread with a determinate beginning and ending, but an entanglement of a discontinuous array of experiences and meditations, internally divided by changes in Shehadeh’s outlook or mood, and most acutely by catastrophic transformations in the landscape. The points of departure and arrival signify less completed journeys than paths whose promise is increasingly menaced, many of which, from the vantage of the author in 2007, are likely to be impassable. The book is subtitled *Notes on a Vanishing Landscape*, and it offers a sharp meditation on the division between past memories and present realities of landscape, as it charts the encroachment of Israeli settlements and roads on the Palestinian hills, which destroy their beauty and the capacity of Palestinians to access them at all.

Charlotta Salmi argues that *Palestinian Walks* records a “failed” national landscape, as its own fragmentary form signifies the “splintered form of national Bildung” within a spatial and ethnic archipelago (2012, 435). There is a sense, then, in which the book offers a formal mimesis of the “splintering occupation,” as its walks are broken up and interrupted, its own structural units compromised by the terrain they navigate. On the other hand, the walks signify the persistent possibility of *beginning again*, of finding a point from which to unfold once more a better relationship to land. Shehadeh’s history of walking is a history of his apprenticeship to the potentiality of paths: “In the beginning I did not know my way around,” he writes. “I would stray off the path, scrambling over terrace walls and causing their stones to tumble down behind me. It took a while before I began to have an eye for the ancient tracks that criss-crossed them and for the new, more

precarious ones, like catwalks along the edge of the hills, made more recently by sheep and goats in search of food and water” (5). Some of these paths are on the Ordnance Survey maps composed by the British in the time of the Palestinian Mandate, but many are not, and they are legitimate insofar as they are walkable, ready for the *sarha*. To go on a *sarha*, Shehadeh tells us, is “to roam freely, at will, without restraint”; the verb form of the word means to allow cattle to wander and graze at liberty. Not any excursion counts as a *sarha*; *sarhat* (the plural) involve letting go, wandering aimlessly, unrestricted by time and space (2). The closest translation in English would be “ramble,” a word Shehadeh also uses and one that similarly describes a digressive bodily and verbal logic that is also historically localized.<sup>6</sup> Both the bodily and the verbal resonances of this word are in play in this text, with the descriptions of each walk ranging well beyond the unfolding of the physical paths themselves, and disclosing histories and memories that generate their own digressive processes of thought and association. These digressions traverse Shehadeh’s family history, his experiences as a land rights lawyer contesting the expropriation of Palestinian land, the histories of Zionism and Palestinian resistance, religious history, literary representations of Palestine, especially from the perspective of orientalist Western visitors, and biological and geological history. As the walk unfolds, so does the concrete ecology of Palestine, the dynamic processes of biological and colonial, geological and political, linguistic and corporeal entanglement.

It is in the context of the wall, the highway, and the settler network that Shehadeh’s

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<sup>6</sup> I am referring to the act of “rambling” in England, where there are also Ramblers’ Associations — to ramble is to walk on common paths that will often use historic rights of way that cross private land. And it is, of course, to “ramble on,” to “ramble and digress like Shehadeh himself,” as Robert Spencer puts it (2010, 40).

recuperation of the practice of walking takes on its specific political charge. *Palestinian Walks* elaborates the walker's disclosure of an entangled world of things that exceeds the materialized abstractions of Israeli settlement, and that continues to survive in the increasingly diminished interstices of the horizontal and vertical dimensions of the built world of settlement. We can counterpose the violence of the superimposed network, which allows Israeli settlers to move from point to point in defiance of the undulations of the hills or the living presence of Palestinian villages, with the unfolding of a logic of path-finding and path-following that is also an alternative logic of "the line" itself — a different form of movement that generates a different mode of attentiveness to the affordances of land. Here, I want to introduce ecological anthropologist Tim Ingold's reading of "the line." In Ingold's view, the logic of "the line" is to be distinguished from the logic of "the network," in which lines exist but only to connect point to point, origin to destination — the passage of the line itself is only that, the function of a passage. The lines of the highway, or the lines of sight that connect different "settlement points," are networked lines, routes rather than paths, and for this reason, Ingold would assert, not really lines at all. For Ingold, the line is more like a walk, but it is crucial that the walker does not define the line in the way that the logic of the network does. Ingold invokes Paul Klee's claim that "the line itself goes out for a walk," and the walker or wayfarer discovers a path that comes into being through its following (2007, 73). Another way to put this is to say that the potentiality of the path precedes the presence of the walker, but it is the act of walking that activates this potentiality. The path and the pathfinder become together: the walker does not follow a pre-ordained route, but nor does the walker assert

her route in a moment of sovereign decision from some abstract or cartographic vantage point. Walking, in Ingold's reading, is about the moving body as it is about the movements and contours of the land, the mutual entanglements of which are borne out and deepened by the walk.

Shehadeh walks at a pace that is "neither hurried nor dawdling" (8). The path "takes him" where he heads; he follows it, as he "follow[s] the silent musings of [his] mind" and "smell[s]," in this example, "the sharp brittle scent of thyme." He "negotiates his way between the thickets," through smells of oregano that linger where he brushes against them (12). Throughout the book, we get a sense of the walker's entanglement with the land, where the land is far from a mere surface upon which one can take a simple step. The hills can rise difficultly; the wadis may decline gently, or precipitously. The undergrowth may be difficult to pass; a particular ledge is narrow enough to induce vertigo. The land is inhabited by wild dogs against which Shehadeh must protect himself with *natch*; at one point, he is buffeted by a large owl that comes from nowhere. The seasonal temporality modifies the terrain, as do unanticipated changes in the weather: the rain can transform the dry riverbeds of the *wadis* into picturesque streams; it can render the path suddenly muddy, and the clouds can block out the sun. Following Shehadeh and Ingold both, we might suggest that there is no clear distinction between land and weather, substance and medium, and in turn inhabitant and environment, such that the land can be considered, in Ingold's words, "a vaguely defined zone of admixture and intermingling" (2008, 1803). The ground, Ingold writes, is "not really a coherent surface at all but a more or less impenetrable mass of tangled undergrowth, leaf litter and detritus, mosses

and lichens, stones and boulders, split by cracks and crevasses, threaded by tree roots, and interspersed with swamps and marshes overgrown with rafts of vegetation that are liable to give way underfoot” (1803). Somewhere underneath there is solid rock, and somewhere above the clear sky, but life is lived in this “intermediate zone.” The Palestinian walker, we have established, inhabits the below of the strictly divided political and infrastructural world, but therefore, as well, the intermediate, entangled zone of life — unlike the settler who navigates the network’s flatness, without a pothole, without a stone.

The Israeli settler and the Palestinian walker are idealizations in this schema: clearly it is possible for a settler to trip on a pebble, for her home to be penetrated by cockroaches. But the point is that the building of this world seeks to materialize these idealizations: the Israeli above and the Palestinian below are not fictions, but imperfectly built realities, things afforded by a material, concrete ecology. The usefulness of Ingold’s account in this context is the language it offers us for understanding the world-making agency of a walk, as against the impoverishment of the life of things to which colonial world-building aspires. But there is a Romantic impulse to Ingold’s account that I think Shehadeh would resist, and it is this impulse that distinguishes Ingold’s reading of the entangled ecology from my interpretation of the “concrete” in a specific historical and political context. Ingold reads land as a “zone of admixture and intermingling,” but this is a primarily natural and organic intermingling: things, here, are grown together, but growing is an organic process that accords with a vitalist language of genesis. Ingold anticipates this critique, and seeks to qualify this feature of his argument as he states, for

example, that a walk does not need the organic body of the walker. Ingold's wayfarer "may even drive a machine, such as a motor-bike, all-terrain vehicle or snowmobile (2007, 78). A walker, this implies, may also use a wheelchair or other mobility-assisting device, and this is an important recognition given the ableist assumptions that underpin some contemporary neo-Romantic accounts of walking, such as Frédéric Gros's.<sup>7</sup> But the apparatus of the machine still appears secondary in this account, as merely a vehicle for a vital process of life that isn't significantly modified by its mechanism of mediation: the difference between a foot and a wheel is basically unimportant. Ingold therefore neglects the built aspects of the concrete ecology, the way that the co-presence of a paved surface and weeds may lead to the pavement's splitting, but may not negate its affordance of more or less secure support to the foot of the walker, as against the wheel of the wheelchair. And he neglects the historical specificity of a given unfolding of the line, which leads to an account of experience which seems as de-particularizing and de-historicizing as the most technical phenomenology. Notwithstanding Ingold's brilliant commitment to conceiving of countermodern and anticolonial forms of movement, his reading of the unfolding of the line in a living world has to be further particularized in order to render an account of the practice of the *sarha* in Palestine that would explain its living political significance.

In his fifth walk, Shehadeh describes travelling a path that had by then become part of

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7 Gros characterizes the freedom of walking as a "suspensive" freedom, one that consists in throwing off the inessential demands of social and worldly responsibility, or of history itself: "The freedom of walking lies in not being anyone; for the walking body has no history, it is just an eddy in the stream of immortal life" (2014, 7). It is clear that Gros's body is a neutral body and a universal body, *just* a body, without race, gender, or disability.

an Israeli nature reserve, a legislative manoeuvre that Shehadeh had initially cautiously welcomed, before it became clear that such designations were additional ways of constraining Palestinian movement and, ultimately, expropriating more land for the building of settlements (164). All nature reserves are in Area C, the area of the West Bank which, after the Oslo Accords, Palestinians were legally unable to enter, and which includes the majority of its land. Walking had become increasingly treacherous, yet for Shehadeh “it was essential not to hesitate but to venture out and take walks where it was still possible” (131), and to summon the spirit of *sumoud*, of steadfast persistence. But even if Shehadeh continues to walk, the status of these walks as *sarhat* appears increasingly questionable, as he is constrained to follow paths designated in Israeli guidebooks, and to do so at the risk of being stopped by Israeli soldiers, by armed guards protecting nearby settlements (140), or by settlers themselves performing citizens’ arrests for Palestinian trespass in Area C (164). The walk is partial: the Palestinian might leave her car behind, with its registration plate clearly displaying her ethnic status, but her body is subject to a control against which the walk pushes as a performative dialectical transgression. The Palestinian walker cannot throw off history, cannot become a mere human body, and nor does walking in Shehadeh’s explication of it aspire to such transcendence, even if he will accept the fortune of being mistaken by a soldier for a non-Palestinian (127).

If the line is something that unfolds according to a vitalist becoming, the *sarha* is a culture-bound historical practice: it is not the line that goes out for a walk here, but a Palestinian subject. And this walk is grounded in and is itself a kind of cultural

affordance, as the history of the *sarha* affords the walker a genealogical narrative (and an implicitly proleptic one, like all genealogies), and as the practice of the *sarha* affords the Palestinian an ongoing, future-oriented attachment to the land. Ingold writes that wayfaring “is the most fundamental mode by which living beings, both human and non-human, inhabit the earth” (2007, 81), but Shehadeh is not Ingold’s walker, one who is motivated by a logic that is essentially the natural movement of life. Like the ramble, the *sarha* is a historically localized activity that presupposes common routes, a communal understanding of place that is shared primarily through the practice itself, and through stories about the practice (like those in Shehadeh’s book). Palestinian walks are thus Palestinian, not the paths of any wayfarer but bodily and textual inscriptions of a relationship to, and a claim to, land. The phenomenologically appealing conception of the zone of the land as a zone of intermixture, what Ingold, borrowing from Henri Lefebvre, calls the “meshwork” in opposition to the “network,” is thus less important than the politically charged recognition of this land as an object of a partial, contested, and increasingly impossible claim.

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