The Politics and Aesthetics of Decolonial Queering in Palestine

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Declaration

Abstract

The study of Palestinian queer politics has been either marginalized or approached through conceptual frameworks that overlook Israeli settler-colonialism, and thus lack an engagement with grounded knowledge of Palestinian queerness. In response, this study examines the political activism and aesthetic productions encountered in the queer political spaces and networks of *alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society.* It adopts participant observation and interviewing methods in order to provide in-depth analyses and nuanced understanding of how queerness and decolonization intersect and mutually inform each other in Palestine. Drawing on queer theorising and its interaction with decolonising sexualities and 'queer of colour' critiques, the study focuses on two main interrelated points: first, how queer Palestinian activism and aesthetics challenge and critique Zionist hetero-colonialism; second, how they question current imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty, whose visions for liberation continue to re-instantiate hetero-colonialism. The first part of the study demonstrates how alQaws' frames of activism and aesthetics productions – ranging from video, photography and performance art – entail the will to gaze back at Zionist hetero-colonialism. It examines how they challenge the premise of the colonial ga(y)ze, as exemplified in the case of those Israeli narratives positing Israel as a modern, sexual democracy in contrast to a backward, homophobic Palestinian society. The second part of the study explores the will to imagine otherwise in Palestinian queerness by focusing on alQaws' modus operandi and aesthetic productions, such as satirical images, performance art, fashion design and queer narratives. It sheds light on how Palestinian queerness decolonizes from within, thus opening possibilities for imagining liberation beyond the re-production of colonial gendered and/or geopolitical hierarchies. The study concludes by arguing for the importance of taking seriously the work of alQaws, and the various queer aesthetics encountered within its spaces, as a site for mapping the intersectionality between queerness and decolonisation. This remains a necessary task within settler-colonial contexts, such as Palestine, and other (post)colonial geographies where sexuality and/or decolonisation is still a matter of considerable debate.

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Walaa Alqaisiya

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my late friend Yousef.

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Problem: The Case of Queerness in Palestine

This study examines queerness in the context of Palestine revealing its significance in relation to decolonisation. Zionist colonisation of Palestine holds at its premise negating and racializing power paradigms vis-a-vis an indigenous [Arab Palestinian] other. These power paradigms are also mired in the production of gendered and sexualised discourses which, as elaborated in Chapter 4, permit the continuation of the colonial power regime. The research draws on work conducted with *alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society* (a queer grass-movement), which has worked for over two decades to disrupt sexual and gender-based oppression and their regulations within intersectional power paradigms [patriarchal, capitalist or colonial] in Palestine (see alQaws, np). alQaws' existence has attracted little attention from Arab scholars, including influential Palestinian feminists whose work unravels necessary connections between gender and the colonial context of Palestine (see Jad 2008, Kevorkian 2009). Being a Palestinian myself and having grown up in Palestine I see how the lack of engagement with the work of the alQaws in particular and queer politics in general reflects a general tide, including local Palestinian feminist circles, of questioning the relevance of *sexuality* politics to 'our context.' 'Queer,' remains a 'western' import, which is not only considered irrelevant, but also risks re-colonising us imposing 'Euro-American' cultural and political agendas (Massad, 2007). Moreover, suspicion towards sexuality politics, and LGBTQ organising more specifically, stems from views of the Palestinian (homo)sexual as 'Israelised' [connections to Israelis] and a potential 'collaborator' that are yet to be dismantled (see Alqaisiya, Hilal and Maikey, 2016). Identifying as an open feminist queer space, with explicit attention to LGBTQ issues, alQaws is viewed with a scepticism that dismisses them as bound to Israel [the colonial Zionist state]. This study emerges in response to such attitudes that marginalise queer politics and their relevance within Palestine. By raising the question on queering in Palestine the study engages with some wider debates in regard to queer geographies and what they signify.

1.2 Queer Geographies: A Western Problem or a Means for Decolonial Worlding?

To trace the etymology of the word 'queer' is to reveal its rootedness in 19th century Euro-American context (Oxford dictionaries.com). Its usage to identify, in derogatory manner, the medicalised category of the perverse 'homosexual' was reclaimed politically in the midst of the AIDS crisis. Thus, queer emerged in the 1980s to capture an arguable "continuity and a break[age]" with a gay liberationist model, where gay pride counters social stigma (see Jagose, 1996: 75), that had been a marker for the American 'Stonewall riots' in 1969. Within academic spheres, and particularly geographers' efforts to de-territorialise queer (see Browne *et al* 2009), attempts are made to 'take queer further' beyond sexual identifications. However, despite such attempts to locate the capacity of 'queering' to contest identities and meanings, it is still perceived as "doing little to address American ethnocentricity'' (Binnie, 2009). Given this, the term 'queer' and the politics it enfolds vis-à-vis sexuality and its categorisation within a broader 'LGBTQ' spectrum implies that they have originated solely within Western societies. This leads to an assumption that queer and its politics might have no relevance for other, particularly, non-English speaking contexts (Kulpa and Mizielinska, 2011: 13).

Joseph Massad's (2007) *Desiring Arabs* makes precisely this argument by critiquing the irrelevance of 'Western rooted' sexuality-politics to Arab contexts. Massad's critique is focused specifically on the 'Gay International' (ibid: 174) and its universalising campaign for gay rights since the 1980s. Massad problematizes the "inciting discourses on homosexual and gay and lesbian rights identities" through which "the very ontology of gayness is instituted." Such an incitement to discourse, which is embraced by "supporters of the gay international," propagates discourse that aims at "transforming practitioners of same sex contact into subjects who identify as 'homosexual' and 'gay' (ibid: 162). Drawing on Edward Said, Massad contends that gay rights discourses in the Arab world have been shaped by a Euro-American model of hetero/homo-normalities, as well as Orientalist perceptions of the Arab and Muslim world that, he suggests, lurk in liberationist discourses (ibid.).

Massad's thesis undoubtedly provides a significant contribution towards a Saidian analysis of Arabic sexuality. However, there is an important question to be raised about

the violence of re-enacting a 'West and Rest' dichotomy, which relegates the 'Rest' to a passive role and refuses to capture nuances that challenge an analytical framework that remains stuck within the 'West's' colonial epistemology of itself. Such a frame is part of a knowledge/power system that reinforces the supposed universality of a Euro-American regime of the hetero/homo dualism and dismisses both the nuances and specificities of other geo-temporalities. In other words, Massad's thesis emphasises the complicity of queer and sexuality politics more broadly with the 'Gay International' and the regime of normativity in the realm of identity politics that it imposes. Thus, queer politics is always already trapped within the hegemonic progressive narratives of Euro-America and their spatial-temporal pre-requisites.

Such a critique falls short of realising what Butler calls a conceptualisation of sexuality politics as "a fractious constellation" (2009: 103), in which the dominant progressive narrative is "but one strand within that constellation" (ibid: 104). To read queer from within the localised experiences of those involved is a necessary task of revealing other narratives within that constellation, and thus a step towards 'de-centring' 'Western Sexualities' (see Kulpa and Mizielinska, 2011). North American native critics invite us to read queer at the juncture of two-spirit [1] and the necessity of foregrounding theoretical interventions from grassroots GLBTQ2 movements and their work (e.g. Driskill *et al*, 2011). A reading of queer politics in relation to decolonisation corresponds to Roy and Ong's (2011: 12) conceptualisation of the process of "worlding." Worlding departs from "the conventional view of the world as spatialized into binary orders," in which everyday practices are aimed towards alternative social visions or 'worlds.' According to Roy and Ong (ibid), worlding is "linked to the idea of emergence, to the claim that global situations are always in formation." Thus, a reading of queer indigenous work via Roy and Ong suggests that perhaps it is more constructive to understand queer-politics as 'worlded' in multiple ways, affirming "spatializing practices that mix and match different components" rather than confined strictly to "a single unified process" (ibid). This raises the possibility of "remapping relationships of power at different scales and localities" (ibid). Thus, in contrast to Massad, we might understand the worlding of native [decolonial] queerness alongside the worlding of the

[1] "an indigenously defined pan-native North American terms that bridges Native concepts of gender diversity and sexualities with those of Western cultures" (in Driskill *et al*, 2011: 13).

'queer international' without assuming either is in sole possession of 'the global' from which to make claims.

This study focuses on the worlding of Palestinian native queerness. It invites us to comprehend its value as international scholarly research on Palestinian queer activism remains limited with little significant empirical work generated from grounded knowledge of local contexts. By contrast, the rise of Israeli 'pinkwashing' narratives, which promote Israel as 'gay friendly' as opposed to 'homophobic' and 'barbaric' Palestine (Puar, 2010: np), has garnered attention from scholars who read queer as intersecting with race, sexuality, nationalism, globalisation, terrorism and mechanisms of state-sovereignty and/or surveillance (Puar 2011, Hochberg 2010). Despite the usefulness of shedding light on the 'transgressive' potentialities of Palestinian queerness by allowing the Palestinian queer to 'finally speak' (Amierh, 2010), no scholarly work has offered an in-depth empirical and theoretical analysis of the situated context, history and internal practices of Palestinian queer activism. This research undertakes this task. Grounded knowledge in Palestinian queer politics allows, as I demonstrate more fully in Chapter 2, complicating the utility of certain approaches to the study of Palestinian queerness. More specifically, queerness as a means of transcending 'conflict' and enacting a politics of co-existence between 'Israelis and Palestinians' (Hochberg, 2010) is a problematic approach for locating an engagement with Palestinian queerness. Taking Palestinian queer politics and aesthetics as its point of departure, this study offers an understanding and necessary engagement with queer as it signifies a move against colonial power structures. Furthermore, to map queering in relation to colonialism means to also investigate how Palestinian queer politics challenges the re-inscription of colonial power in Palestinian strive for liberation. In other words, Palestinian queerness, as the case of alQaws activism and the aesthetic examples elucidate, work simultaneously on decolonising queer by virtue of centering Palestine, and queering the decolonization of Palestine by virtue of dismantling its re-inscription in hetero-colonialism. Queering in relation to decolonisation is, therefore, identified and engaged as the most appropriate ground for identifying the research aims and significance.

1.3 Aims and Significance

The primary purpose of this research is to show how queering interweaves decolonisation and so bears immense significance to all Palestine and Palestinians. By foregrounding personal experiences and the voices that puncture the silence on the relevance of queerness to Palestine, this study brings to light imaginings of Palestinian liberation that have been curtailed by the politics of statehood building. Significantly, this queering of Palestine and meanings of liberation corresponds to the location of queer politics against the paradigms of colonial heteronormativity in Palestine. As such, this enquiry into Palestinian queerness begs an understanding of the Zionist settler colonial project as gendered and sexualised. Moreover, it demands that the fight against hetero-colonialism is incorporated into enquiries on decolonisation and future imagining(s) of 'free Palestine.' The frame of decolonisation is vital for 'local actors,' including other Palestinian grassroots movements, whose concern with social change corresponds with the wider Palestinian quest for self-determination. More crucially, it demonstrates the relevance of the often dismissed 'too-personal,' including the web of emotions, desires and mundane aspirations, to de-colonial organising and thinking.

The research is also of broader theoretical significance because it widens and extends debates about queer vis-à-vis decolonisation theories of positionality and politics. By centring the question of decolonisation to queer imaginings, it is committed to continue inspiring as well as being inspired by the project of *imagining* called for by the editors of *Queer Indigenous Studies* (Driskill *et al*, 2011: 1). They state in their introductory chapter: "this collection asks us to imagine what critical indigenous GLBTQ2 theories look like and what impact they have on our practices as scholars, activists and artists" (ibid). In response, this research maps emerging queer imaginings in Palestine and the impact they have not only on an ongoing struggle for decolonisation and liberation, but also on advancing queer-native knowledge and theories that challenge "colonial legacies in research" (Smith in Driskill *et al*, 2011:4). Therefore, in its focus on unfolding meanings of queer as emerging from the specificity of Palestinian native positionality and context, this research contributes to advancing the intellectual sovereignty of indigenous knowledge. Driskill *et al* (ibid: 8) comment that: "the decision to exercise intellectual sovereignty provides a crucial moment in the process from which resistance, hope and most of all imagination issues." Therefore, it aims to

highlight and make central the voices of Palestinian, native queer activists/ artists and their respective work.

Moreover, bringing activists' and artistic work together the study emphasises the role of the aesthetic, revealing the web of sensory experiences to the enquiry into decolonial and queer politics. Palestinian feminist Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2016) brings attention to the often forgotten regime of 'occupying the senses' in Palestine, revealing the necessity of examining aesthetic dimension to investigations of colonial domination. As such, enquiries into settler-colonialism should also tap into the sensory and embodied means of practicing control, which involve management of language, sight, sound, time, bodies and spaces of its subjects (ibid). This exploration of the sensory dimension of power permits us to engage with the relevance of the aesthetic when thinking resistance. The aesthetic narratives that this study explores, ranging from photography, video art, performance art, caricatures, songs and fashion design, engage the queering dimension to these aesthetic forms of Palestinian resistance. They go beyond traditional examination of forms of Palestinian aesthetics (e.g. Dabkeh[2] dance, Kuffieh[3] wearing) to explore the relevance of the sensual, emotive and embodied to re-imagining Palestine. These forms of re-distributing sense (Rancière, 2004) are essential to making room (Ahmed, 2010) for imagining Palestine *otherwise*.

To achieve its purpose, the research is designed around interpretive social science and uses the qualitative methods, participant observation and interviewing as the main tools for collecting the primary data. As such, the methodological approach of the research corresponds to its primary objective of privileging the voices and experiences of Palestinian queer activist/artists. The participants, comprising activists and artists, were all located via alQaws spaces of activism and web of networks, to which my positionality as a Palestinian gave me privileged access.

[2] Palestinian folk dance.
[3] Palestinian national scarf.

1.4 Research Questions

In the light of the research gaps outlined above, the primary questions of the study are as follows:

1. How do decolonisation and the question of queerness in Palestine intersect and mutually inform each other?

2. How do Palestinian queer activism and aesthetics challenge hetero-colonialism and its reproduction in Palestinian imaginings of sovereignty?

To answer these questions, the main findings of the research are divided into two and interrelated parts that elucidate the politics and aesthetics of decolonial queering in Palestine. Part 1 (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) entitled *The Will to Gaze Back at Zionist Hetero-colonialism* contextualises hetero-colonialism in Palestine, queer activism and aesthetics, revealing their significance in challenging regimes of hetero-colonialism.

Part 2 (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) entitled *The Will to Imagine Palestine Otherwise* commences with another contextual mapping of the reproduction of hetero-colonialism within imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty. It then examines Palestinian queer activism and aesthetics to reveal their value in imagining Palestine otherwise.

The answers to these questions continue to locate Palestinian queerness in relation to decolonisation and, as such, reveal the study's main contribution in weaving queering into decolonisation. Queering is a useful ground for locating Palestine's colonial context within the gendered and geopolitical paradigms of hierarchy and their normalisations. At the same time, decolonisation is mapped via the spaces of trouble (Butler, 1999), dissonance (Rancière, 1999), dis-identifications (Muñoz, 1999) and dis-orientations (Ahmed, 2006) in relation to hetero-colonialism and its normalisation in Palestinian imaginings of sovereignty. Thus, to conjoin queer and decolonisation means to pave new ways to imagine beyond the gendered and/or geopolitical normalising mechanisms within the colonial order. This exploration is crucial in the case of Palestine as it identifies how a politics of liberation has succumbed, following the Oslo 'peace accords' in particular, to problematic frames of state-making and 'peace-building.' Whilst recent studies have advanced such a critique (e.g. Salamanca *et al*, 2016), there remains a need to attend to the relevance of queer(ing) to such enquiry. It is the task of this research, therefore, to use the analytics offered by the politics and

aesthetics of Palestinian decolonial queering to shed the light on how other imaginings remain crucial to liberation and re-thinking decolonisation.

1.5 Research Outline

The following, ***Chapter Two*** sets out the theoretical framework for the study, which is aimed at weaving queer in decolonisation. It does so in light of a critical review of the currently scant literature on Palestinian queerness. The literature review reveals a gap within the frames failing to emerge from within the settler-colonial context and experiences of Palestinian *native* queerness. The chapter explains how the main goal of the study, whose purposes is to understand the question of Palestinian queerness in relation to decolonisation, interact with theoretical and empirical findings that defines this study's approach. The proposed approach navigates conceptual tools ranging from settler-colonial, post-colonial and feminist studies to reveal the racializing, gendering and sexualising premises of colonial power relations. The works of North American native feminists and queer indigenous critics (Driskill *et al*, 2011) allows us to map queerness in relation to decolonisation. Then 'queer' as a concept is engaged via the work of Judith Butler, Jose Muñoz, and Sarah Ahmed, as well as in relation to the political concepts of Jacques Rancière.

Chapter Three connects the study's theoretical rationale to the most appropriate methodological approach that the study undertakes. The chapter outlines how research methods (participant observation and interviewing) allow an engagement with the contexts, experiences and ideas of the people, stemming from their native [decolonial] positionality. Thus, an interpretive approach to knowledge enables us to address how Palestinian activism and art conjoin queerness and decolonisation. In addition, a frame of 'feminist objectivity,' where partiality - and not universality - conditions knowledge claims, allows us to foreground questions of positionality and self-reflexivity. The chapter demonstrates the usefulness of this particular approach in addressing the aims and significance of the research. As mentioned earlier the findings of the research are presented in two main parts as follows:

Part 1: The Will to Gaze Back at Zionist Hetero-Colonialism

Chapter Four provides the necessary contextual analysis for the subsequent exploration of queer activism and aesthetics. It demonstrates the relevance of reading the Zionist project in Palestine as hetero-colonial, hence the web of racializing, othering, gendering and sexualising. The analytical insights of Said (1979) and Fabian (1983) are used to explore the conflation of time and space that allows Zionist settler colonial 'conquest' to function via 'origin stories' (Butler, 1999) of gendering and sexualising. The heteronormativity embedding 19th century Zionist conquest enables comprehension of current 'branding' techniques that construct an Israeli (homo)sexual heaven. The hetero-colonialism of continued Zionist conquest, including via the liberal ga(y)ze that promotes Israeli sexual modernity, grounds the subsequent engagement with queer politics and aesthetics as they gaze back at Zionist hetero-colonialism.

Chapter Five provides an analysis of alQaws' queer activism, particularly focusing on its emergence and evolution as decolonising and queering. The chapter outlines the emergence of alQaws as Palestinian and queer, revealing the significance of such a positionality. It engages 'anti-pinkwashing,' challenging Israeli narratives of 'gay progress' versus 'Palestinian homophobia,' as a window for decolonial queer work. A critique of the role of international involvement in Palestine lies at the core of anti-pinkwashing work and analysis, showing how it enforces colonising hierarchies of developed versus ill-developed. Anti-pinkwashing work reveals the agency of the Palestinian pinkwatcher who is able to confront continued Zionist conquest of Palestine via sexualising discourses found in Israel pro-gay discourses. The analysis that Palestinian queer activism offers, coupled with strategies of boycott and anti-normalisation, challenges certain aspects of Puar's homonationalist critique of anti-pinkwashing [pinkwatching] work.

Chapter Six examines the case of Palestinian queer aesthetics, illuminating their role in complementing alQaws' queer decolonial politics. Nadia Awad's video *A Demonstration*, emerges from native Palestinian queered positionality to reveal and trouble the reality of Israeli pinkwashing. The chapter argues that the aesthetic dimension of Awad's lens is further developed in the photography of Alaa Abu Asad. His Palestinian queer lens occupies a present-absent position, disrupting colonising paradigms of 'seeing.' Knorn's dance-performance is the final example of how art is a significant medium for political engagement, discomforting the colonising [liberal]

gaze. Reviewed as a whole, the work of these artists demonstrates the role of aesthetics in gazing back at hetero-colonialism.

Part 2: The Will to Imagine Palestine Otherwise

Chapter Seven provides another contextual bedrock for understanding the continuity of hetero-colonialism in Palestine. This chapter explores how Palestinian liberation struggle re-produces hetero-colonialism. Drawing on the rise of Fatah as a political power, the chapter reveals the gendering processes crafting dignified Palestinian national 'heroes.' It then explores how the path to Oslo consolidates statist aspirations for the national political elites whose rise to power enforces agendas for modernising and securitising. Thus, hetero-colonialism, as explored in Chapter 4, is reproduced within imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty. In doing so, the chapter sets the ground for how queer activism and aesthetics imagine Palestine otherwise.

Chapter Eight provides an analysis of alQaws' role in decolonising from within. The chapter explores the local work strategies of alQaws to demonstrate queer activism's role in imagining otherwise. The chapter unpacks the term 'internalised pinkwashing' as alQaws' activists define it. Showing the layers of victimhood mentality and us-versus-them binaries, internalised pinkwashing links to imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty within the paradigms that re-instantiate hetero-colonialism. The chapter examines alQaws' means of creating other 'imaginings' for Palestine. Analysing activists' practices for decolonising desire, building communities and querying the homeland, it reveals the significance of queer dis-identifications to Palestine. It ends with a critical response to reductive critiques (Massad, 2007 and Mazzawi, 2014) of alQaws to show how they fail to grasp the significance of alQaws' decolonial queerness in imagining an otherwise.

Chapter Nine provides an analysis of the role that Palestinian queer aesthetics play in 'imagining otherwise.' The chapter continues the exploration of the relevance of queer to decolonisation via specific artistic projects generated by alQaws' activists and the other artists encountered within its spaces of activism. alQaws' queer *hikaya* (Arabic for stories) navigate the role of musical narratives and/or prose that the group generates in order to relay queer emotions, hopes, desires and native aspirations and/or feelings. Knorn's political satire and performance art demonstrate in visual and embodied terms

critiques of internalised pinkwashing and Ramallah 'la la land.' Finally, Omariv's fashion design for Palestine's future statesmen troubles the reality of male- and state-making, while also enabling other future possibilities for Palestine. The aesthetic examples analysed together unpack the idea of imagining otherwise at the conjunction of Palestine queer politics and aesthetics.

Chapter Ten draws together the findings and examines their implications across the fields of queer politics and decolonisation. In appraising these findings, the chapter emphasises the significance of grounding the experiences and voices of Palestinian activists/artists and shows the relevance of interweaving queer and decolonisation on theoretical and practical levels. It also examines the possibilities for future research that are opened up by possibilities for making way towards decolonial and queer beginnings.

2. Weaving Queer in Decolonisation

This chapter reviews the accumulated body of knowledge associated with the principal concern of the study, namely weaving queerness in relation to decolonisation in Palestine. The first section of the chapter examines the scant literature on queerness in Palestine and explores how it has been studied through the comparative lens of 'Israel/Palestine.' While those works have a tendency to scrutinize Israeli spaces and practices in a critical manner, such approaches do not emerge in relation to Palestinian queer politics and positionality. These studies fail to provide a full account on Palestinian queerness from within the question of Israeli settler colonialism and Palestinian decolonisation. The chapter, consequently, proposes to explore queer Palestinian grounded knowledge by weaving the question of queer in decolonisation.

The second section of the chapter outlines a set of conceptual tools adopted to map queer in relation to decolonisation. Such a mapping entails an engagement with a conceptual frame drawn from settler-colonial, post-colonial and feminist studies, whose intertwinement reveals the racializing, gendering and sexualising premises of colonial power relations. It also engages 'queer' as a concept through the work of Judith Butler, Jose Muñoz, and Sara Ahmed, as well as Jacques Rancière. Moreover, this section draws on the work of North American native feminist and indigenous queer critics in order to stress further the significance of linking queer to decolonisation. The study approaches queering as a process emerging from a native positionality that is undergoing a decolonisation struggle (Driskill, 2010: 69).

The chapter concludes with an emphasis on the importance of approaching queerness in relation to decolonisation, revealing its contribution to the literature and the study.

2.1 Missing Colonialism

Most existing academic studies investigate queer through the comparative frame 'Israel /Palestine' but predominantly focusing on Israeli practices and spaces. Such studies approach the queer movement in Israel as "an instance of liberal Zionism" (Stein, 2010: 521), describing Israeli gays as moving "out of the closet into the state apparatus"

(Solomon, 2003: 156). To reveal oneself as gay inevitably reproduces loyalties to the nation state (ibid), and thus the oppression of Palestinians. While Israel promotes gay inclusion, it also excludes Palestinians through the imposition of more borders and limitations. In this regard, Jason Ritchie (2010: 559) indicates how "Israel is perpetually caught between an assemblage of racist discourses and practices, which limits membership in the nation and its rights and benefits to Jews, and liberalism, which in turn posits the equality of all the state's citizens, including its Palestinian minority." Similarly, Rebecca Stein (2010: 521) identifies Israel's gay decade in the 1990s as contradictory because recognition for gays came with further oppression toward the Palestinians. These studies present how queer liberal Israelis come out and consolidate their place within the Israeli-nation, while such a practice positions themselves against Palestinian queers, who are identified as either 'too Arab' - thus 'not enough gays' - or 'victims' of a backward culture (Ritchie, 2010: 561).

In order to understand those studies on Israeli queerness, it is important to point out how their critiques emerge in relation to the broader field of queer studies and its attempt to mobilise "a broad social critique of race, gender, class, nationality, religion as well as sexuality" (Eng *et al*., 2005: 4). These critiques explore how LGBTQ politics normalize state practices, and its dominant relations of power and refer to those state-normalizing LGBTQ practices as 'queer liberalism' (ibid), drawing on Lisa Duggan's (2003:50) notion of 'homonormativity.' While Duggan charts how queer liberalism in many Western contexts promises the possibility of a "privatized, depoliticised gay culture" (ibid), Jason Ritchie applies her insights to the Israeli context. He traces how the rise of a visible gay-culture indicates a "privatised, depoliticised model of homosexuality" (2010: 560). Moreover, Jasbir Puar (2011) investigates the collusion of queerness with nationalist Israeli policies in the context of 'Israeli pinkwashing,' which is a branding campaign Israel uses to promote itself as gay-friendly. She coins the notion of queer nationalism or 'homonationalism.' Reviewing the literature focusing on the "rise of the gay equality agenda in Israel [that] is concomitant with increasing repression of the Israeli state towards Palestinians" (Stein cited in Puar, 2011:135), Puar describes pinkwashing as a form of homonationalism:

> The relationship of the rise of gay and lesbian legal rights as well as popular visibility that happens in tandem with increasingly xenophobic policies in regards to minority communities within the nation-state and the

> Others that threaten the borders of the nation-state from outside—is exactly what I have theorised, within the context of the United States, as well as some European states, as 'homonationalism' (ibid: 136; see also Puar, 2007).

Puar suggests that homonationalism sheds light on queer's "complicity and contingency with dominant formations" (2005: 121-122), thus moving away from queering as an 'alternative' or a form of 'dissent[ing].' In this regard, Adi Kuntsman's (2009: 102) study of Russian-Israeli queer immigrants draws similar conclusions. She demonstrates how Russian-Israeli queer immigrants assert their belonging and loyalties to Israeli society through violence, embracing right-wing nationalist and anti-Arab stance. In her introduction to the themed issue '*Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine/Israel*,' Gil Hochberg and others (2010) rely on a similar approach to queerness. Their contributions explore how queerness complies with dominant structures of oppression, and point to the violence in the constitution of the Israeli queer-self qua nation and liberalism. For example, they draw on the military checkpoint to narrate "hegemonic heteronormative and masculinist modes of the nation" (ibid: 504) in 'Israel/Palestine.' At the same time, their contributions take into account the potentialities of queerness as defiant and transgressive. For instance, Hochberg refers to a video performance by a Palestinian artist, arguing how "the campy fashion through which the Palestinian body is represented at the checkpoint challenges the most prevalent depictions of the (male) Palestinian body as a marker of complete submission, terror, death and bare life" (2010: 591).

Within the same themed issue, Amalia Ziv and Jason Ritchie emphasise the need for Israeli-Palestinian queerness to come together in order to challenge ethno-national biases. In particular, Ziv maps anti-occupation queer Israeli groups and their role to overcome "national and ethnic divides" (2010: 539). Ritchie stresses the need to centralise queer activism around the checkpoint rather than the 'closet,' "if Israeli and Palestinian queer activists are to generate an emancipatory cross-national narrative that interrogates the meanings naturalized by nationhood" (2010: 503). His ethnographic study reveals that "[r]ejecting the language and tactics of mainstream (Israeli) gay activism, queer Palestinians articulate a politics of social change that offers a potentially subversive alternative to the normalizing project of queer visibility" (ibid: 558). Along these lines, Sara Schulman identifies the growing impact of Israeli pinkwashing, as a

form of homonationalism, and maps out the necessity for international movements to merge "anti-occupation work and LGBTQ politics" (2012: 132).

Although those studies scrutinize queer Israeli practices in a critical manner, they do not provide a full account on Palestinian queerness. One of their most significant limitation lies in the adoption of a comparative lens, which juxtaposes 'queer Palestinians' vis-a-vis 'queer Israelis' in the realm of an ongoing conflict. For instance, Hochberg identifies queerness as premised on the promotion of a "politics of coexistence beyond ethnonational and religious borders" (2010: 500). Her argument appears to stem from the idea of an ongoing conflict between Israel/Palestine. It risks defining the power relations in Palestine as based on the presence of two equally powerful parties with conflicting 'ethno-nationalist/religious' aspirations. This framing betrays a lack of understanding of the settler-colonial history of Palestine, which manifests further in Hochberg's apologetic use of the name Palestine:

> the use of the slashed name might be problematic, precisely because Palestine does not mark an existing viable national entity, it is nevertheless important, for it keeps the two names, Israel and Palestine, in motion and in relation to each other, refusing to adhere to the partitioned logic of the present political reality (ibid: 500).

To put 'Israel and Palestine' in 'motion' beyond the 'partitioned present reality' conjures a parity between two equal parties. It fails to take into account how a settler-colonial structure pursues the ongoing elimination of Palestine, thus imposing its structural 'un-viability.' Hochberg's themed issue, furthermore, claims to provide a neutral reading of the history of the conflict or, as she writes, it "surveys" the "conflicting narratives" around the "Israeli/Palestinian conflict" (ibid: 501). Her introduction approaches the discursive circulation of the conflict through an examination of narratives from two national sides claiming "exclusive ownership of land," pointing out to the theological weight of the conflict or revealing native status of the Palestinian inhabitants (ibid: 501-502).

The purported objective reading of the history of the conflict is problematic. The 'native' Palestinian inhabitant would reject an objective 'surveying of conflicting narratives.' Such an objective reading risks to equate all these narratives, as if they lay the same truth claims to conflict, thus equating a settler-colonial approach to any other discourse

(i.e. the theological weight of the conflict). This neutral approach not only reproduces the amnesia of colonialism for the native Palestinian, but also leads to problematic analysis of queerness. For example, emancipatory notion of queerness identifies how Palestinian and Israelis should come together in order to rise above 'national divides' (Ritchie and Ziv, 2010). This analysis fails to grasp the relevance of being *Palestinian* for Palestinian queers. It does not capture the complex positionality of Palestinian queers vis-a-vis [the nation] Palestine. These same aspirations to Palestine, in fact, emerge from the day-to-day experiences with colonial structures, whose maintenance of Israeli reality is based on the denial of its Palestinian Other.

Moreover, while those studies scrutinize critically Israeli queer liberalism, they do not fully take into account Israeli history of settler-colonialism. As mentioned previously, those studies point out to the contradictory nature of Israeli queer liberalism, demonstrating how liberal ideals clash with ongoing racist and oppressive representation of Palestinians. However, a proper contextualisation of Israeli history of settler colonialism explains how such racist representations do not contradict liberal ideals, rather they fulfil their colonial premise. Israeli liberalism and democracy are *already* premised on continued colonisation of Palestinian lands and denial of Palestinian existence and their right of return to their homelands. This applies to Ritchie's conclusion on how the "racialized Arab *emerges* as the most salient and dangerous other at the moment the homosexual, once the nation's sexual other, gains increasing acceptability" within the frames of liberalism (my emphasis, 2010: 556). Without grounding Israel liberal and democratic values into its settler-colonial history, critiques of queer liberalism offer a simplistic understanding of racism toward Palestinians. By centring the question of settler colonialism, it becomes possible to interrogate the temporal dimension of those analyses, such as Richie, which obscure how the creation of Israel was premised on racism towards Palestinians.

Relying on Duggan's idea of homonormativity, Puar's homonationalism critiques queer-visibility in regards to oppression perpetuated against "minority communities within the nation-state" (Puar, 2011: 135). Similarly, Hochberg speaks of "tracing the ties that inevitably link the oppression of sexual minorities to the oppression of other social minorities" (2010: 495). By framing Palestinians as a social minority, this approach risks ignoring a whole history of elimination, denial of return for refugees and systematic *minoritisation* via the 'demographic policies' (Stypinska, 2007) of a Jewish

majority. By failing to take into account the history of Israeli settler-colonialism, these studies reduce Palestinian [queerness] to a social minority within the Israeli state. By contrast, the work of Scott Lauria Morgensen (2012, 2013) grounds queer in 'settler colonialism,' starting from a comparative analysis of queer Palestinians and Two Spirit (North American indigenous) people. He posits 'settler colonialism' at the basis of the formation of modern queer national subjects, which he calls 'settler homonationalism' (2010). However, Morgensen's analysis does not capture, as we have discussed above and we shall demonstrate in Chapter 5, how Palestinian queerness challenges some aspects of the theory of homonationalism.

The problematic aspects that emerge from those studies of Palestinian queerness derive from the lack of in-depth analysis of the situated contexts and internal practices of Palestinian queer organising. Although existing studies engage Palestinian queer activism through online conversations (Hochberg, 2010), interview ethnography (Ritchie, 2010), and as part of international solidarity tours (Schulman, 2012 and Puar, 2011), most academic scholarship published on the question of queerness in Palestine remains written by outsiders. The lack of local grounded knowledge of Palestinian queerness means that critical North American queer and sexuality theories have been 'applied' rather than critically connected to the Palestinian context.

2.2 Research Gap

Most studies have a tendency to approach the question of queerness in Palestine through frameworks that do not fully take into account two major and interrelated points. The first one is ignoring the history of Israeli settler-colonialism, with its system of racializing and othering processes, as gendered and sexualised. The second is neglecting native grounded knowledge of queerness within the Palestinian context.

This study proposes to bridge such a gap by drawing on a contextual analysis of Israeli colonisation of Palestine, permitting the weaving of queerness into decolonisation. Following the reflections of North American native feminists, the study identifies how a native-other is *queered* (Finley, 2011: 33) in relation to a colonial structure and traces what meanings queering assumes against this structure. In doing so, it also challenges Puar's frame of 'homonationalism.' While she focuses on queerness as it works in

relation to dominant structures, this study proposes the exact opposite. By grounding queer qua native positionality struggling for decolonisation, it not only goes back to the transgressive possibilities that queerness/queering enables, but also juxtaposes the question of queerness in relation to decolonisation. Thus, it becomes possible to examine how the racialized and 'queered' native-other signifies vis-à-vis the colonial regime since its inception. The study contributes to existing literature on the question of queerness in Palestine, as well as to broader studies of Palestinian decolonisation and transnational sexualities.

The next section outlines the conceptual tools adopted in this study by grounding the question of queerness into a history of colonialism and decolonisation. The proposed approach aims to navigate the importance of linking queer - with its transgressive potentialities - to both the settler-colonial context of Palestine and the native positionality struggling for decolonisation. These conceptual tools guide the interpretation of the potentialities of re-signification and change that queer enables against the heteronormativity of colonialism.

2.3 Conceptual Framework

This section delves into the conceptual tools that inform the analysis of the study in a twofold manner: firstly, it identifies those concepts that help to reveal the heteronormative functioning of colonialism via its racializing and othering processes and secondly, it outlines the concepts, such as [settler] colonialism, heteronormativity and queerness, used to ground queer into decolonisation. The importance of those conceptual tools lies in the manner they capture the regulating processes that characterize settler-colonialism, thus its racializing, othering and gendering mechanisms. To fully understand colonialism, it is crucial to examine those discourses generated to justify and perpetuate conquest and elimination of the native. The second part introduces 'queer' as a conceptual category that challenges gendered normative structures and intersect with decolonisation struggle. This conceptual framework emphasises the links between queering and decolonisation that are essential for imagining otherwise.

2.3.1 Settler-Colonialism and Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity entails the creation of power structures privileging patriarchy and heterosexuality, thus normalizing specific hierarchies of gender and sexuality. In order to understand how such a process functions from the viewpoint of native feminists and queer indigenous critics (Driskill *et al*, 2011), it is necessary to define settler-colonialism. According to Patrick Wolfe, settler-colonialism involves both elimination of the native population and construction of a new colonial society on expropriated land (Wolfe, 2006), producing a structural reality whose ultimate goal is to eliminate the native population. While conquest of land and elimination of natives are its final aims, settler-colonialism also relies on a series of racializing and othering mechanisms. Those processes demonstrate how colonial 'conquest' takes place through a normalization of gender and sexuality (Smith, 2005). For this reason, the study combines the conceptual insights of postcolonial authors, feminist geographers and decolonial native feminists in order to analyse how colonialism operates through the normalization of power structures that privilege patriarchy and heterosexuality.

The work of Edward Said (1978) is important because it shows how projects of colonisation possess racist epistemological assumptions, dividing 'West' versus 'Rest.' Said traces the racial constituents of 19th century Europe in relation to the Enlightenment, demonstrating how this philosophical movement provided the intellectual foundations of colonialism. He identifies the emergence of those ideals aimed at replacing the reactionary values of the East with the progressive ideas of the West. Building on the reflections of Michel Foucault and Antonio Gramsci, Said unveils the ontological arrogance and epistemic violence upon which colonialism is founded and naturalised. He demonstrates not only how colonialism creates the 'Other' as an object of knowledge to be studied, conquered and disciplined, but also how colonialism uses this knowledge to legitimize the total replacement and domination of this same 'Other,' the native (Wolfe, 2006). Therefore, he shows how colonialism works through constant processes of othering and racializing that support and justify conquest.

Building on Said's reflections, Johannes Fabian (1983) contributes to the analysis of colonialism by focusing on the temporal constituents of the Enlightenment period. In

particular, Fabian explores how the construction of 'Time' contributes to the reproduction of a particular vision of the West versus the Rest. Fabian investigates how Time instructs anthropological construction of relations with others, activating power dynamics that reify "the relationship between the West and the Rest" (1983: 28). Whilst focused primarily on the discursive production of 'Time' in anthropology, Fabian's study sheds light on how "a civilised West as the pinnacle of universal human progress helped legitimise various imperialist projects" (ibid: x). A Western colonial self is revealed in relation to 'Others,' whose location outside the terrains of civilised 'Europeanness' is not simply spatial, but also temporal. The other is not only 'out there' but also '*back* there.' In this way, colonisation, as a process of civilising barbarity, is legitimized and justified. These chronological premises of 'West' versus 'Rest,' which are the building block of what Fabian calls *chronopolitics*, intersect with how colonialism controls space, thus its 'geopolitics.' In Fabian's words, "*geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*" (1983: 144). To create geography of exclusive settler entitlement to native space (Wolfe, 2006: 388) follows the inherent logic of what Fabian labels as *chronopolitics*. Being premised on a logic of ethno-racial exclusivity, colonisation embodies the natural need to distance itself from those positioned at the lower end of the 'temporal slope': the Other.

While the insights of Fabian and Said describe the ideological cognates of colonialism, separating a progressive and powerful 'West' from a backward and reactionary 'Rest,' they do not highlight how gender and heteronormativity underpin colonial power relations. For these reasons, this conceptual framework draws on the ideas of native feminists, such as Mishuana Goeman (2013), whose work takes into account this fundamental component. Goeman's analysis not only focuses on the racializing and colonising processes revealed in "the brute force of slavery and colonisation and the ideological frames of Orientalism" (ibid: 22), but also underlines the crucial role of heteronormativity in the creation of colonialism. Through the analysis of fictional narratives, she demonstrates how civilizing trajectories instructs a settler-masculinity that is "defined by a relation to 'othered' space, [and] dependent on the exclusion of 'othered' identities" (ibid: 54). She captures the importance of heteronormativity in the masculine desire to conquer the Other, whose creation is premised on an unequal gender relation. Centring gender to imperial mapping and revealing those dialogical

connections between race, space and sexuality, Goeman's analysis echoes studies of feminist geographers, such as Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose (1994).

Blunt and Rose (1994) indicate how the physical violence of colonialism comes hand in hand with a discursive production of an Other, who is represented sexually as feminine or impotent. Colonial conquest stems from a sense of masculine entitlement to control and penetrate the land, erasing the native presence and depicting space as 'transparent.' The masculine desire of the coloniser strives for total vision and knowledge of its native Other, mapping native space as ready for ownership and control (in Nagam, 2011: 150). The work of native feminists and feminist geographers is important to this study's conceptual framework for two reasons: firstly, it demonstrates how race, gender and sexuality intertwine within the logics instructing colonial imaginative geographies and secondly, it complements those insights offered via a feminist reading of Orientalism. Meyda Yegenoglu (1998), for instance, explains how sexual and cultural difference map into one-another within the production of conquerable 'Otherness.' The imagination of a colonial masculine sovereign [colonising] subjectivity, who desires to penetrate into the mysteries of the feminine [veiled] Otherness, relies on a naturalised gender binary system.

The above discussed conceptual tools capture the parameters of colonialism demonstrating how colonial domination not only functions via discourses of race, but also privileges a structure of power based on masculinity, patriarchy and thus hetero-coloniality. At this point, it becomes possible to introduce the conceptual insights of queer theorising in relation to analysis of heterosexuality, subjectivity and gender regulations. By unveiling the social construction of gender identities, queer theorising interrogates the heterosexual frames of power that constitute [colonial] heteronormativity. It throws into question the colonial power-system, revealing its epistemic violence and the fictitious nature of its hierarchies (Smith in Driskill 2011: 33) and ideological foundations of 'transparent spaces' (Blunt and Rose, 1994). This allows us to comprehend how decolonisation works at the intersection of queer critique. Such an interaction enables the necessity of a politics of failures, dis-identifications and disorientations that carve possibilities for re-mapping, re-configurations [of sense] and imagining otherwise.

2.3.2 Mapping Queering into Decolonisation

By mapping queer politics into decolonisation, this study draws upon the recent work of North American native feminist and indigenous queer critics, which centres decolonisation in relation to gender and sexuality (Driskill *et al*, 2011). Their work stresses the 'queered' (Finley, 2011: 35) positionality of the native Other vis-a-vis processes of sexual and racial normalisation that define settler-colonialism. From the point of view of those undergoing decolonisation, queerness is a struggle against those colonial power structures privileging patriarchy and heterosexuality, and thus hetero-colonialism. Decolonisation enfolds queerness – and vice versa - as it tries to 'unsettle' (Morgensen, 2011: 133) the paradigms enforcing continued colonisation of native bodies, lands and desires. Driskill *et al* (2011: 19) emphasise how queer indigenous ideas work in relation to 'the dissent lines' and enables to "disrupt external and internalised colonialism, heteropatriarchy, gender binaries and other forms of oppression." Mishuana Goeman contends that practices of remapping lead native nations to "rethink spatializing and organising our communities around heteropatriarchal structure of nation-state model" (2013: 37). Similarly, Jennifer Naz Denetdale argues (2005) that native nationalism relies on traditionalist views that only reinforces homophobic and masculinist presumptions, thus reifying the exclusionary methods of the US nation-state model.

This study conceptualizes queerness following the call of those native and decolonial feminist queer critics. By understanding the role 'colonial heteropatriarchy' (Driskill *et al*, 2011) plays in the question of colonial liberation, we are able to foreground the necessity of queer dissonance to decolonisation and the meaning(s) of liberation. Decolonisation means imagining beyond colonial heteropatriarchy and challenging the naturalisation of social hierarchies and gender binaries that colonialism imposes. For these reasons, it is important to identify what meanings queer assumes in this study and what conceptual tools inform its mapping. Butler's work outlines what queer signifies in relation to subjectivity, deconstruction and the value of a post-structuralist feminist politics. She proposes a performative understanding of gender based on the idea that "there is no 'being' behind doing, affecting, becoming, [rather] 'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything" (Nietzsche, cited in Butler, 1999: 33). On the one hand, performativity explains how social norms emerge from a

repetition and re-iteration of certain acts, which (re)produce dominant power structures. On the other hand, it identifies how potentialities and possibilities for re-signification of those dominant norms lie within their performative repetition. As Butler suggests, "Possibilities of gender transformation are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relation between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat in 'proper' terms the gendered identity ascribed to us" (1999: 179).

Butler argues that there is no original or natural meaning to social norms, such as gender and sexuality. Rather subjects determine those meanings through the mundane and ritualized repetition of acts. That is, social norms and categories require re-enactment and re-experiencing in order to establish their social meaning. Butler's performative understanding of social norms interrogates the very ontological field that provides legitimacy to the reality of bodies. Such a reality does not derive from a presumably 'internalised origin;' rather gender emerges from its own repeated doing(s) through time-space and in relation to the power relations that institute its reality. In such a scenario, gender*ed* identity is revealed to function via socio-political, discursive and/or power paradigms that appear real and unquestionable. To question the reality of gender means departing from the very power paradigms that regulate it.

In this vein, it is possible to comprehend what role drag possesses as an example of performativity. Far from suggesting that gender is a performance – meaning a choice that one gets to put on or take off – drag throws any essence of gender or its reality in crisis because it unmasks "the imitative structure of gender itself, as well as its contingency" (1990:175). Butler explains how her theorising is grounded in the field of power, from which she aims towards a 'politically engaged critique' (1992: 6-7). To approach gendered identities as *effects* of power enables possibilities for political agency that could remain foreclosed when identities are taken as foundational and fixed (1999: 187). This also corresponds, as Butler argues, with the need to contest normative and exclusionary assumptions located at the heart of theoretical and political engagements. In particular, to conceptualise gender(s) as mere 'regulatory fictions' – which means they are neither true nor false but only the "truth effect of primary and stable identity" (ibid: 174-180) – addresses certain limitations within feminist political theorising. It complicates an often taken-for-granted feminist 'we,' including its occasional universality and categorical determinacy, and lays out the potentiality for a

new politics. Such an approach takes into account the contingent foundations of feminist thought and prevents the violence enshrined in those attempts to apply uncritically a universal notion of feminist politics unto other contexts.

Butler's queer critique opens up the subject to "other possibilities" including re-usage and/or the redeployment of dominant norms in alternative ways (1992: 15). By focusing on how trouble, dissonance, disunity, and failures emerge within those paradigms that define gendered identifications, possibilities for re-significations arise when 'critically queer[ing]:'

> queer is never fully owned but always and only redeployed, twisted, queered from a prior usage and in the direction of urgent and expanding political purposes and perhaps also yielded in favour of terms that do that political work more effectively (Butler, 1993: 19).

This study situates its enquiry in relation to concept(s) continuing to stabilize themselves - queer, queerness, queered, queering - and demonstrates their expansive capacities to *become* more politically effective.

Along with Butler, this study also takes into account the notion of 'dis-identifications' or 'failure to identify' (Muñoz, 1999) in queer of colour critiques. Building on queer interactions with race studies, José Esteban Muñoz explores artistic performances of minority subjects who fail to identify with the normative accounts of majority culture. Muñoz contends that political possibilities lurk at the juncture of a 'failure to perform' and an "uneasy sense of standing under a sign to which one does and doesn't belong" (Butler in Muñoz, 1999: 13). This is how queerness, in its capacity to work on, against and within hegemonic paradigms, paves the way for an alternative reality beyond the present one. However, to weave queer into decolonisation also complicates theoretical terrains that fail, at times, to emphasise the necessity of a decolonisation stance. This is particularly true for Muñoz' dis-identification framework which, in its critique of 'majority cultures,' fails to consider the utility of 'counter-identifications' (Smith, 2010: 56). Dis-identification derives from an understanding of queer as a struggle of 'a minority-culture' beyond assimilation [identification] and complete rejection [counter-identification] vis-à-vis a majority-culture (Muñoz, 1999: 11). However, from an anticolonial positionality, as Andrea Smith also argues, counter-identifications – meaning opposition to colonial structures – still play a major role. The work of Muñoz

describes queerness as a utopian political project (2009: 25), signalling future possibilities beyond the 'here and now.' Muñoz charts the significance of queer investment in politics and relationality via the aesthetic work of queer racial minorities. He emphasises queerness as politically invested, bearing aspirations for the future. In such a scenario, queer utopia functions beyond the present reality of straight-temporality and the political landscapes of homonormativity, thus moving away from pragmatic gay politics of the present invested in marriage, neoliberalism and militarism (ibid: 21).

Whilst Muñoz explores how 'utopianism' lies at the heart of queer directionality, postcolonial and race critic Sara Ahmed (2006) investigates how a politics of 'disorientation' informs queer intersections with other subjects, spaces and times. Queer 'disorientations,' as Ahmed describes them, mark deviations from proscribed lines of orientations, thus power paradigms. For example, she discusses how heterosexuality marks a continuation of patriarchy, while orientalism and racism generate an orientation around whiteness.

Drawing on the work of Butler, Ahmed, Muñoz and Rancière, this study captures how queerness interacts with those power paradigms or regimes of normativity that regulate subjects, with their ethnicities, identities and desires. In such a scenario, queering begins at the intersection of how 'failure' (Butler), 'disorientations' (Ahmed), 'dis-identifications' (Muñoz) and/or 'redistribution' (Rancière) open up foreclosed possibilities to re-signify normative configurations. This conceptual framework will guide the analysis of how Palestinian queerness challenges the police regime of hetero-colonialism, offering imaginings beyond liberation paradigms, which reproduce and maintain hetero-colonialism.

2.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the existing body of knowledge associated with the main area of this study: the question of queering in Palestine. It identifies a research gap within the existing literature by focusing on two interrelated points: the absence of conceptual frameworks that take into account the history of Israeli settler-colonialism, and the lack

of an engagement with grounded knowledge of Palestinian queerness. The chapter delineates the conceptual framework which sheds light on how colonialism functions through the normalization of power structures that privilege patriarchy and heterosexuality. It grounds queerness as a means to challenge colonial heteronormative paradigms of power via the work of Butler, Muñoz, Ahmed and Rancière. This chapter not only presents how this study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on the question of queerness in Palestine. It also demonstrates the importance to study queer vis-à-vis native positionality and interrogates certain limitations within existing approaches in the field of queer studies, such as Puar's homonationalism and - more generally - queer liberalism. The chapter also proposes to approach queer as a concept with expansive capacities to *become* more politically effective, thus moulding the work of several theorists and – most importantly – follows the call of North American native feminist and indigenous queer critics. To weave queering in relation to decolonisation permits the guiding of nuanced analyses of how natives imagine beyond colonial heteropatriarchy and challenge those social hierarchies and gender binaries imposed by colonial regime and re-instantiated in sovereignty struggle. This conceptual rationale has important implications for the methodological underpinnings of this research, which we explore in the next chapter.

3. The Methodology of the Study

This chapter outlines the methodological foundations of this study, by linking the identified research gap and the study's conceptual framework with the most appropriate methods and techniques used to investigate the question of queerness in Palestine. While it explores the methods used in this research for collecting data, it also demonstrates their connections to the epistemological rationale of the study. It focuses on the processes of data collection and analysis, detailing what criteria and dynamics determined the inclusion of the people involved in this study. It also reflects on the positionality of the researcher and discusses relevant ethical issues. The chapter concludes by taking into account what practical and intellectual constraints emerged throughout the research, pondering how those limitations both curtailed and broadened the scope of the study.

3.1 Data Collection

The research gap identified in the previous chapter (lack of local grounded queer knowledge and the significance of a settler colonial framework) makes it essential to rely on research methods that allows a direct engagement with the contexts, experiences and ideas of local people, stemming from their native positionality. The study, henceforth, relied on two main research methods: participant observation and interviewing. At the same time, the epistemological rationale of the study also influenced such a choice. In fact, this study proceeds from an understanding of reality that commonly goes under the general umbrella-term of *interpretive* or *social constructionist* approach. This approach aims at constructing knowledge in relation to what is meaningful or relevant to people (Neuman, 2013: 93) in their particular contexts. Reality, and its multiple meanings (knowledge), is the result of a co-construction process, emerging from the interactions between experiences and beliefs shared by those self-interacting individuals involved in the study.

It is also crucial to highlight that in order to account for a politics and epistemologies of location and positionality, this study embraces what Donna Haraway calls a "feminist objectivity" (1988: 581) making a claim to knowledge that is partial, and not

universal. The importance of this approach lies in demonstrating how 'objectivity' emanates from how we situate ourselves within power structures, from our positionalities. While this study acknowledges its partial claim to knowledge, it inevitably criticises the omnipresent, all-seeing and conquering gaze of what Haraway defines 'god trick,' a way of seeing the world from the "unmarked positions of Man and White" (1988: 581). Moreover, such an epistemological rationale builds on the conceptual approach outlined in the previous chapter allowing a move away from 'impartial' and 'neutral' objectivity.

The following is a detailed exploration of the two chosen research method – participant observation and interviewing – discussing both their strengths and weaknesses, and their implementation in this study.

3.1.1 Participant observation

The methods of this study include participant observation, a method that requires researchers to immerse in a group of people and their geographies for an extended period of time "observing behaviour, listening to what is said in conversations both between others and with the fieldworker, and asking questions" (Bryman, 2012: 432). Participant observation utilises 'thick-descriptions' (Geertz, 1973: 30) to generate complex layers of meanings within given social situations. These thick descriptions are "rich ethnographic descriptions based on intensive investigation of informants' actions and their interpretation of their own practices placed within their own cultural contexts" (Gregory *et al*., 2009: 753). However, there is a tendency among researchers to divide participant observation in two separate processes: immersive participation and detached observation (Gold 1958, cited in Kearns, 2010: 246). This presents a major risk because it ignores the mutual and simultaneous relation between those processes. If we instead approach observation, as Donna Haraway (1988) argues, in its 'embodied nature,' taking into account our 'situated-ness' within the social order, it is possible to comprehend how observation is woven *in* participation.

Both participation and observations are forms of situated knowledge (ibid), thus participation in the social order. In this regard, my ethnographic experience provides an account of the continuous intertwinement between observation and participation, and highlights the crosscutting edge of 'participant observation' with 'participatory

action.' For instance, being a local Palestinian facilitated my access and participation into alQaws and its varied geographies, i.e. networks, events and spaces. Although my fieldwork spanned the summers of 2013 and 2014, my initial contact with the group took place in 2012, when I first met its director, Haneen Maikey, in Ramallah. During this occasion, I shared both my eagerness to explore the question of queerness in Palestine for the doctoral programme, and my personal interest - as a local Palestinian - to learn more and be involved in their work. Following such a meeting, I began attending alQaws' activities and some of their workshops in Ramallah, Beit Jala and Haifa. The first engagement I attended was a writing workshop, where participants discussed the relevance and content of the various texts (poetry and prose) and their performances. Those meetings provided the opportunity to realise the necessity for this study to take into consideration the aesthetic and artistic component of alQaws' spaces of activism, thus I established contacts with those artists. The majority of the people encountered in alQaws' spaces of activism were young, and their age ranged between 18 and early 40s. These young people not only accommodated a wide spectrum of gender and sexual identifications but also came from various Palestinian towns and cities, including Ramallah, Jerusalem, Haifa, Yafa, Hebron and many others.

While being a local Palestinian woman eased my access to alQaws' geographies, my identity as a researcher who 'is interested in queer discourses in Palestine' raised only doubts among its members. In fact, being seen as an academic 'observer' triggered a feeling of suspicion that required explaining carefully whether 'my research entailed working with Israelis' (Alaa, 2013). As I learnt throughout my interactions with alQaws, those suspicions emerged as a result of previous encounters between alQaws activists and other researchers. That is, researchers often failed to comprehend the political positionality of the activists, who, in turn, perceived academic interest in queer 'Israelis and Palestinians' as very problematic (Field notes, July 2014). Overall, being a local woman from Hebron, a city in the south of West Bank, enabled my full participation within alQaws' geographies. Full participation, however, did not simply mean 'involvement' (Mctaggart, 1991: 171) but rather paved the way for a 'collaborative' mode of engagement, "explicitly oriented towards social change" (Kindon *et al*, 2009: 90). Such a mode entailed what it is called 'participatory-action' research, where research produces knowledge *with* rather than *on* people. In this regard, I was invited to speak alongside other activists at local (e.g. alQaws Sexuality School, Beit Jala) and

international events (e.g. Anti-pinkwashing event, London). The creation of knowledge about alQaws *with* alQaws also took place by writing a collaborative piece with two of its members, where we identify "as Palestinian activists and academics who are committed to engaged analyses and praxis towards decolonizing gender and sexuality in our communities" (Alqaisiya, Hilal and Maikey, 2016: 125).

I also participated in numerous alQaws' activities: informal gatherings in Ramallah, organised workshops with solidarity activists in Ramallah, the annual sexuality school in Beit Jala, the launching of a singing sexuality music project in Haifa, and anti-pinkwashing talks in London. Moreover, I visited a fashion design exhibition and an art academy workshop in Ramallah, where alQaws-related artists discussed informally their work. In order to document all the encounters I had within those geographies, I kept both a field-note/personal diary and relied on the method of mental-noting (Bryman, 2012: 420), which helped me to keep an initial account of these events and later transfer their details into the diary. A camera and a memory-flash were also used to photograph and save the work of the artists, which I had the opportunity to observe within local exhibition spaces in Palestine. Participant observation played a fundamental role during the period of data collection, enabling me to understand and produce queer Palestinian grounded knowledge. Nonetheless, in order to develop a more nuanced and deeper understanding of the various processes shaping such a knowledge, I also relied on the use of interviews.

3.1.2 Interviewing

Interviewing plays a vital role "in the realm of closer encounters" (Hoggart *et al*, 2002: 201). Researchers often capture the complexities of meanings and experiences through interviews as means for social interaction and dialogue. This research method sheds light on the rich and multi-layered dimensions of everyday life, shaping a deeper and more nuanced picture (Silverman, cited in Valentine, 2005: 111). Furthermore, interviews often challenge how the researcher approaches her topic, thus forcing to interrogate and revise her questions, assumptions and opinions (see Dunn, 2010: 103). By talking to people and drawing directly on how they experience and interpret their realities, this approach also challenges hierarchies of knowledge because it forces researchers to reconsider the 'ivory towers' of academia. However, one can still argue that the researcher/researched or interviewer/interviewed dichotomy does not

completely disappear, as the very uttering of the phrase 'to interview *you*' affirms. On the one hand, this is an impossible dilemma to resolve, as Cheryl McEwan also describes, due to the inevitability of epistemic violence in one's attempts to create knowledge and/or represent an 'other' (2009: 275). On the other hand, researchers can grow vigilant and conscious of such a problematique, seeking more ethical ways to conduct research (ibid). In the case of this study, I tried to navigate this problem by grounding the process of interviewing in ethnography. In other words, I established respectful, trustful and on-going relationship (Heyl, 2001: 370) with the activists/artists in order to have exchanges of views based on a *conversational* basis rather than an official [researcher/researched] one. Conversations had a fluid nature, resulting from changes in the interlocutors, the spaces between them and those settings shaping their/our varied locations. The following is an account of the fluid manner of the development of the method of interviewing during the period of data collection.

As mentioned previously, I gained access to alQaws' geographies following my first conversation with alQaws director. It was a process of 'snowballing' (Valentine, 2005: 117) that allowed "build[ing] up layers of contacts" with the activists/artists. During my fieldwork, conversations and interviews took on different forms. They ranged from informal chats to semi-structured interviews, and from face-to-face, one-on-one interviews, to group discussions, as well as phone-calls and conversations on social media platforms. At times, such a fluidity of interactions facilitated the preparation of more structured conversations, approached with planned questions and digitally recorded. These more structured forms of discussions helped significantly to focus on particular aspects and more complex dynamics that the research aimed to unpack. The informal, spontaneous one-on-one or group conversations were often most useful in opening new and exciting perspectives, new questions and unexpected answers. It is important to note that the fluidity of these conversations changed according to several factors, including depth of the relationship, level of trust or political conditions. For instance, phone calls replaced face-to-face interviews during those moments of political volatility that disabled interviewees from coming to and meeting in Ramallah, as discussed below. Most of my encounters, in fact, took place in Ramallah. This city was chosen as a strategic location for fieldwork because it enabled me to meet regularly with those alQaws members who are either Ramallah-based or travel regularly from Jerusalem and other parts of Palestine. Such a choice stemmed from my previous

knowledge of the activities that alQaws was holding in Ramallah, as well as my previous encounters with its members who are Ramallah-based and work for the organization.

When my fieldwork in Palestine concluded at the end of September 2014, conversations with activists and artists continued in different forms. For instance, the Internet played a crucial role to continue our conversations. As I relied on Skype calls and Facebook chats to remain in touch with participants, so interviews took place via email correspondence when one of the artists found such means as the most convenient. It is worthwhile to stress that the Internet and social media can play a particularly significant role in the case of occupied and *fragmented* Palestine, when Palestinians are scattered all-over-the-world (Mavroudi, 2017). Talking through social media has been an important aspect of this research whether I was *in* or *out* of Palestine. In particular, it allowed remaining in contact with other fellow Palestinians who resided in those territories beyond the West Bank that Israeli restrictions impede me to reach. Israeli rules do not allow Palestinians residing in those territories located on the West side of the Jordanian river (West Bank) into the 'borders' of its state, unless granted 'special permits' that are difficult to obtain. Social media bridged such restrictions on my mobility within Palestine. They also helped in reaching out diasporic activists, such as the Palestinian-American artist, Nadia Awwad, or one of the artists, Knorn, who was based in Beirut during the time of our conversations. Skyping, emailing and Facebook messaging offered a chance to build social geographies, and provided an easy, accessible and convenient platform to talk beyond physical barriers - literally and metaphorically. Online platforms also facilitated richer discussions because they allowed, for instance, artists to share instantaneously those relevant artistic works that popped into their minds during our conversations.

I documented all these conversations in a variety of means. When 'interviewing' took place in a more formal manner, I asked permission to record digitally the conversation, thus easing the process of data transcription. On other occasions, I documented the conversations with activists/artists via note taking in a field-diary. Lastly, social media conversations and chats required less effort, since their content remained always accessible online, thus facilitating even further the process of data analysis, which is explained in the next section.

3.2 Data Analysis

This research used an inductive technique for analysing the data. This approach examines data without any predetermined theory or framework, deriving the structure of the analysis directly from them (Bryman, 2012: 24). In this regard, the research relied on one of the most common methods for analysing qualitative data: thematic content analysis (ibid: 578). The process involved gathering the data, identifying the most recurring themes and organising them into a structured analysis (Creswell 2013: 184). This section discusses how I gathered and subsequently analysed each set of collected data, such as notes from-the-field, transcribed interviews, art images and videos.

I started the process of analysis by gathering all the field-notes, including non-recorded interviews and informal-discussions with alQaws' members and artists. The material was, first, read thoroughly and repetitively, paying particular attention to notes on the margins and what was underlined as 'important reflections.' Notes gathered in relation to a particular event that alQaws organised (i.e. sexuality school camp) were then typed into a Microsoft-word document. Transferring field-notes into Microsoft-word documents helped in identifying major and minor themes emerging from each activity/field note-setting/or noted discussion. The major theme of each setting became the 'Title' that identified each document/field-note setting. The minor sub-themes within these settings were highlighted in bold throughout to identify the main idea of each written record (discussion, intervention and/or feelings) gathered within the wider major-themed document. For example, if a folder under the name 'sexuality school' emerged, I would save a Microsoft-word document within that folder under the title of a major theme: 'imagining otherwise.' Within that document I would create a sub-heading entitled 'bringing Palestinians together,' which contained the reflections and field-notes from 'sexuality school' concerning that sub-theme. As themes intersected and overlapped between the various field-note documents, I undertook a process of data re-shuffling, moving them from one document to another. For example, if the folder 'three-day-workshop' was found to contain a sub-theme of 'bringing Palestinians together,' I would create another document merging this set of data/field-notes together with the ones identified in the 'sexuality school' folder.

Data from interviews were all transcribed, translated from Arabic and put into separate documents, which were identified by interviewees' names, purpose and context of the interview. Two main categories emerged: the reflections of activists and artists on their work. This led to the creation of two separate folders (Activism and Art), each containing the set of documents about artistic or activist work. In some cases, multiple conversations with the same person were made leading to create smaller folders (identified with each person pseudonym/name, see below Section 3.4). Moreover, each reflection from an artist and/or activist led to navigating a wider set of textual and/or visual data. During interviews the activists referred to certain written texts, which highlighted important issues close to them. For example, when discussing the topic of 'pinkwashing' with Haneen, she referred to articles written by other activists from alQaws (e.g. alQaws statement, 2014). Similarly, when I was conversing with artists (i.e Alaa and Nadia) they referred to particular artworks and texts. Consequently, I sought these texts and works of art in order to incorporate them in the appropriate data folders.

It is needless to say that multiple readings of those transcripts I transcribed and collected enabled me to interpret the overall meanings of the data. This procedure involved the coding/indexing process of labelling those words, phrases, paragraphs or full sentences that recurred or conveyed a similar meaning, or the ones that an interviewee deemed important. This allowed for a process of categorising and identifying themes and subthemes across Activist and Art folders. A thematic categorisation of collected aesthetics [images, videos, songs, prose] took place via re-readings of artist and activist transcripts. Then, I began locating each artwork in relation to the identified themes and sub-themes from the transcripts. Emerging themes from transcripts and artist-work were read in relation to identified themes from field-notes, thus enabling a process of data triangulation. Broadly speaking data triangulation validates and enhances research by crosschecking the same information. The use of multiple methods allowed the emergence of crosscutting themes that confirmed and spoke to one-another. This served to further comprehend the data as well as enhanced confidence in the research and its results (Creswell, 2013: 251).

Finally, it is important to emphasise the participatory nature of this research, which has been key to the process of data analysis. In particular, the research offered me the opportunity to join activist/artists' spaces and co-produce knowledge with them. As such, the data analysis process revealed the collaborative nature of knowledge production where 'researcher' and 'researched' distinctions fall apart. Moreover, the collaborative premise of the research reflects the politics and praxis of alQaws as both practitioners and thinkers. Each stage of the data analysis was shaped by two main processes: firstly, the analysis of those forces at work – be them economic, social or political – that aim to control the lives of Palestinians and define alQaws' work and secondly, the capacity to engage theories and tactics to navigate and challenge them. This meant that the research did not emerge as the platform of creating spaces for 'subaltern' identifiable others who needed be enabled to 'speak (Spivak, 1988). Rather, it simply evolved to apply and engage those *already-at-work* mechanisms of thought-praxis encountered via the words and works of activists-artists. At the same time, the process of data analysis became also a process of reflecting on *our* lives, positionalities and contexts. Thus, it ultimately engaged my own experiences as a Palestinian woman, elaborated upon in the following section, whose presence within activist-artists' spaces also became a rich ground for drawing connections, analytics and imaginings of queerness in Palestine.

3.3 Positionality

> It is exciting to finally have someone who is Palestinian, a local and a woman approaching us! Usually there are a lot of Westerners who want to know and study our work. (Haneen, Skype Conversation, December 2012)

The first conversation I had with alQaws' director, Haneen, happened through Skype and, as the quote above also shows, her interest and willingness to cooperate linked to my positionality as an Arab/Palestinian woman. As mentioned previously, later I understood why alQaws' members adopted a cautious approach when dealing with researchers and, in particular, those coming from the 'West.' Those reasons became clear during my 'in the-field' encounters. For instance, when I met two Western researchers, respectively from Australia and France, I began realizing how their research projects reflected what activists consider to be problematic approaches. Whilst

one researcher had no problem assuming that 'gay scenes' exist in Palestine and ought to be 'discovered;' the other conflated Palestinian queer politics with Israeli ones. For alQaws' members and me, those interactions revealed how little these researchers knew about Palestine and how willing or unaware they were to impose their assumptions in relation to sexuality issues. In fact, both my ability to scrutinise ethically these 'assumptions,' along with a research investment in the question of decolonial politics, stems from my positionality as a Palestinian. It is important to acknowledge that my family history and personal experiences as a Palestinian woman who has lived and struggled throughout her life due to the Israeli occupation inevitably influences the over-all framing of this research. In fact, as Haraway also points out, it is our situated-ness in the social world, rather than being neutral observers, that allows mapping this study in relation to its 'embodied nature' (1988: 581), emphasizing how my positionality as a Palestinian marks its framing.

I realised how my insider positionality endowed me with certain advantages throughout the fieldwork period. It not only enabled me to share and be part of alQaws' spaces, discussions and events, but also to think and write collaboratively with its members. However, if being an insider facilitated certain processes, it also made this research far more difficult and emotionally draining. In this regard, when Israel brutally aggressed and bombed Gaza for fifty-one consecutive days during the summer of 2014, both I, and my research were paralysed. My 'field-researcher' identity was put aside while I dealt with immense sorrow, anger, anxiety, insomnia and endless political discussions. Through these difficult times, I became much close to those people I had met within alQaws, as we would watch the news together and, at times, join in spontaneous protests. The scales of the violence and the unfolding tragedy not only placed practical and physical limitations on my research, due to the imposition of stricter travel restrictions by Israeli authorities, but it also triggered emotional consequences. The research became difficult, if not completely impossible, to pursue. At the same time, these tragic events brought Palestinians together, revealing the intimate connections between us. This allowed a blurring of researcher/researched differences and enabled further the process of trust building throughout the data collection period.

While 'being in the field' enforced the emotional weight of 'being home' to seep in, my departure from Palestine at the end of September 2014 came as both a relief and a

reminder of my privileged position in relation to friends and family who are unable to leave. The journey outside the field demonstrated how my positionality as researcher in a Western academic institution offers some privileges. It enabled a sense of emotional distance, which ultimately helped in finishing this work. However, it curtailed my connection with alQaws and its local geographies. Finally, this study deserves a particular reflection on the sexual positionality of the researcher vis-à-vis the investigated topic. It might be expected from the researcher to declare her 'sexual orientation' because the study investigates questions of 'gender and sexuality.' However, as I was never asked to define my 'sexual identity' throughout my interactions with alQaws, so there is no need for such a declaration. This choice only reflects the spirit and the work of alQaws – as this study will show – to move beyond narrow identity politics paradigms and/or exclusive frames of 'LGBT.'

3.4 Ethical considerations

Throughout the process of conducting the research, a set of moral principles had to be taken into account. In particular, during the process of fieldwork and interviews I complied with those measures apt to guarantee anonymity and data confidentiality, as required in social science research (ESRC Postgraduate Guidelines in Cook and Crang, 2007: 29). Throughout this study, I changed the names of all those participants who asked to be anonymised and I provided no indication to understand who bears their 'true' name or a pseudonym. Specific attention was paid to the consent and comfort of the participants, who were only asked to be interviewed or interact after a detailed explanation of the research goals. Only one participant did not feel comfortable to be associated with alQaws, and so I found appropriate to exclude his work.

My insider [Palestinian] positionality helped my ability to judge the most appropriate approach to participants and data. As someone who shares knowledge of language and the subtleties of socio-cultural codes and conventions, I could gauge the level of (dis)comfort and/or (un)willingness to discuss certain issues in certain contexts or to disclose certain information. For example, during the initial meetings with a potential participant I never discussed 'my research' and 'how you can help me.' Instead, as mentioned previously, it was crucial to establish mutual respect and a level of trust

without "stereotyping and using labels that participants do not embrace" (Wiss and Fine 2000, in Creswell 2007: 44). For these reasons, during the process of translation and coding of themes I remained close and sensitive to both data and participants in order to avoid any misjudgements.

3.5 Research Limitations

Some of the limitations faced in this research relate to my positionality as Palestinian, which posed certain restrictions on the scope of the study. In particular, being Palestinian from the West Bank I hold what Israel classifies as 'Green ID,' a document that restricts my ability to travel beyond the West Bank and – at times - within its spaces due to the heavy presence of Israeli military checkpoints. In this regard, while the initial goal of this research was to work with both alQaws and the Haifa-based group 'Aswat for Gay Palestinian Women,' my inability to gain permission and travel to Haifa (a city located in the north of Palestine, which Israel considers its state territory) restricted the focus of this study to alQaws. In addition, the Israeli aggression on Gaza in 2014 led to political volatility in the whole of the West Bank and affected my fieldwork as well. This situation disrupted completely my access to participants, obstructing any chances to travel and meet people, including within the West Bank. Social media, as discussed earlier, served as a great tool for keeping in contact with participants throughout this period and when I returned to England. Nevertheless, I encountered limitations in regards to the quality and length of the conversations. For example, the poor quality of the Internet connection often disrupted Skype calls, limiting both ease and length of the conversations.

The difficulties and limitations imposed on the process of data collection during the 'official' fieldwork period in the summer of 2014 were negotiated through my previous knowledge of alQaws and its networks. Interacting with alQaws for almost a full year before starting the project helped overcoming such restrictions posed during the fieldwork period. My own personal diary, where I kept a record of workshops, conversations and interactions within alQaws' spaces, became a major source for assembling 'data' whose collection turned out to be extremely difficult throughout the summer of 2014. For example, the assault on Gaza forced alQaws to cancel numerous

activities, which were due to take place throughout the summer period. During an informal gathering, I remember that activists and friends of alQaws reflected on how practically and morally impossible was to organise any activity during a time of profound tragedy for Palestinians. The emotional burden of being home and witnessing yet another large-scale act of violence, along with the practical difficulties this imposed on the research, created very real threats to the viability of the project.

By taking inspiration from alQaws' courage and firm belief in their work, I found a way to continue pursuing the research. My 2013 personal diary became a necessary tool to overcome the limitations faced during the data collection period in 2014, and served to shape the quality of this research in significant ways. In particular, the use of biographical reflections with the reconstruction of its emotional and intimate aspect of knowledge sharing conferred the study an analytical depth and 'embodied' richness (Haraway, 1988) that could not have been captured otherwise. And, in spite of the enormity of the tragedy unfolding and the seeming futility of my own research in this context, reminding myself of the inspiration I had drawn from alQaws also restored some faith in the significance of the research. Moreover, my situated positionality as a 'Green ID' Palestinian shaped other important aspect regarding the approach and scope of this study. For example, whilst a Palestinian only focused-approach speaks to alQaws' political stance of anti-normalisation with Israelis, my inability to reach and so explore 'what the other side has to say' derives from my own positionality within the colonial power relations and its system of oppression. This system, in fact, places real and physical constraints on any Palestinian, from West Bank and Gaza, to access Israeli spaces, albeit queer or otherwise. The intellectual necessity to challenge the comparative frame of Israel/Palestine and the call to think queerness beyond the 'conflict' stems from the very limitations imposed on Palestine and Palestinians.

Finally, as I introduced myself as a Palestinian woman, I acknowledge that my identity will inevitably influence the content of the interviews. It also must be acknowledged that my accessibility into alQaws' spaces and collaboration was facilitated via the group's director and organiser. My entry into alQaws' circles could not bypass the un-avoidable level of hierarchy that her position bears. However, it is important to stress that, although Haneen's position was important for *initial* accessibility within the group, she did not represent or monopolize alQaws' voices and practices in its totality.

For instance, when I was invited to speak with other alQaws' members at an anti-pinkwashing event in London, I learnt from them that my name was suggested 'not by Haneen' but by another member.

3.6 Conclusion

The chapter provides an explanation of the research methodology for exploring the question of queerness in Palestine through activism and art, and its meanings in relation to decolonisation. Since academic studies on the question of queerness in Palestine lack an engagement with local grounded queer knowledge, the chapter outlined how the chosen research methods (participant observation and interviewing) give prominence to the voices, experiences and ideas of local people. In doing so, they allow mapping what meanings queer assumes from the standpoint point of native positionality. Moreover, by drawing directly on the reality, and its multiple meanings, of those people involved in the study, participant observation and interviewing allow examining Palestinian queer positionality vis-à-vis heteronormative colonial paradigms. They permit, therefore, to bring queering and decolonisation into mutual dialogue. The chapter also remarked how Donna Haraway's definition of 'feminist objectivity' influences the aims and significance of this study (see Chapter 1), taking partial knowledge and marked embodiment as fundamental pillars for research. A reflection on the positionality of the researcher pointed out how family history and background inevitably influence the question, fieldwork and analysis of the study. Finally, this chapter brought to light how the extreme political conditions unfolding during the fieldwork period created both limitations and possibilities. This chapter also sets the ground for the contextual analysis of Palestinian queer activism and aesthetics that follows.

4. Contextualising the Relevance of Queer: Hetero-Colonialism of the Zionist Project in Palestine

The chapter provides the necessary contextual analysis for the following chapters (Chapter 5 and Chapter 6) on the meanings of queer activism and aesthetics. This analysis revolves around what I term hetero-colonialism of the Zionist project in Palestine. This refers to the foregrounding of the *settler-colonial* context of Palestine vis-à-vis racializing and othering processes, which are gendered and sexualised. The chapter is divided into two main sections exploring the structural continuity of Zionist hetero-colonialism by drawing on various historical events and contextual examples. The first section, entitled 'Legitimising Settlement through Progress,' maps the temporal-spatial constituents of the Zionist settler-colonial project, revealing ways of quarantining Palestinian time and space, especially the *Nakba* for Palestine (Palestinian catastrophe). It then investigates, via a queer reading (Butler,1999) of the Zionist story of creation, the gender and sexual components of Zionist conquest that gazes onto (an)Other [Arab Palestinian]. The second section, entitled 'Ongoing Conquest: The Ga(y)ze of Liberal Democracy' links the foundational premise of Zionist hetero-colonialism to contemporary representations of Israeli sexual modernity. The liberal ga(y)ze, which penetrates into the reality of backward, ill-progressive otherness, continues to remain masculine and sexualised, thus hetero-colonial.

The conclusion emphasises the significance of contextual foregrounding of Zionist hetero-colonialism. Colonial conquest of an oriental Islamic, sexualised and feminised otherness reveals the mesh of gendering and othering for which queer (activism and aesthetics) matters.

4.1 Legitimising Settlement through Progress

Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) presents the argument on the interwoven discourses that served the production of a designated entity known as 'the Orient;' an inferior other to a European [colonial] self. Said's ideas help to understand how colonialism operate through not only the physical violence it commits against the other, but also via discourses and ideas. In his 1896 proposition for a Jewish state in Palestine, the

founding father of the Jewish state, Theodor Herzl, declared that the aspired-for Jewish-state would "form a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilisation as opposed to barbarism" (in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 2011: 601). His assistant Max Nordau added, "we shall seek to do in Western Asia what the English did in India […] We aim to come to Erez Israel as messengers of culture and we aim to extend the moral boundaries of Europe all the way to the Euphrates" (in Goldberg, 2009: 116). These statements illustrate how the evolution of the idea of 'Erez Israel' in the late 19th century occurs in relation to European colonial regimes and the civilizational discourses they utilised. These discourses help us to comprehend the violent constitution of the settler-colonial entity, foregrounding legitimacy for native negation. In *The Question of Palestine* (1979: 9), Said traces the infamous Zionist slogan of '*a land without a people, for a people without a land*,' from which a project of reconstitution and rebuilding of Palestine emerges. He provides the example of the French traveller, Alphonse De Lamartine, in *voyage en orient*, whose writings reflect the idea of Palestine as a place to be "possessed anew and reconstituted" (ibid). For De Lamartine, Palestine is "not a real country; its inhabitants are not real citizens" and so can "be empty for development by a more deserving power" (ibid).

De Lamartine's vision to empty and develop Palestine was not a far-fetched reality. Britain's infamous pledge for the constitution of "a National Home for the Jewish people" [4] in Palestine lead to the imposition of a Mandatory regime, which, as Forman and Kedar write, "was beneficial to the Zionist colonization and detrimental to the interests of the country's indigenous non-Jewish populations" (2003: 497). At the core of the Jewish settler colony and the British colony, termed as a "dual colonialism" paradigm [5] (Shamir, 2000: 19), was the British-Zionist Mandate relationship that stood for "a discourse of development and modernization" (Forman and Kedar, 2003:497). Forman and Kedar unpack how the British occupation of Palestine, which entailed an ethos of development and progress, validated the naturalisation of a land and legal system that was essentially consonant with Zionist colonial interests. The

[4] The Balfour Declaration of 1917 sanctioned Great Britain's support for the "establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people" (Forman and Kedar, 2003: 496). This declaration was issued right before Britain occupied the country. British occupation continued between 1918 and 1948, right up to the establishment of the Israeli state.

[5] Ronen Shamir (1999: 19) further explains how this dual colonialism functioned. While the Jewish settlers occupied the land, the British colony provided the political, legal and administrative procedures to facilitate such an occupation.

implementation of this system replaced what was seen as the "insufficient indigenous elements of Palestine's land system" (ibid: 509) with what was believed to be "superior European concepts of land use and development" (ibid). This process demonstrates how legal systems produce and perpetuate "colonial socio-spatial power orders" (ibid: 494). The frame of development and European 'civilisation' conferred *legitimacy* to these policies and thus justified the transfer of land from natives to settlers. In particular, development projects enabled the production of categories, such as 'vacant' and 'wastelands.' These were then allocated to Jewish settlers as per Britain's commitments in the Balfour Declaration (ibid: 510).

The epitome of this settlement project, transforming 'vacant land' and rendering its inhabitants transferable, was the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, which Palestinians identify as a *Nakba* meaning catastrophe. Beit-Hallahmi notes that the transformation of the native populations of Palestine as conquerable and transferable people took place just "like the swamps, the heat and malaria" (1997: 73). The expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians in 1948 was an essential step in the transformation of Palestine by the Jewish people, whom Britain identified as capable of "giving it a place in the modern family of nations" (Chaim Weizmann[6] in Said, 1979: 13). The sense of pride that Weizmann's statement conveys in relation to Jews finally being identified as bearers and distributors of that modernity, for which Western nations - such as Britain - stand and promote, is essentially reflective of the pride he, as a Zionist leader, had in the success of Zionism. Identifying Jewishness qua Europe's civilizational trajectory is what set the ground for Zionist success from the perspective of its leaders, who sought a re-invention of Jewishness qua 'Western Time' through the establishment of a Jewish state in the Middle East.

4.1.1 Agents of Western Time

One of the means of addressing the 'Jewish question' in 19th century Europe was an investment, on behalf of Jewish movements, to facilitate their assimilation into modern European society and secular culture. The *Haskalah,* or Jewish Enlightenment, is an example of an influential tide of Jewish intellectualism, spanning from the 1770s to the 1880s, which sought to "assimilate into European society in dress, language, manners

[6] Zionist leader and first president of Israel.

and loyalty to ruling power" (Schoenberg, 2016: np). At the centre of *Haskalah* thought lies an essential diagnosis of Jewish 'medieval' character (see Massad, 2013: np), which inspired modern intellectuals to reform as they grew "estranged" (Schoenberg, 2016: np) from Jewish rituals and traditions. It comes as no surprise that those seeking to "bring Judaism closer to contemporary European standards of behaviour" (ibid), including via encouraging conversion to Christianity, saw the *Haskalah* become a major influence on the founding father of Zionism, Theodor Herzl. His belief in the reinvention of a Jewish identity in tandem with European modern culture materialised through the Zionist project and the subsequent invention of a Jewish state outside Europe. Although such a choice appears as paradox, it is crucial to understand that being outside of Europe meant embracing an important trait of European history: colonialism. In this manner, a settler-colonial project allowed Jews to reveal themselves as Europeans.

Studies of Herzl's life reveal his strong aspiration to establish himself as the 'new man' of the Enlightenment, sharing Christian European disdain for those 'stereotypical' Jewish characteristics that were presumed to obstruct assimilation into gentiles' society (see Kornberg 1993 and Bowman, 2011: 67). Similar to other aspiring-for-assimilation 'Western Jews,' Herzl categorised Jewishness into two types: Western, with which he identified; and Eastern, known as the *Ostjude*. The latter type of Jewishness, which he called *Mauschel,* was the one that bore an "unspeakably low and repulsive" character (Herzl in Pawel, 1989: 345), one whose reform was necessary, including even by means of mass baptism into the Catholic Church. Once all efforts to change the ghettoized nature of Jews failed and, instead, he witnessed the rise of anti-Semitic movements in Europe, Herzl conceived a programme called Zionism, which developed further his existing ideas for Jewish transformation outside Europe. Realising those difficulties entailing Jewish transformation and assimilation within the boundaries of Europe, Herzl advocated for Jews to leave Europe in order to establish a state "where they can finally reveal themselves as Europeans" (Bowman, 2011: 69). Herzl's espousal of the idea of ridding Europe of the Jews aligned him on the same side of those anti-Semitic Christians, whom he described in his diaries as allies and "most dependable friends" (Herzl cited in Massad, 2013: np), since they shared the same goal of Jewish evacuation.

Whilst a reading of Herzl's thoughts might argue that, his explicit alliance with Christian anti-Semites was merely strategic –a means to accomplish his goal of saving

the Jew from racist Europe –Bowman argues that Herzlian Zionism, at essence, is "profoundly anti-Semitic" (2011: 72). He explains, "not only does Herzl see Jewishness through the eyes of the anti-Semitic non-Jew, but contends that anti-Semitism can be extinguished by exterminating those Jewish characteristics which provoke it" (ibid). Thus, the establishment of a distinct entity for the Jews offers Jewish redemption via the Enlightenment paradigm. In fact, this process marks a transition from 'a pre-modern' self towards a new identity that embodies modern European 'Time.' An exploration of those temporal paradigms that Zionist thought propagated helps to reveal the Zionist obsession with 'Western Time.' It demonstrates both the anti-Semitism and the colonial logic that lie at its core. Moreover, the temporal premises of Zionist thought also relate to its Zionist spatial mapping of Palestine, demonstrating how central the fusion of time-space to the process of conquest is.

Drawing on the work of Johannes Fabian (1983) in *Time and the Other* allows us to unpack how Zionism functions as an agent of 'Western Time,' reproducing the colonial and racial dynamics of 19th century Europe. In what he calls anthropology's "denial of coevalness" (ibid: 25), Fabian analyses the political premises, and their exclusivist racial paradigms, behind the universalisation of Western progress. As a modern dynamic, Time 'naturally' constitutes its pre-modern less developed Other. Fabian unfolds the production of such a temporal knowledge about the other [7] in its unchallenged hierarchical form, by providing a genealogy of temporalizing discourses. Such a genealogy shows how the production of "a civilised West as the pinnacle of universal human progress and helped legitimise various imperialist projects" (ibid: x) occurred within what he defines as secularising Time. [8] Fabian elucidates how knowledge of Time moves from its construction within a religious frame of progress. In particular, Time moves from a notion of progress via salvation for a chosen people, e.g. Catholic Christians, towards its re-writing[9] in order to include "the whole world at

[7] Fabian's insights bear resonance to those of Giordano Nanni (2012). In '*The Colonisation of Time: rituals, routine and resistance in the British Empire*,' Nanni explains that Time was a crucial element for the 19th century British empire, which allowed for the construction of a Civilised western temporality and colonization of its other. Nanni's work is instrumental to trace the convergence of "Christianising and civilising" (3) to impose regiments of temporality in order to colonise and dominate societies.

[8] Although Fabian interchangeably uses the terms Christian and 'Judeo-Christian' time, it is worthwhile to stress that Fabian's genealogy is strictly rooted in Christian and, in particular, Catholic universalization of salvation Time.

[9] Fabian relies on the work '*Discourse on Universal History'* by the French catholic bishop, Jacques Benigne Bossuet, in order to trace 17th century attempts at writing "a universal history from a Christian point of view" (1983: 3).

all times" (ibid: 3). The Christian idea of salvation is universalized to include all humans, while salvation is understood as secular (through Progress and Development), rather than as Divine (ibid). This process of secularising time culminates with the naturalisation and universalisation of the evolutionary paradigm of 19th century Enlightenment, where a "spatializing of Time" (ibid: 15) takes place. The temporalisation of man's "self-realisation" (ibid: 7) replaces Time vis-à-vis salvation, and travels to different geographies in order to observe the different stages of human development. However, such a mapping of Time only takes place through an outward movement, going from the centre (European/West) towards the periphery (the rest). Different stages of development literally take place in relation to European space and civilisation. Fabian discloses how secular Time and its naturalisation place societies within "a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, some downstream" (ibid: 17). In such cases, knowledge of Time subscribes to 'a tabular' logic (ibid: 13), representing diagrammatical (ibid: 121) classifications of societies' 'level' of development. Colonial projects and racializing processes rely on such epistemological premises.

Herzlian Zionism stems from such temporal paradigms. For Herzl, knowledge of the self/other reproduces the 'politics of Time' (Fabian, 1983: 97) that justify European 19th century racial, anti-Semitic processes. This is clearly manifested in the way Herzl and other Zionist Jews enact what Fabian calls a 'schizogenic' use of time (ibid: viii), whereby a taken-for granted 'Western' 'we' defines itself against the 'Ostjude' 'Eastern Jew' (them). The latter fails to catch up with the former's (Western) Time. Once again, Herzl relies on the evolutionary schema of 19th century temporalizing rhetoric and reproduces the classifications of modern enlightened Europe. Thus, to break the Jewish destiny that relegates them outside the contours of the 'here' and 'now' of European Western Time, constantly collapsing into their 'pre-modern,' 'there' and 'then' stereotypically Eastern character, an act of 'distancing' (Fabian, ix) is necessary on behalf of those who are aware of such a temporal knowledge. It is by virtue of such a physical and geographical distancing from Europe, meaning transfer within a colonial project, that the Jew can become proximate with Europe and sufficiently located within 'Western Time.' For this reason, Zionism allied with anti-Semitic Christians, as they both possess necessary knowledge of Time through which Jewish/Christian socio-spatiality can be determined. Having such a knowledge of Time, the Zionists and

Christian anti-Semites could 'observe'[10] how Jews and Christian Europeans fail to live at the same Time in the same place.

The Zionist idea of relocating the Jews outside of European geography, creating their 'own' state, becomes a way to bridge such a temporal difference. Choosing Palestine rather than other proposed countries, such as Argentina, is a key point to this process. In particular, through their journey to Palestine the progress of the Jews towards that salvation which Europeans denied them, since "a Jew was a Jew even if he was a Christian" (Bowman, 2011: 69): in other words, a Jew was always other. Herzl and other Zionist leaders' aspirations for a Jewish state in Palestine ties strongly with temporalizing discourses that, as Fabian argues, find roots in Christian ideals of universalised myth of salvation. For this reason, Herzl, who fully identifies with European secular tenets, resorts to a Jewish state in Palestine as a means of emphasising the history of a 'Chosen people.'

Exploring Herzl through Fabian's genealogy shows that no contradiction lies at the core of Herzl's identifications with European Enlightenment, as well as theological mantras such as the 'Chosen People.' In fact, it proves the alignment of the Jew with European Time, as it emanates from a mapping of progress towards salvation. The journey to and settlement in Palestine for the Jew who wants to be European, therefore, embodies a movement across sacred time and its secularised variants. The establishment of a state in the East, in the very geography of the 'Orient,' follows a 'tabulation of space' according to an evolutionary paradigm, permitting the Jew to demonstrate its European-ness. 'Being in the orient geographically'[11] allows Jews to move up the scale of human development, abandoning the position from which they –European Jewry – come. Hence, to observe and contain the 'barbarism' (time) of the 'orient' (space) justifies Jewish embodiment of European civilisation. In Herzl's words, a Jewish state in Palestine would stand as a "defence of Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism" (in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 2011: 601).

[10] Fabian identifies 'observation' as a necessary tool to 'naturalise' an-Other Time, thus marking distance by virtue of denying coevalness (1983: 67).
[11] Ben Gurion's infamous statement: 'we are in the orient only geographically' (in Samman, 2010: 49).

4.1.2 To Quarantine Palestinian Time/Space: *Nakba* for Palestine

This taxonomic logic of civilisation versus barbarism, underpinned as Fabian shows by knowledge of Time, feeds the negation of (an)Other's Time. Zionism's negation of an Arab history in Palestine goes hand in hand with the geographical transformation of Palestine into 'Israel.' Joseph Massad explains, "For Palestine to become the 'desert that European Jews would make bloom,' the Israelis undertook the destruction of any signifying traces left by the expelled Palestinians including the 418 Palestinian villages" (2006: 38-39). He further draws on Israel Shahak:

> The truth about Arab settlement, which used to exist in the area of the State of Israel before 1948, is one of the most guarded secrets of Israeli life. No publication, book or pamphlet gives either [the] number [of Arab villages] or their location. This of course is done on purpose, so that the accepted official myth of 'an empty country' can be taught and accepted[…]This falsification is especially grave […] because the destroyed villages were—in almost all cases—destroyed completely […] so that literally a stone does not remain standing, and visitors are passing and being told that 'it was all desert' (ibid).

Similarly, Edward Said (1979: 13) argues that to reconstitute and rebuild Palestine necessitated the systematic replacement of hundreds of thousands of Arab communities with Jewish ones. A quote in 1969 from Moshe Dayan, an Israeli military leader, demonstrates the brutality of such acts, "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages […] because these geography books no longer exist [...] the Arab villages are not here either" (in Said, 1979: 14). Erasing Arab presence from the land has taken place through an ethnocratic order (Yiftachel, 1999) where Zionist 'facts on the grounds'[12] serve continuous Judaisation of the land. This, in turn, explains the structural reality of the Palestinian *Nakba*. The *Nakba* was not simply an event that refers to a moment in history where Palestinian indigenous dispossession allowed the establishment of Israel (i.e., the year 1948). Rather, Palestinian *Nakba* is the structure that defines the fabric of the "new colonial society on the expropriated land base" (Wolfe, 2006: 388).

It is through a Wall and Tower building system (Rotbard, 2003) that Zionism carves space in order to pursue the embodiment of the politics of Time. Architecture plays a

[12] In other words, Israeli settler expansion continues and grows exponentially in the West Bank and Jerusalem. For example, see: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-klass/facts-on-the-ground-israe_b_6949126.html (Accessed 24 June 2017).

crucial role in Zionist colonial conquest. It is through architecture that Zionism maintains a socio-spatial fabric of exclusive Jewish rule. At the core of Israeli socio-spatial landscape as premised on Herzlian Zionism are the two crucial elements of Wall[ing], as fortification and separation, and Tower/observing, as gazing down, devouring and containing. For instance, the Wall stands as an emblem of the ever-expanding Israeli/Zionist spatial contours, from pre-1948 until the present "separation fence" in the West Bank (ibid: 11). Rotbard stresses how the Wall represents a ferocious obsession with erecting enclosed spaces, which can be seen even in the building of urban environments, such as Tel Aviv. Most significantly, Rotbard argues that the Wall and Tower function as a way to "dictate the location of the new settlements on the peaks of mountains and hilltops [….] they mould the entire landscape as a network of points, as an autonomous layer spread above the existing landscape" (ibid: 10). Eyal Wizeman (2002: np) describes the architectural function of Israeli colonies as "urban optical devices for surveillance and exercise of power." Israeli colonies function as "panoptic fortresses" (ibid), which gaze *over* surrounding landscapes and Arab towns to maintain and exercise power.

Wall and Tower allows us to see how Zionism configures spaces according to an exclusionary and hierarchical logic that is inherent to a civilisation versus barbarism/'West versus Rest' logic. In Fabian's words, "*geopolitics* has its ideological foundations in *chronopolitics*" (1983: 144). Zionism becomes an agent of that 'Western Time' through the ways it carves up the very geography of historic Palestine. Israel establishes itself on top by building "settlement and military outposts and bypass roads and tunnels; and underneath lies Palestine: the land of villages and towns dirt roads and paths" (Rotbard, 2003:10). Furthermore, Zionist Israeli mechanisms to quarantine Palestinian time/space manifest through acts of 'distancing' (Fabian, 1983: 27) from those who are judged as incapable to live in the same place, and at the same time, of the newly revealed 'European Jewish-self.' Palestinian confinement within sealed spaces currently manifests itself in what is defined as the OPT (Occupied Palestinian Territories), where walls, checkpoints and permit systems--not to mention the infamous blockade of Gaza--function as methods of encirclement and 'enclavisation'(Khalili, 2013). Such practices date back to those early years of the Israeli state's establishment, when it imposed its brutal military regime on the 150,000 Palestinians whom it had not managed to expel. Ilan Pappé talks about the inhuman imprisonment of the Palestinians

under military rule, which denied basic right of movement while "their houses continued to be looted, their fields confiscated, their holy places desecrated" (2006: 200). It is within the confines of the "all-knowing, all seeing body of the military government" (Korn 2000: 168) that the Palestinian emerges as a ghost-like category of a present-absentee.

An explication of internally displaced Palestinians (IDP) allows us to comprehend the present-absentee figure. The category of internally displaced Palestinians or IDP refers to those who:

> were driven out of their homes by the Jewish forces (subsequently Israeli) prior to the foundation of the State of Israel, or by institutions under the authority of the State of Israel following its establishment, and who remained within the borders of the State of Israel most starkly in the period between November 1947 and July 1949, but also continuing into the present. Today, Israel continues to prevent these internally displaced persons (IDPs) from returning to their homes (Khoury, 2012: np).

IDP's constitute two groups: The first, which comprise the majority of IDP's, are those displaced throughout 1948 but who remained in what became known as Israel and then were classified according to Israeli law as present-absentees. The second group are those who were displaced after 1948 and now continue to reside in 'unrecognised villages.' The reason for such a classification is to prevent those IDPs, although granted Israeli citizenship, from returning to their previously owned homes and properties. They were recognised as present within the borders of the state, however, their 'absence' from property previously owned, which was the inevitable result of a process of systematic expulsion and being prevented from returning throughout the military period, deemed them 'absent' and so unable to recover their property. Their 'presence,' perpetually caught in 'absence,' instructs legitimised displacement and denial of return while Jews—from anywhere in the world—qualify for citizenship.[13]

Central to this condition of present absence is the classification of Palestinians in various categories that define them according to the hierarchical terrain of inclusion/exclusion. For instance, the issuing of identity cards by Israel is based on a

[13] Israel's Law of Return stipulates that any Jew, from anywhere in the world, has the right to proclaim 'Aliyah' and become a legal Israeli citizen. See: https://www.knesset.gov.il/laws/special/eng/return.htm (Accessed 14 June 2017).

measure passed from the pre-1948 British 'mandate regime' and serves a double functionality. It defines those who are 'in', those who are 'out' and thus those who might be 'infiltrators.' Pappé (2006) explains how the issuing of identity cards in the wake of establishing the state of Israel was instrumental to control the remaining Palestinians. The worst punishment, either imprisonment or transfer, was inflicted on those who were not in possession of the newly issued ID cards. Thus, ID cards became instruments for the "creat[ion] [of the] Israeli 'Arab minority' in order to prevent the imminent return of 800,000 refugees and their descendants outside the country" (ibid: 201). Identity classifications are central characteristic defining Palestinian communities across the varied enclaves that are assigned to them through the geography of the occupation. In *Hollow Land*, Eyal Weizmann (2007) paints an image of the colour coded lanes and sub-lanes making up the "complex choreography of pathways and security checkpoints that divide the passengers according to destinations defined by the geography of the Oslo accords."[14] Weizmann's statement captures how the Oslo Accords have contributed to furthering the reality of Palestinian confinement within the various hundreds of enclaves dissecting the West Bank territory into A [Palestinian], B [Palestinian semi-autonomy] and C [Israeli control]. It is in relative correspondence to these set-up territorial enclaves that Israeli imposed-barriers continue to mushroom throughout these territories. These barriers, identified for 'security,' require ID documentation and/or special permits "each allowing different categories of persons to travel through different categories of space through different categories of checkpoints" (ibid: 146).

The materiality of Israeli-configured space collides with the temporal paradigms that generated it in the first place. These spatial-temporal regimes fuse each other in order to curtail, devour and distance an Otherised time/space. The Israeli regime of classification and categorisation imposed onto Palestine/Palestinian enclaves is a manifestation of the tabular spatiality that Fabian sees as instrumental to relegating non-Europeans to (an)Other time. As tabular space produces knowledge through its orderly arrangement within the pre-figured tables and diagrams, so it helps to explain how the temporality of the other is negated and or "absorbed by the tabular space of

[14] Agreements between Palestinian officials and Israeli ones for 'peace.' Further discussion follows in Chapter 7.

classification" (Fabian, 1983: 147). Zionism controls and contains Palestinian enclosed spaces through the reality of the ID card system. It is that same gaze, which first observed Palestinians as *(un)identifiable*[15] others, that now identifies them, keeps them in place/ line/order. As the next section discusses, this gaze also imbues gendered and sexualised processes.

4.1.3 The Vacant and Virgin Land: Zionist Story of Creation

In *Land and Desire in early Zionism*, Boaz Neumann (2011:2) brings into focus what he calls an 'existential' aspect of the Zionist project in Palestine, which has been omitted from studies exploring 'settlement' from political, socioeconomic and ideological perspectives. This is the "pioneer's desire for the land" (ibid: 3), which he deems crucial to comprehending Zionism as instructed by 'conquest.' Neumann adopts a definition of conquest in the sense of 'creation,' 'construction' and 'redemption' of "land without organs through creating its organs" (ibid: 80-81), thus differing from conquest as violent and colonizing. His study focuses on what Hebrew defines as *halutzim* – pioneers, who were 'the first' to engage in activity in 'the land of Israel' (ibid: 3). To study the *halutzim's* relationship with the land means to explore the essential constituents of the way Zionism and Israel are experienced in space and the human body (ibid: 7). For this reason, he writes: "when we Israeli Jews of today *gaze* at the Land of Israel, we see it largely through the eyes of *halutzim*. When we feel it with our bodies and souls, we sense it largely through their sensibilities" (my emphasis: ibid).

It is desire that plays a crucial role in defining the 'gaze' and 'sensibilities' of the *halutzim*, that today's Israeli Jews - like Boaz Neumann - have inherited. Before unpacking elements of desire as manifested in the pioneer "intimacy with the land" (ibid: 52), Neumann firstly frames his approach to desire as one that is grounded in psychologising accounts that "purge desire of its essence and meaning" (ibid: 39). Desire for him is understood as a means of production in and of itself, "a pure energy, a fluidity that knows no origin (i.e., derives from no needs) or destinations (i.e., makes

[15] This refers, in particular, to Palestinian East Jerusalemites whose nationality is classified, in the travel document that Israel grants them (known as laissez-passer), as *un-defined.*

no demands) and is not essentially connected to any particular body" (ibid). However, it is also interesting to note how Neumann omits the role power plays in the construction of desire. He declares that it is life, in its totality, that informs *halutz* desire. Thus, Zionism is not a political movement but an act of devotion for life (ibid: 49). A counter-reading of this 'desire' from the standpoint of an Arab Palestinian, however, unveils its articulation vis-à-vis politics and power. It shows further how processes of gendering and sexualising, which crosscut the racializing project, inform conquest in its violent and colonising sense. This is where Zionist spatial-temporal paradigms of othering articulate the heteronormative desire, which regulate colonial relations in gendered terms (Butler, 1999).

Neumann's study helps to map out those performances of gender and sexuality that constitute Zionists' 'desiring project.' He writes, the "Zionist narrative of many halutzim is a story of falling in love romantically and even sexually, with the land of Israel" (2011: 52). Those representations of the land as "always female, virgin beloved mother earth" with the *halutz* seeking to "pierce that virginity and cause their beloved to fall in love with, and even wed them" (ibid: 53) capture the kind of love and sexual relationship for which the pioneer aspires. Neumann draws upon the cases of Zionist leaders, such as Ben Gurion and Berl Katznelson, who describe their relationship with land as their 'bride' and 'betrothed,' and their time with it as a 'honeymoon.' Further, he positions them as the 'groom' who will deliver into the 'mother-belly of the betrothed soil' (ibid). His study also unpacks how *halutzim* passion for the land is rooted in its wondrous beauty, which made the pioneers feel free as they were hypnotised by "the mysterious force inherent in the orient as a whole" (ibid: 63).

Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, we see how an "oppositional, binary gender system" (Butler, 1999: 30) constitutes *halutzim* desire. Far from being natural and free-floating, *halutzim* desire cannot be separated "from the political and cultural assumption in which it is invariably maintained" (ibid: 6). Configurations of the *halutz* as the penetrator of the 'virgin' 'mother-land' create and maintain a power dynamic based on exclusion and hierarchy, achieving the goals of settler colonial conquest (Smith, 2005: 23). In other words, performances of femininity and masculinity instruct pioneer desire for the land, underwriting a discursive power regime that is hetero-colonial. Desiring becomes a marker for 'rebirth' of the new Jews, which allows their 'return to history'

(Neumann, 2011: 45). Massad explains that the new post-diasporic 'Jewish man,' unlike his 'feminine' predecessors, would engage in agriculture, war and athletics (2006: 72). Pioneer unification with, and desiring of, the land not only regenerates the New Jewish body, figured 'without-organs,' signifying a living corpse and disunity[16], due to exile degeneracy. It also simultaneously redeems the 'sick,' 'desolate' state of the 'land-without-organs' (Neumann, 2011: 93). The land, therefore, stands 'bare' and 'naked' awaiting and yearning for the 'pioneer-redeemer' (ibid: 93), who will enable the organs to appear again. It is "a 'land without a people' [that] awaited, yearned for, and desired the 'people without a land'" (ibid: 79).

Pioneer conquest as 'creation' emerges within a discourse of desiring and being desired by the bare land in order to fulfil "a moral conquest as a result of which human beings lived and created cultural values" (ibid: 80). More importantly, as Neumann explains, the Arab incapacity to desire and conquer the land the way the *halutz* could informs such a 'moral conquest.'

> The emptiness of the land, its status as a land-without organs, was magnified by the Arab presence within it. In the halutzim eyes, the local Arabs had not only failed to build, create, and redeem the land but were incapable of doing so –because they *lacked desire*. Thus, the Arabs had not conquered the land and could not conquer it …largely owing to character traits such as laziness and *primitiveness*, expressed in a lack of technological capability (my emphasis, 2011: 84).

This passage captures desire as the origin story of Zionism, representing both the new Jew, who is *desiring* the land, and the land, which is yearning to be desired by its Jewish conqueror. To trouble (Butler, 1990) and queer Neumann's account means grasping how desire is the effect of conquest in its violent form and comprehending how violent assumptions constitute the Zionist 'story of origin.'[17]Exclusionary paradigms underpin Neumann's *untroubled* account of Jewish Israeli desire, constituting its *intelligibility*. Neumann's framing of conquest as moral and non-violent, naturalizes violence and

[16] Neumann explains that: "like the individual exilic body, the Jewish national body in exile existed in a degenerate state." He relies on the early Zionist diagnosis of the Jewish people, due to exile, as a 'body without organs' signifying disunity and lack of bonds and hence a status of 'a living corpse.' Neumann adds that this status of the 'Jewish body without organs' is what effectively leads to gentile fear of the Jews (2011: 141-142).

[17] Butler clarifies that the story of origin is "a strategic tactic within a narrative that by telling a single, authoritative account about an irrevocable past [before the legal state of origin] makes the constitution of the law appear as a historical inevitability" (1999: 46).

native dispossession, enabling conquest as colonialism to operate. Thus, conquest as 'moral' renders legitimate Zionist presence in Palestine/on the land. To reveal the normative, hierarchical, violent and exclusionary presumptions that inform this reality unsettles[18] settler colonial projects, such as the Zionist project in Palestine, and their gendered constituents (Butler 1999; Goeman, 2013 and Smith, 2005).

The Zionist desiring project gains its legitimacy through a naturalised account of gendered relations, presenting figures of the penetrator (masculine) pioneer and the penetrated (female) land, while also marking other bodies and desires as *illegitimate*. Pioneer penetration of the virgin land signifies both Arab impotence and lack of desire; or, as Neumann claims: "as a virgin, the land expected to be penetrated; the Arabs were impotent. As a bride the land demanded love; the Arabs did not love it they even neglected it" (2011: 85). Those gendering and sexualising processes reify the temporal and spatial constituents of Zionist settler colonialism. As Neumann indicates, such an impotence vis-à-vis the land informs how Zionism ontologizes Arab presence qua absence: "their very presence on the land served only to make their 'absence' more palpable and actually intensified pioneer desire" (ibid). Pioneer desire, constructing legitimacy of a moral conquest [creation], derives from the Arabs unnecessary presence on the land. The 'potency' of the Jewish Zionist presence only can be articulated in relation to its antithesis: the impotency of the present-absent Arab. The temporal paradigm of 'West' versus 'Orient' defines the potency of Israeli Zionist presence, constituting its 'reality' (in relation to conquest that Neumann argues is 'moral'). Desiring the so-called 'virgin' land entails drawing a boundary between Israeli Zionist (settler) presence as potency and Palestinian (indigenous) absence as impotency. Neumann also shows how the Zionist pioneers use expensive heavy European plows (2011: 84) unlike primitive Arab ones. The latter's ploughing techniques merely give "pretence of penetrating the soil"' (ibid), rendering conquest of land "a human cultural enterprise of great value, a civilising enterprise" (ibid). "Piercing the virgin soil" carves "the map of the land" (ibid: 81) where the Israeli Jew is gazing. As Neumann confirms, "his gaze creates a Zionist geography" (ibid). The link between pioneer desire, the gaze

[18] I borrow this term from the work of Mishuana Goeman (2013: 32), whose re-mapping of settler's geographies aims to unsettle the heteropatriarchy that use gendering and racializing structures to support settler-colonialism.

and carving Zionist geography highlights the particular role of vision in the geographies of conquest. Mishuana Goeman argues that colonial vision conceives territory through "transparent processes" (2013: 31) and "colonial closures" (ibid: 33), which, in turn, are informed by conceptions of modern versus primitive. Goeman's insights link to how Blunt and Rose (1994: 13) define the colonial gaze, as erasing native presence and creating blank spaces for settlers to be conquered. While this quest for total knowledge and control instructs the epistemological and ontological foundations of orientalist/settler-colonial mapping, it also unveils the masculine positionality (Blunt and Rose: 1994: 5) of the gaze. This Zionist ga(y)zing, tantamount to ongoing 'conquest' continues today within the frame of Israeli 'liberal democracy.' Taking the example of the pornographic movie *Men of Israel* and the discourses revolving around Israel as 'liberal' and 'gay,' the next section demonstrates the continuation of Zionist conquest, thus hetero-colonialism.

4. 2 Ongoing '*Conquest*'[19]: The Ga(y)ze of a Liberal Democracy

[19] I refer to conquest as Neumann does, thus meaning construction and creation, because it allows me to show how discourses describing Israel as a modern democracy and a sexual haven are rooted in the pioneer story of 'conquest.' In other words, they reify spatio-temporal pre-requisites and their gendered constituents for Zionists' continued colonisation of Palestine.

Figure 4.1, *Men of Israel cover photo*

Source: https://myspace.com/lucasblog/mixes/classic-men-of-israel-395415/photo/124199377 (Accessed 24 June 2017)

> "Go to Tel Aviv and have sex with hunky Israeli guys, they are so masculine they are soldiers." (Michael Lucas, director of *Men in Israel*, in Schulman, 2012: 117)

Michael Lucas is the director of the 2009 pornographic film *Men of Israel* (Figure 4.1). An American Jew known for his loyalty to Israel and keenness to obtain Israeli citizenship through its law of return, Lucas often spoke of the significant role his films play in relation to promoting Israel's 'humanist values' (Portwood, 2013: np). He claims, "when it comes to gay rights, Israel, is one of the most progressive countries" (ibid). Lucas offers his films, including *Men of Israel*, as examples to confront some of the misconstrued assumptions about Israel. He states: "Tel Aviv is maybe the gayest city in the world but some people lump Israel in, with other Middle Eastern countries where gay life is vastly more secretive and dangerous and where gay people are subject to harassment, assault and imprisonment" (ibid). Lucas's *Men of Israel* celebrates an 'all-Israeli gay porn,' with an 'all-Israeli cast' and across 'an-all Israeli geographies' (Hoffman, 2009: np). It helps "viewers see Israel, its geographic features and history, a place not much different from Prague or Palm Springs: an invitation of LGBT vacation destination where handsome men have sex" (ibid). Furthermore, Lucas does not shy away from speaking out against those whom he describes as "romanticizing the same Palestinians that hang gay people on cranes, but demoniz[e] Israel which is a safe haven

for gay people" (Glazov, 2011). Instead, he claims, "Israel is a beacon of LGBT emancipation in an area that's very dark corner for our gay and lesbian brothers and sisters" (Jerusalem Post, 2011: np).

I draw on these narratives to demonstrate how representations of Israel as 'a gay haven' corresponds to a Zionist settler colonial teleology, generating - once again - the spatio-temporal paradigms central to Zionist 'conquest.'[20] Lucas's porn movie features images filmed in "telegenic scenes of Tel Aviv and Haifa" (Kaminer and *The Forward*, 2009: np) for promoting Israeli tourism, and it refers to an 'abandoned village' on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Lucas describes this 'abandoned village' in an online blogpost:

> It was a beautiful ancient township that had been deserted centuries ago... However, that did not stop our guys from mounting each other and trying to repopulate it. Biology may not be the lesson of the day but these guys shot their seeds all over the village (2009: np).

Although Lucas describes this village as abandoned for centuries, it is in fact, a former Palestinian village, Suba, whose population was ethnically cleansed in 1948 (see Blumenthal 2013: 215). Lucas' statement constitutes an act of erasure that simultaneously establishes Israel as a particular kind of (liberal, gay friendly) presence. His film and statements resonate with an array of narratives framing Israel as a liberal democracy via its 'record' on gender and sexuality rights. For instance, in his 2011 speech to the Joint Session of US Congress, after emphasising the strong alliance that connects his country to America, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Israel does not need democracy or nation building, 'we got it.'[21] Israel's assumed ability to build democracy as per its Western allies in America and Europe is positioned in relation to a 'lack' in the rest of the region. In fact, Netanyahu declares, "in a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, and Christians persecuted, Israel stands out, it is different [...] free press, open courts, rambunctious parliamentary debates" (ibid). Both Lucas and Netanyahu's statements present Israel as an LGBT destination that mirrors places like 'Prague' and 'Palm Springs.' At the same time, such discourses also entail the creation of distance from a surrounding region, which they observe as 'a dark corner' for sexual minorities.

[20] In reference to Neumann's analysis of Zionist conquest as per *desire* for creation.
[21] See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BaMLlnb_KI (Accessed 24 June, 2017).

Lucas' film and related narratives promote the gayness of Israel as a modern liberal democracy and represent a manifestation of Zionist on-going colonisation of Palestine. In such discourses, we can capture the continuity of Zionist hetero-colonialism. This is where Jewish Israeli exclusive and 'rightful' presence over Palestine, by virtue of carving an all-Israeli topography, fuses a temporalizing rhetoric (civilised versus primitive). Lucas embodies such a reality of legitimate Zionist presence allowing conquest in the sense of desiring creation and continuing repopulation (Neumann, 2011). On the one hand, he automatically qualifies to obtain Israeli citizenship, a process that Israel grants through the implementation and maintenance of its ethno-racist laws. On the other hand, granted citizenship comes with Lucas' pride to promote Israeli humanist and progressive values, which, in turn, drive his dedication to a cinematic work promoting the beauty of Israeli geography. It is the demarcation of a barbaric Other, a supposed primitive Middle East region that allows Lucas, and so Israel, to articulate Israeli progressiveness toward gay rights. As Lucas warns, Palestine should not be romanticised for the way it 'hangs its gays.'

It is against the backdrop of such an analysis that it is possible to trace the violence of Zionist settler colonial conquest of and/or the on-going *Nakba* for Palestine. The Israeli liberal ga(y)ze demonizes Palestine and Palestinians, turning them into savages 'hanging gays on cranes' and therefore, unlike Israel, not destined to build a nation and achieve the goals of democracy. Through such a logic, Palestine and Palestinians, unlike Lucas, have no right to exist and/or be granted a right to return to those spaces that are now proclaimed part of 'Israel.' The emptiness of the 'deserted' village, therefore, continues to instigate the desire for conquest, meaning Jews spreading Jewish seeds for repopulation (Neumann, 2011). Irrespective of gender and/or sexual identification of Israeli Jewish subjectivity, the desire to spread their seeds and repopulate the land, construed as 'vacant,' manifests the masculinist and heteronormative positionality of settler colonial violence in Palestine. In fact, the need to spread Jewish Israeli seeds, which marks legitimated settler conquest versus native dispossession, continues to be articulated within the gendered and sexualised images that underwrite Israeli rhetoric of military invasion.

4.2.1 Bibi: Finish from Inside

The summer of 2014 witnessed one of the most brutal Israeli aggressions on the Gaza Strip, killing 2,230 Palestinians and leaving over 10,636 injured.[22] It caused widespread destruction of buildings and infrastructure, and further displaced tens of thousands of the same refugees (and their descendants) that the Zionist colonial regime had expelled into the Gaza Strip in 1948 and 1967.[23] While such a brutal bombardment occurred, a particular image (see below Figure 4.2) circulated widely throughout Israeli social media. The image shows a woman in a sexually provocative pose, lying on what could be a bed or a sofa, whose upper body is fully covered in an ultra-conservative Islamic fashion, including the *niqab* on the face. However, the bottom part of the woman's body is left bare, the legs' flesh and a pair of shiny red heels are visible to those who look at it. The writing on her clothes clearly indicate that the woman and her body represent Gaza. Underneath the image of the alluring and sexually inviting woman/Gaza, is written in Hebrew 'citizens [who are] in favour of ground assault [on Gaza].' Their statement follows with a request on top of the image that reads 'Bibi [short for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] finish from inside this time.' The image and its caption are tantamount to promoting assault on Gaza via the imagery of raping Gaza [the woman]. David Sheen (2014: np) explains, "In Hebrew, the colloquial meaning of 'finish' is to ejaculate."

Building on Sheen's observation, I argue that this image and its circulation make a strong case for reading Zionist colonial order over Palestinian bodies through the logic of hetero-colonialism. Examining narratives of sexual violence that parallel the invasion of native land, demonstrates the gendered and sexualised (see Smith, 2005: 1) premises of colonising processes. Most significantly, the marking of sexualised 'rapable' (ibid: 10) otherness as a tool for conquest comes hand in hand with the discursive production of Palestine as a racially marked otherness. A thorough examination of the veiled reality of the woman (Gaza) in the image exposes the layers

[22] For further analysis of the 2014 Gaza aggression, see (Alqaisiya and Bhungalia, 2014: np).
[23] Gaza is a hub for internally displaced Palestinian refugees who were expelled from the territories now identified as Israel proper throughout the processes of Zionist colonisation and declaration of state in 1948 (*Al-Nakba*), as well as in the 1967 six day war (known as Al-Naksa) where further displacement of Palestinians took place.

and interactions of gendering, sexualising and racializing processes that are central to conquest.

Figure 4.2

Poster reads in Hebrew: 'Bibi finish from inside this time' (top) and 'citizens in favour of military invasion' (bottom). [24]

The usage of an Islamic veil to cover the upper half of the woman-as-Gaza aims to identify Gaza as clearly Islamic. Understanding how Israel views and represents Gaza as a veiled woman, and thus Islamic, requires contextualising such images within broader discourses on the global war on terror, securitisation and their media proliferation. This image accentuates Israeli representations of Palestinians as 'Muslim-so-terrorist,' thus granting the moral justification for Israel's brutal aggressions in Gaza under the banner of fighting 'Muslim terrorists of Hamas.' The aggression is a continuation of Israel's collective punishment against Palestinians. It also manifests in Gaza through the imposition of a siege that goes as far as to limit the daily intake of

[24] Source: http://muftah.org/israels-war-gazas-women-bodies/#.WMvsm9JviUk (Accessed 24 June 2017).

calories for each Gazan by controlling the entrance of food allowed into the Strip.[25] These measures also entail the classification of Gaza as a 'hostile territory,' which happened in the aftermath of Hamas' electoral victory in 2006 and its subsequent take-over of the Strip in 2007.

In such a context, the veil becomes a political and cultural marker that identifies Palestinian otherness as dangerous, via the figure of the Muslim/Terrorist. The veil is central to construe racially and culturally marked otherness whose violent conquest, as the image indicates, is grounded in gendering and sexualising the Other. As the image shows, otherness should be punished by ground invasion, which is equivalent to an ejaculation from inside. This brings resonance to earlier narratives around the Zionist story of creation, which although not necessarily captured via rape imagery, they nevertheless echo this need for Jewish virility to penetrate the virgin-land awaiting Jewish insemination. The veil in the above imagery, however, stands crucial for marking sexual and racial otherness, thus continuity of hetero-colonialism. In her analysis of the figure of the veiled woman, Meyda Yegenoglu (1998) reveals the instrumentality of the veil in simultaneously mapping cultural and sexual otherness, while constructing a sovereign colonial self. In other words, the omnipotence of the all-knowing-all-in-control colonial and Western Gaze constructs its object of knowledge as feminine and oriental other, whose veiled-self informs its very essence. It is the veil that reveals the *orientalness of the orient* (ibid: 48), framing it as a place of unknown and hidden culture that ought to be revealed. Since the veil stands in the way of total knowing, instructing the reality of the orient in its 'deceptive' and 'mysterious' manner (ibid: 52), it is the veil that instigates the desire to penetrate.

The veil is thus both *threatening* and *seductive*. Figure 4.2 shows how Israeli citizens in favour of the military invasion imagine Gaza as a female Muslim woman, whose veiled upper half is as provocative as the bottom half. On the one hand, her veiled top-half, which allows her to see without being seen, instigates a sense of deceptiveness, mysteriousness and threat. On the other hand, the bottom naked-half of her body alludes and combines a sense of threat and urge for penetration, albeit by force. It allows an articulation of the seductiveness that the mysteriousness of the veiled-woman (Gaza) allows and enables. This double movement triggers and justifies the desire to penetrate

[25] See: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/17/israeli-military-calorie-limit-gaza (Accessed 24 June 2017).

the woman (Gaza) who appears both threatening, as well as seductive and inviting. Therefore, the urge to 'finish from inside' becomes justified from the stand point of the coloniser sovereign-self who is able to *see* the seductiveness imbued in the mysteriousness and threatening nature of the native land and/or Other. In other words, *she* is asking for it.

Combining Yegenoglu's analysis with Finley's (2011: 34) insights on settler-colonial imaginary stories of conquest, which represent native female bodies as available sexual objects, helps to place the image of the military invasion of Gaza in relation to 'pioneer desire for conquest' (Neumann, 2011). It shows the continuity between the conquest of 19th century woman/land and the 2014 representation of Gaza/woman as effects of a discursive economy of the veiled-orient. Although pioneer desire does not necessarily rely on the veil as an explicit means of sexualising the land, it invests in the production of land within this very lens of threat and seductiveness similarly, to what the explication of the veil vis-à-vis oriental-ness reveals. Neumann's study reveals how pioneers' eyes view the land in its magical quality, as they "conjectured further of some *mysterious* force inherent in the orient as a whole" (my emphasis, 2011: 63). This mysteriousness combines a sense of danger and threat, which further accentuates pioneer desire for penetration. By virtue of penetration through Jewish Israeli seeds, Zionist conquest urges to fight the sense of degeneracy and threat that the orient (woman-land) naturally poses; while the exotic, feminised, orient other is believed to lure the pioneers to *desire* and *conquer her*.

Through such an analysis, it is possible to return to Lucas' movie in order to stress how it feeds wider economies of *(un)veiling* as part of on-going *conquest*. The spread of Jewish Israeli seeds all over the deserted village that Lucas' movie enables, *de facto* reflects 'liberal,' 'humanist' and 'progressive' lens continuing to reveal and ga(y)ze into (an)Other (deemed un-progressive, backward, etc.). Lucas' movie and the film's accompanying narratives depict Israel's progressiveness qua sexual modernity, which seeks to *penetrate* into the reality of darkness and primitiveness of a Middle East region that is presumed to lack democracy and sexual rights. By virtue of unveiling and depicting (an)Other, the liberal ga(y)ze both constructs conquest in its moral, cultural

and humanist values and *effaces* its own constitution[26] via the gendering and racializing constituents of settler colonialism.

4.5 Conclusion: Queering Matters to Hetero-Colonialism

The chapter demonstrates how heteronormativity occupies a central role in the Zionist colonial project in Palestine. It looks at the development of 19th century Zionism in relation to the question of Western Time and shows how the Zionist project relies on the fusion of time-space mechanisms, embracing civilizational trajectories vis-à-vis (an)Other barbaric Orient. This allows the comprehension of how mapping techniques of observation, fortification and classification reflect and infuse a taxonomic logic of temporalizing, which marks Jewish relocation to Palestine as a 'return to history.' More importantly, in showing the primacy of masculinist gaze of 19th century Zionist mechanisms for mapping and temporalizing, the analysis contextualises the continuity of Zionist hetero-colonialism. The representations of modern sexuality unveil an oriental, Islamic, feminised and conquerable Other. Those gendered and racialised underpinnings of Zionist colonialism detail the contextual frame necessary to understand the relevance of queering to Palestine. It is from this point that an exploration of the significance of queer (activism and aesthetics) in Palestine and their meanings in relation to decolonisation begins.

[26] This resonates with Yegenoglu's argument on the colonial gaze as a "deaf topology of the veil" made up of tales of unveiling and penetrating the other's world, which she reveals comes hand in hand with processes of 'effacement' "ensur[ing] that the desire which represents the veil itself is never represented" (1998:58).

5. Unsettling the Colonial Ga(y)ze: The Role of alQaws' Decolonial Queer Politics

This chapter and the following one (Chapter 6) examine the role queer activism and art play in challenging and unsettling the hetero-colonial ga(y)ze. In particular, the chapter charts the emergence of the group 'alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society' vis-à-vis queer politics in Palestine and explores the relevance of decolonial queer activism. The analysis of alQaws' politics and their meanings in relation to queer, Palestine and decolonisation, emerges by looking at anti-pinkwashing and pinkwatching discourses and activism. The chapter shows how alQaws' queer politics, on the one hand, strive for what I call 'decolonial modes of being,' where aspirations for different [decolonial] ways of being instruct political agency to counter normalisation. On the other hand, it reveals a positionality whose aspirations for Palestine challenge 'homonationalist' frame of analysis (Puar and Mikdashi, 2012: np). By drawing on queer people of colour critiques (Muñoz, 2009) and decolonising indigenous accounts (Driskill *et al*, 2011), the chapter investigates how Palestinian queerness 'gazes back' at colonising discourses of modern sexuality.

This chapter concludes that alQaws brings out decolonial queer politics and questions what the study identifies as Zionist hetero-colonialism (see Chapter 4), paving the way for investigating how queer aesthetics also challenge the colonial gaze.

5.1 To be Queer in Palestine

In 2001 alQaws operated as an informal group under the umbrella of an Israeli LGBT organisation, The Jerusalem Open House (JOH).[27] As one member explains:

> It was only following the official separation from the Israeli group and its registration as an independent organisation that I joined alQaws and became actively involved in its activities and meetings, which are held regularly in Ramallah (Ghaith, Interview, August 2014).

[27] Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance is "a leading organization of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) people and their allies in the heart of Jerusalem." See: http://joh.org.il/index.php/english (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Haneen Maikey, director and founding member of alQaws, provides a detailed explanation of the gradual development of alQaws' current political trajectory. This process did not come about because of "us feeling happy and drunk and wanting all of a sudden to be radical" (Maikey, 2014: np), rather it was the outcome of "ten years of real field-work experience that - most of the time - was far from radical, if not very politically problematic" (ibid). She adds:

> In 2001 alQaws was part of an Israeli Zionist organisation in Jerusalem. The funny story is that they advertised a job looking for a Palestinian – the job description referred to an Arabic speaker or something along those lines – a community organiser who could reach out to Palestinians LGBT. Since I was exploring my sexuality, it was the right timing and perfect 'professional hat' to hide under in order to explore my sexuality […] so, in 2001 we started as a tiny, local, service-oriented, apolitical project. We were exploring our sexual orientation in a Zionist Israeli apolitical organisation [audience bursts laughing]. It is a joke but it's true, [and this was] in one of the most hectic political periods, a couple of months after the Second Intifada. We were a bunch of queers sitting in a community centre discussing sexual orientation. I think what happened at the end of those various meetings, as we went down town Jerusalem, was crucial for us. Soldiers were stopping us; friends who came from the West Bank - back then the apartheid wall was not yet officially in place - they were not even able to come. So, this entire political situation was coming in, imposing itself into these discussions and it was really hard to ignore. What we did was to contain it, work with it, and see how we could be queers in Palestine and what it meant to be queer in Palestine and Palestinian queer. In other words, we were exploring our sexual orientation in a Zionist, Israeli, apolitical organisation [audience bursts laughing] – it sounds like a joke but it is true (ibid).

As the words of Haneen Maikey reveal, this intense political period brought the group to interrogate its cooperation with Israeli LGBT spaces, which was primarily based on sexual orientation, and triggered a need to 'be queers in Palestine.' During the period of the second Intifada (2000-2005), Israeli colonising forces targeted and killed Palestinians everywhere,[28] intensifying further the reality of checkpoints, soldiers and settlements. This period also represented the unofficial demise of the Oslo-Accord-inflicted 'peace era,'[29] as the flawed premise of the Oslo agreements crumbled. It posed a challenge to Palestinian LGBTQ people, amongst other Palestinian groups, forcing

[28] The events in October 2000 witnessed the killings of Palestinian protestors in Israel, classified as Arab Israelis, at the hand of Israeli police. see: https://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/8639 (Accessed 13 July 2017).

[29] The Oslo Accords in 1993 signalled the start of the peace process between Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) and Israel. During this period, many Palestinians collaborated with Israeli organisations. Chapter 7 discusses further its implications.

them to question their relation with those spaces offered by Jewish Israeli organizations, such as JOH.

The reflections of Haneen explain the subversive potentialities of the group's redefining process. In reaction to a political situation that 'was imposing itself' in everyday discussions, their act of self-identification as 'queer in Palestine' or 'Palestinian queer' was a conscious act of political resistance. It also describes how Palestinian queers started grounding their queerness into that which had been foreclosed within Israeli LGBT spaces, meaning: the colonial reality of Palestine, thus one's own Palestinian-ness. Haneen comments further:

> Being in this situation, we started to see how the coloniser/colonised dynamic reproduce itself, in terms of what language we could and could not use. We could not use the word 'occupation' because this 'apolitical' Zionist organization would not allow it […] and in 2005 we decided to split from JOH (Maikey, 2014: np).

During the separation process, which took place over two years, alQaws was trying to define what being queer *in Palestine* means and how to be a "relevant and integral part of Palestinian society which is struggling with a lot of social and political issues" (ibid). While this constant effort to orientate themselves as queer Palestinians is an ongoing process (Field notes, December 2015), it was concomitant to a growing critical stance vis-à-vis the limitations of single-issue politics.

5.1.1 From 'Mithlyoon wa nos' to 'Queeryat'

alQaws' activists began publishing their writings on an online column called *Mithlyoon wa nos* [Arabic equivalent for 'proudly gay'], as part of the Arabic literature and politics website *Qadita*[30] (Ghaith, Interview, August 2014). This column later changed into the Arabised version of queer, 'Queeryat corner.'[31] Although this change seems irrelevant, in the article '*Sexuality Movement in Palestine from Identity Politics to Queer*' Haneen Maikey and Taj Al'aress (2011: np) explain how this move represents a symptom of a broader movement. The move from 'mithli' to 'queer' comes as a desire to re-shape the

[30] Qadita.net is an Arabic website founded by Palestinian author, Ala Hlehl, and Palestinian journalist, Anton Shalhat, both residing within the Israeli state. The name *Qadita* comes after a village in upper Galilee that Israeli forces depopulated in 1948. See: https://arablit.org/2010/08/16/new-arabic-literature-politics-website-qadita-launches/ (Accessed 24 June 2017).
[31] See: http://www.qadita.net/category/archive/queers/ (Accessed 24 June 2017).

frame for sexuality-based organising in Palestine. It echoes the expansive capacity of working beyond what alQaws perceives as the limiting framework of 'lil-mithlyeen wa al mithlyat' [for gays and lesbians] (Maikey and Al'arees, 2011: np). It is the outcome of positioning the group and its micro-struggle within 'the wider context of Palestine' and its 'larger struggle.' The authors of the article indicate that:

> Our life is political and, as queer activists, we need to deal with politics. We believe that all various struggles in our society are part of a bigger struggle. As queer Palestinians, we cannot ignore colonialism, militarism and ethnic discrimination, and simply focus on lesbian and gay rights. In doing so, we stay disconnected from our everyday context. In our group meetings, we hardly hear the words 'homophobia,' 'coming out of the closet' or 'fear of fundamentalists,' and other words that might find more prominence to western frame of gay organising […] Therefore, we do not frame our discussions within the terms of coming out. Rather we can talk about how our society as a whole can arrive to occupy the centre towards gender and sexual diversity. Instead of homophobia, we ought to talk about the danger of dividing people into those who accept gays and those who fear them. The use of such narratives ignores our existence within such power paradigms. We are part and parcel of society, thus the product of its 'heteronormative' structure. This means that we also bear the seeds of the 'homophobia' against which we might come to position an affirmative identity (ibid).

While this extract from the article demonstrates how alQaws activists articulate a critical approach in relation to 'gay rights,' it is also important to understand how this move intertwines with the Palestine-identification lens explored above. The split from JOH and the Israeli LGBT community called for a different position vis-à-vis the paradigm of single-issue politics. alQaws re-articulates this frame because it starts realizing that to mobilise people on the sole basis of sexual orientation is equivalent to 'a trap' (Maikey and Al'rees, 2011: np). The group reflects on those lurking dangers that a western frame of gay organising brings about. It takes into consideration how those terms, such as 'coming out of the closet' and 'homophobia,' risk reproducing the structural conditions of colonialism, where Palestine is located and Palestinians live.

During Skype discussions, Ghaith, one of alQaws' most prominent voices, recounted a homophobic incident that took place in 2009 in a gay bar of Tel Aviv,[32] leading to the death of two people. In particular, he discussed how the event organized to commemorate the victims turned out to be a celebration of Jewish Zionist discourse.

[32] See http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/8180173.stm (Accessed 24 June 2017).

> A commemorating event followed this incident but some Palestinian LGBT, who wanted to express their solidarity, were banned from participating in fear of them 'talking politics.' At the same time, the event was full of those same Israeli politicians who praised the killings of Gazans[33] a few months earlier. Now, they had come to proclaim a 'Do Not Kill' message to the rhythm of the Israeli national anthem at the vigil (Ghaith, Skype Conversation, April 2015).

It is important to note that Israeli anthem, 'Hatikvah,' is a Zionist song that celebrates exclusive Jewish entitlement to Palestine identified as the 'land of Zion.' Naftali Herz Imber, a Ukrainian Jew, wrote Hatikvah [meaning 'hope' in Hebrew] in 1880 to represent "the undying hope of the Jewish people, through the long years of exile that they would someday return to independence in their homeland" (Jewish virtual Library: np).[34] This song represents yet another example of a Zionist hope for a return to history, which reflects salvation qua 'Time' (see Chapter 4 Section 1.1). Hatikvah stands for the Zionist reinvention of Jewish collective identity within a biblical frame, it legitimizes a Jewish nation as a colonial project in the land of Palestine.

From here, it is possible to comprehend how alQaws' queeryat approach and positionality troubles and so queers the subject of unitary [colonial] gayness. alQaws activists developed a critical lens beyond exclusivist 'gay' identifications, thus allowing possibilities for 'gay' re-signification (Butler,1999). Their alternative consisted of a conceptualization of sexuality as grounded into the socio-political context, taking into account the colonial reality of Palestine with its multiple power dynamics, thus 'talking politics.' '*alQaw*s,' Arabic word for 'rainbow,' tries to prevent the rainbow from becoming an exclusive symbol for '*milthlyyon wa mithlyat*' [gays and lesbians], rather it embraces '*t'adudiyyah jensiyyah wa jindariyyah*' [sexual and gender diversity], while positioning itself '*fi al mujtama' al falastini*' [in Palestinian society]. This process of naming manifests alQaws' determination to re-signify the exclusionary politics of gayness or LGBT frame. In doing so, it captures what Judith Butler describes as queering and twisting, by virtue of yielding the terms [sexual and gender diversity in Palestine] for being politically relevant (Butler, 1993: 19). This identification with sexual and gender diversity in Palestine presents a queering resistance to exclusionary gay frame, and culminated with the official establishment of alQaws as an

[33] Israel launched a military aggression on the Gaza strip in 2008 known as *operation cast lead*. See: https://imeu.org/article/operation-cast-lead (Accessed 24 June 2017).
[34] See: http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/israeli-national-anthem-hatikvah (Accessed 24 June 2017).

independently registered group in 2007. Positioning themselves within Palestinian society and its 'larger struggle' (Maikey and Al'arees, 2011: np) also raised questions about the polarising paradigms underlying gay-rights agenda and single-issue politics. The following section illustrates how alQaws' activists confront Israeli use of those paradigms in order to paint a 'pink-progressive' image of itself and further legitimize its existence upon Palestinian 'homophobic' lands.

5.2 Identifying Pinkwashing: A Window for Decolonial Queer Work

On 28th February 2014, I travelled to the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London in order to attend a talk[35] by the founder and director of alQaws, Haneen Maikey, as part of the annual 'Israeli Apartheid week.' This annual event includes numerous activities whose aim is to "raise awareness about Israel's on-going settler-colonial project and apartheid policies over the Palestinian people."[36] On this occasion, Haneen discussed what Palestinian-led queer activist groups, and their international alliances, have termed 'Israeli pinkwashing.' She explained how in 2002 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked Israeli LGBT communities to take part in a video aimed at branding Israel as pink-progressive, whose distribution would take place in San Francisco, US. In 2005, this campaign expanded and became known as 're-branding Israel' with millions of dollars invested to promote Israel's gay and progressive image worldwide. This became a tactic to promote Israel as a liberal and gay haven in order to whitewash its crimes against Palestine, which, in turn, is deemed as backward and homophobic (Maikey, 2014: np).

In our collaborative piece, Haneen, Ghaith and I frame pinkwashing as:

> an ontologically racist and colonial project […] a familiar Zionist tactic that reframes the relationship between Israel and Palestine from 'coloniser-colonised' to one that distinguishes between those who are 'modern and open,' and those who are presented as 'backward and homophobic.' Thus,

[35] The talk is also available online on alQaws' page, see: http://alqaws.org/videos/Liberation-in-Palestine-A-Queer-Issue-Haneen-Maikey?category_id=0 (Accessed: 24 June 2017).
[36] The Israeli apartheid week organises 'Panels, film screenings and creative actions' to mobilise support for the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. See: http://apartheidweek.org/ (Accessed: 24 June2017).

> it simplifies and anesthetizes the fundamental violence on the basis of which colonialism thrives (Alqasiyah, Hilal and Maikey, 2016: 131).

This demonstrates that the promotion of a fun, fabulous, gay image of Israel relies on a logic that polarises Israel and Palestine as modern/open versus backward/homophobic. alQaws' activists consider these dynamics as a very important component to tackle and discuss critically:

> On the one hand, there is the open western Israel, which accepts homosexuality. On the other hand, there is the Palestinian society, which suffers from homophobia and rejects homosexuality in all its manifestations. Since Israel is 'the only western country that is LGBT-friendly' – a claim that perfectly rhymes with 'the only democratic country in the Middle East' - and is also surrounded by a sea of 'homophobes,' then it has the right to break human laws and fight those 'barbarians' surrounding her. We witness, therefore, the pinkwashing of the apartheid wall, which becomes a wall to protect Israel from a 'homophobic' attack. At the same time, calls are made for putting an end to the support of Palestinians because they are not 'LGBT-friendly' (Maikey and Shamali, 2011: np).

They point out these dichotomies in order to demonstrate the exclusivist character of LGBT rights agenda and challenge the colonial tactic of pinkwashing. alQaws' anti-pinkwashing efforts show how Israeli ideals of progress entail racist and anti-Arab assumptions. Maikey also explains how pinkwashing becomes appealing for those

> who already adopted some of kind of racist and anti-Arab message to their views on progress […] it does not only promote racist fictions about the Palestinians, but it actually relies on the fact that racism already exists in this room (Maikey, 2014: np).

By questioning pinkwashing narratives, through anti-pinkwashing or pinkwatching, alQaws challenges the normative and dichotomous frames that structure the world into civilised versus uncivilised, pride versus homophobia, progressive versus backward, democracy versus terror. alQaws, therefore, unveils how Israeli pinkwashing succeeds to normalise a vision of progress that perpetuates colonialism and racism. It shows also – as the Chapter 4 identified (see Section 4.2) –how the Zionist conquest continues under the ga(y)ze of liberal democracy, and where discourse of sexual progress reproduce Zionist hetero-colonialism. More importantly, these examples show how alQaws approaches sexuality in relation to politics and relationality, as Jose Muñoz argues (2009: 94). Muñoz describes queerness as political and relational, bearing aspirations for the future, for something else other than the status quo. He refers to this

queer desire beyond the here and now, clarifying**:** "Queerness should and could be about a desire for another way of being in the world and time, a desire that resists mandates to accept that which is not enough" (ibid: 96). Similarly, alQaws' operational framework acknowledges the value of politics and relationality, formulating what I call Palestinian decolonial queer politics.

An emblematic example of such efforts to 'pinkwatch Israel'[37] took place during another anti-pinkwashing event at the London School of Economics (LSE), where I participated with other Palestinian activists – including from alQaws. During the event, a member of the audience, who introduced himself as Israeli, stressed: "Israel has the right to promote its image and be proud of being open, just like any other country would promote itself, and why should there be anything wrong with that?!" (Khoury, alqaisiya and Abu-Ziyad, LSE Talk,[38] February 2015). Omar, a member of the panel and alQaws activist, replied:

> I think you have not paid enough attention to our talks, which show that Israel is not like any other normal country first and foremost, because its branding campaign always relies on proliferating certain images and narratives of the Palestinians. So, it is not just an innocent act of self-promotion what is happening here (ibid).

In fact, the whole event questioned the myth of Israeli innocence and normalcy. In this regard, another panellist provided an illustrative presentation, including videos and online gay guides to Tel-Aviv. It revealed how Israel paradoxically present itself since its gay-friendly, modern and democratic branding campaign relies heavily on the continued reproduction of images of the Palestinian (gay) as a closeted victim, exotic other and/or terrorist.[39] Before further unpacking the significance of anti-pinkwashing activism to alQaws' anti-colonial, queer politics, the next section traces what role the international plays in cementing those pinkwashing mechanisms just illustrated.

5.2.1 On the Role of the International

To mark the beginning of the Oslo Peace Process, in 1993 Israel and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), which later became the Palestinian Authority (PA),

[37] See: http://www.pinkwatchingisrael.com (Accessed 24 June 2017).
[38] This talk was organised as part of Israeli Apartheid Week.
[39] The Israeli film 'The bubble', directed by Eytan Fox, includes all these three representations.

signed the Declaration of Principles (DOP). Although the signing of this agreement raised promises of 'peace' and aspirations for a 'modern' state of Palestine, it also witnessed an increasing involvement of the international community in the form of 'International Assistance' (Le More, 2008). Following an approach based upon a "linear progress between peace, security and development," (ibid: 7), the growing role of International assistance reflected how the Oslo agreements had turned the colonial reality of Palestine into a post-conflict scenario and state-building enterprise. Disregarding settler expansionist policies or even the structural flaws[40] of the Oslo Process, this approach allowed Israel's facts on the ground[41] to continue and left the Palestinians hoping for autonomy and a State-to-come. While this explains how the sustainment of a colonial order takes place under the rubric of 'development' and 'peace,' (see Chapter 7 Section 7.2) it also sheds light on how an interest in human rights and, in particular, sexuality rights emerged in Palestine. Human rights and sexuality rights agendas proliferated in order to measure development vis-à-vis those global (e.g. South Africa)[42] and local (e.g. Israel) successful examples of LGBT legally gained rights.[43]

> The coloniser's standards and achievements became the yardstick to which the colonised were measured and had to conform, ignoring the fact that the same 'anti sodomy' laws were removed from the Jordanian Penal code - which the PA inherited - in 1957 (Maikey, 2012: 122).

Based on recent interactions with international donors, human rights organisations and international media outlets, alQaws started reflecting critically on this growing interest in what is labelled as the 'gay scenery' in Palestine. The case of Ramallah[44] is particularly interesting because these discourses make the claim that Ramallah has the potential to become like Tel-Aviv. alQaws activists emphasise that we "live these

[40] Le Moore (2008: 9) clarifies that a peace negotiation process between two unequal parties is "structurally flawed and doomed from the outset, principally because it postponed the most contentious and important issues (Jersualem, refugees, borders, etc) until final status negotiations and did not stipulated a clear political endgame, thereby favouring the considerably stronger party, Israel, by perpetuating the status quo."
[41] See footnote 15.
[42] Following the fall of Apartheid regime in South Africa and subsequent constitutional gains made by LGBT community, solidarity activists started looking at Palestine as another context where similar gains could be achieved (Conversation with Ghaith and Haneen, February 18, 2015).
[43] For more information regarding the Israeli 'gay decade' in the late 80s, see: (Gross, 2001:391–414).
[44] Ramallah is a city in the north of West Bank, hub of the Palestinian Authority's power.

narratives and see how they keep getting reproduced, whether in donor's agendas or in the random rhetoric that is emerging recently in possibilities for 'gay tourism in Palestine' (Ahmed, Interview, August 2014). In one of our Skype conversations, Ghaith sends me a link to read and comments:

> This article[45] [in an online magazine] by this American writer, who wants to 'explore Gay Palestine,' is now providing readers on Palestine, which he considers to be only the West Bank, with a description of 'fun' places as opposed to what we get in the news. He refers to these 'gay scenes' and cafes of Ramallah, which are supposed to challenge what his American audience usually expect to see happening in Palestine. That is, homophobia, xenophobia and terror […] It is funny that the writer even suggests contacting alQaws as one of the Palestinian gay rights group. I think they never googled us! [laughing] (Ghaith, Skype Conversation, April 2015).

This article that Ghaith draws on explains the underlying assumptions associated to the emerging gay Palestinian scenery: 'homophobia, xenophobia and terror.' During another discussion, Ghaith and Haneen also indicate how international donors take pinkwashing as a threshold to measure the gay scenery in Palestine, which is often equated with Ramallah.

> (H): There is a growing donor obsession with the Ramallah gay scenes, and some of them think that it can become like Tel Aviv! […] This is a dangerous rhetoric on two levels: firstly, it repeats the old mantra of 'us' needing to somehow catch up with Tel Aviv, re-affirming the colonising notion of civilised/uncivilised; secondly, this also feeds the logic of fragmenting further Palestine, creating a hierarchy within Palestine that is reproduced by measuring closeness to the so called' Tel Aviv progress'.
>
> (G): It is true and I think the emphasis on Ramallah is another way of echoing the Ramallah/Gaza binary, where Palestinian fragmentation is augmented by 'their capacity to develop levels.'
>
> (H): It reminds me of how some Israeli officials commented in response to Palestinian demands to stop the aggression and lift the siege on Gaza. One of them declared, 'Let's wait for when you have gay parades in Gaza first!' (Haneen and Ghaith, Skype Conversations, April 2015).

These narratives, once again, reveal the necessity for alQaws activists to trouble the normalised perceptions of progress in relation to LGBT-gained rights. They establish multiple connections between international and Israeli policies, so they both question

[45] Ghaith also sends me the following article as an example of the growing narratives on Palestine's gay scenery in general and Ramallah in particular: Passport Magazine, 'Exploring Gay Palestine,' https://passportmagazine.com/exploring-gay-palestine/ (Accessed November 12 2016).

and challenge the internationalisation of Western LGBT strategies based on questions of pride, visibility and homophobia. alQaws activists, therefore, ponder how to face international hegemonic investment in combating homophobia and spreading LGBT rights by drawing on the specificity of 'our local context':

> How can we frame our struggle as against homophobia when we live in a society that does not publicly discuss sexuality? Are pride parades the ultimate celebration of freedom and visibility in a context where millions of Palestinians have no access to water, health care, mobility, work, etc? How can we understand individual visibility in a family-based society? Is coming out, as understood and practiced in the west, a crucial step for a healthy and open life? What are the means to achieve an open and healthy life for LGBT people whose bodies, minds and reality is colonised?[46]

To highlight the limitations of mainstream Western LGBT strategies, when applied onto the Palestinian context, also means unmasking the epistemic violence inhered in their description of homophobia as "the specific property of Arab/Muslim society" (alQaws' statement, 2014: np). alQaws reveals how the underlying logic of development legitimates the founding ontological violence of the Israeli colonial order, which promotes itself as a civilizing enterprise spreading democracy where it is seen to be lacking. alQaws' activists deconstruct the duality of the West and the Rest upon which a notion of progress for 'those riding the wave of fighting homophobia' is based.

> The duality of the U.S, the west, and the civilized friends of gay people is being used against the Iraqi people and government, who are instead homophobic. This gives the Americans the right not to respect the will of the Iraqi people or of the Iraqi gay community to determine their own paths of struggle. Instead, they imposed the love of gayness and 'democracy' on them, in a ready-made package, sent 'from America with love.' Similarly, Israel uses this discourse in its attempt to whitewash its crimes in front of the whole world (Maikey and Shamali, 2011: np).

These reflections demonstrate the capacity of alQaws to capture how the functioning of international assistance as 'development' for 'peace' works: it enforces colonising hierarchies, while it whitewashes them through seemingly neutral methods of measuring progress and democracy. The next section demonstrates how alQaws' Palestinian queer lens enfolds a search for decolonial modes of being, which resists the colonising hierarchies endowed into notions of progress.

[46] These questions came out as the outcome of numerous Skype discussions and email exchanges with Hilal and Maikey throughout May 2015, while we were working collaboratively on an article (Alqaisiya, Hilal and Maikey, 2016).

5.2.2 Striving for Decolonial Modes of Being

Anti-pinkwashing activism problematises normalised connections to 'pinkwashed' spaces and reveals how the narrative of progress/pride in LGTB rights reifies a colonising hierarchies of power (Field notes, December 2015). It also unmasks the normalisation of 'pinkwashed' geographies as symptomatic of reproducing a universalised temporality [of progress], which is an essential mean for othering: civilised vs. backward, pride vs. homophobia. This very task of unmasking Israeli pinkwashing narratives, and their underlying notion of timeless universality, is an integral element of the struggle for decolonial modes of being. In this regard, alQaws' activism tries to oppose Israeli colonialism through the call for Boycott of Tel Aviv pride and Israeli gay tourism (Maikey, 2017: np), as well as the rejection of those discourses connecting Palestinian queers to the pinkwashed city of Tel Aviv. These are forms of activism whose queerness, as Muñoz writes, "desires another way of being in the world and time" (2009: 96). They strive for a different way of being.

For instance, in their 'Boycott Tel Aviv Pride 2016' campaign, alQaws' activists and international allies released a video where the cynical question 'Why are you proud of Tel Aviv?' follows the statement: "Sunbathe at the gay beach and spend the night in luxurious boutique hotels built on the ruins of ethnically cleansed Palestinian villages" (See Figure 5:1 below). Anti-pinkwashing activism assesses the problems involved with those discourses on gay rights as celebrated in 'pinkwashed' geographies, such as Tel Aviv. In doing so, it exposes the violence of settler colonialism (Wolfe, 1999 and 2006) that has been 'anesthetised' in one's views on progressive gay rights. They disclose the foreclosed elements in Tel Aviv's promotion as a top gay destination, where the gay pride brochures and touristic guides fail to mention that:

> It is also an hour away from the world's largest open prison, Gaza, and it is built on stolen land. They forget to mention that the gay soldiers you dance with in the pride parade check, arrest, and kill Palestinians on a daily basis (pinkwatching Israel, 2016).

Figure 5.1

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rqJOH9Dqp-I

While the call for Boycott is a necessary decolonial strategy that refuses to normalize the Israeli state and its gay beaches, it also demonstrates how alQaws defines itself and its work within and across 'historic Palestine.' It is a political strategy of anti-normalisation[47] that, as another alQaws member from Yafa describes, "refuses to work

[47] The Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel defines normalisation as: "the participation in any project, initiative or activity, in Palestine or internationally, that aims (implicitly or explicitly) to bring together Palestinians (and/or Arabs) and Israelis (people or institutions) without placing as its goal resistance to and exposure of the Israeli occupation and all forms of discrimination

[either] directly with Israeli LGBT organisations or those International bodies who do not uphold an anti-normalisation stance" (Ahmed, Interview, November 2015). alQaws' activists often rely on social media in order to spread their anti-normalisation strategy. For instance, on a Facebook status, written in Arabic on the 15th December 2013, Haneen writes:

> Someone please inform the member of Israeli Knesset (gay) Nitzan Horowitz that he needs to stop sending me emails. For God's sake. I am not [gay] like you.[48] (Facebook, December 2013)

What comes to mind is how 'I am not like you,' which is a translation of 'mithlak' in Arabic, means 'I am not gay like you.' By refusing to be 'mithlak,' which is also a derivative of *mithli/mithlyoon*, alQaws' activists stress the importance of 'anti-normalisation' (LSE Talk, February 26, 2015) strategy crosscutting a queeryat approach (see Section 5.1.1). In another Facebook post, Haneen articulates a definition of pride in oppositional terms to the Tel-Aviv gay pride:

> The definition of 'Pride': never went to, and never will attend the TLV Pride. (Facebook, June 2013)

Such political (op)positionality grounds an understanding of queerness as decolonisation, which fails to settle only for a minority frame of dis-identification (Muñoz, 1999). It is important to comprehend how the work of alQaws' political [op]positionality troubles normalised public perception of the Israeli state and its gay image through a counter-identification lens. alQaws positions itself in relation to *Palestine* in order not to turn the Palestinians into an accepted minority; rather it wants to challenge at its foundation the colonial structure of power that Israel publicises through its branding campaigns. In this manner, anti-colonial native subjectivity complicates the logic of dis-identification. While the latter aims to avoid the "trap of assimilation or adhering to different separatist or nationalist ideologies" (ibid: 18), alQaws' politics instead confirms the necessity of *counteridentifcation* (Smith, 2010: 56). The aim of alQaws is not to "carve out a minority" (Ramirez in Smith, 2010:57), to become a minority of the Israeli state. alQaws values anti-colonial resistance and

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and oppression against the Palestinian people." See http://www.pacbi.org/etemplate.php?id=1749 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

[48] Original Facebook status is:
حدا يقول لعضو الكنيست (المثلي) هوروفيتس نيتسان يبطل يبعتلي ايميلات من شان النبي #مش مثلي مثلك

constantly questions "the giveness of [Israeli] state; so its right to exist as any 'normal' other state" (Smith, 2008: 312).

Moreover, such counter-identification lens interact interestingly with the work of Jasbir Puar and Maya Mikdashi, questioning the validity of their criticism toward pinkwashing as a form of activism that ignores other imperialist contexts by focusing 'merely' on Israel (2012: np). From alQaws standpoint, this critique taps into a dangerous Zionist argument. It has a tendency, as we saw above in the exchange with Omar, to promote Israel as 'any other country,' downplaying those arguments that 'exceptionalise' its violence. At the same time, their critique does not seem to acknowledge how pinkwatching de facto draws connections with other imperialist contexts. For instance, the above quote on U.S invasion of Iraq and my participation in the panel organised at the LSE demonstrates how alQaws activists use pinkwashing in order to contextualize its mechanisms within a broader history of colonialism and orientalism. The next section continues to discuss how pinkwatching brings out Palestinian agency by countering Israel's pinkwashing and, in particular, investigates what I term, following alQaws, the colonial-saviour fantasy.

5.2.3 On the Pinkwatchers' Agency

While Israeli pinkwashing narratives enforce the dynamic of a modern vis-à-vis homophobic/backward society, they also create what I term the colonial-saviour fantasy. alQaws' activists acknowledged the existence of such fantasy through their experiences with the Israeli LGBT community and other Israeli progressive groups. Ghaith explains:

> Israel uses narratives of progress and 'gay haven democracy' to feed this fantasy that Israel has something to offer us and to save us. This fantasy tells us that, as LGBT Palestinians, we will always be victims of our 'homophobic societies.' Neither alQaws nor 'our communities can accommodate our needs! (Ghaith, Interview, September 2014).

The reflection of Ghaith illustrates the dangers lurking in the Israeli saviour mentality. This saviour fantasy enforces a positionality of victimhood for Palestinian LGBT, who will have to look for a saviour [Israel] because 'neither alQaws nor our communities can accommodate our needs.'

Haneen provides another emblematic episode that captures how Israel and Israeli 'progressives' and LGBT groups create this colonial-saviour fantasy. In the summer of 2014, Israeli settlers[49] kidnapped and killed a Palestinian teenager from Jerusalem, Mohammad Abu Khdeir. Following such an horrific event, a story began to circulate via Israeli circles claiming that the family had killed Mohammed because he was 'gay' (Gross, 2014: np). Such incitement, as Haneen suggests,

> confirms the pinkwashing narrative and the violence it perpetuates from a supposed 'progressive' positionality which saves Palestinian gays from a society that otherwise kills them (Telephone Conversation, July 2014).

When Israeli circles describe Palestinian death within this frame of entrenched values of honor culture, they negate the colonial structure of violence and re-colonise Palestinians. The fantasy of the Israeli saviour of Palestinians, which constructs dying Palestinians by virtue of their culture of honour, re-enacts the same deadly violence that the settler colonial entity exercises against Palestinians. alQaws' pinkwatching demonstrate a capacity to enable Palestinian agency in order to undermine the colonial-saviour fantasy. This is manifested further in alQaws' statement below against those narratives singling out sexuality as a terrain where Israel exercises its power against Palestinians:

> We are concerned by the way these responses single out sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, as the main and most troubling aspect of Israeli intelligence and surveillance recruitment practices [...] Singling out sexuality ignores the stranglehold that Israel's militarized colonial regime has on the lives and privacy of Palestinians more generally throughout Palestine. Blackmailing and extorting an individual on the basis of their sexuality is, of course, a naked act of oppression. But it is no more or less oppressive than blackmailing and extorting an individual on the basis of their lack of access to healthcare, disrupted freedom of movement, exposure of marital infidelities, finances, drug use, or anything else.
>
> Second, singling out sexuality suggests that 'sexuality' should be the most important priority for Palestinian organizations – including ours – in our struggle against Israeli apartheid, colonisation, and dispossession. It also suggests that sexuality can be singled out from Israeli apartheid, colonisation, and dispossession. This isolation of sexuality as a discrete site of oppression bolsters mainstream LGBT rights discourses, which,

[49] See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jul/05/palestinian-boy-mohammed-abu-khdeir-burned-alive (Accessed 24 June, 2017).

> historically, make this oppression legible only through the frame of purported Palestinian 'homophobia' and Israeli 'tolerance.' In this sense, singling out homosexuality strengthens pinkwashing and, in particular, the specific and false pinkwashing narrative of the queer Palestinian who must remain closeted within their community, living in secret, always worried about being outed, and looking to Israel as the all-powerful, all-knowing entity capable of protecting their queer life and rendering it intelligible […]
>
> This chiding discourse re-colonises our bodies by implicitly suggesting that queer Palestinians look to Israel as our saviour [sic], another repetition of a familiar and toxic colonial fantasy - that the coloniser can provide something important and necessary that the colonised cannot possibly provide for themselves. This is a risky path and we, as local groups, need to remember that these notions can easily affect our own actions and vision (alQaws Statement, 2014: np).

In this statement, we see how the Palestinian queer pinkwatcher observes and challenges discourses that are 'recolonising our bodies' by entrenching 'a familiar and toxic colonial fantasy' of saviour/victim. They reject singling out sexuality as a discreet site of oppression, disconnected from Israeli colonisation. On the one hand, pinkwashing is always about unveiling the reality of the Palestinian [gay] victim of an oppressive [culture of honour] society. Thus, it is a form of colonial ga(y)zing onto (See Chapter 4 Section 4.2) and, by default, fixing the reality of an Other in relation to homophobia and death, to which Israeli saviour [hetero-colonialism] stands as a remedy. Pinkwatching, on the other hand, echoes a positionality of those who are returning the gaze.

In this regard, feminist analysis of the veil's subversive quality against colonisers 'bent on unveiling' helps us in explaining the potentialities of pinkwatching. In fact, this logic of watching over colonial discourses, denoted through pink*watching*, resonates with the veiled women of Algeria (Alloula, 1986), and their attempts to claim space, gazing back at power without being seen. This idea of gazing back, as Yegenoglu indicates, "disturbs the voyeuristic look of the subject" (1998: 62). That is, the process of subject inscription reverses by virtue of looking at an object from a position of invisibility: "Instead of being looked at, the object now looks at" (ibid: 63). alQaws' statement clearly indicates a refusal to 'singling out sexuality,' additionally other activists assert on multiple occasions that "representing Palestinian gays is not our mission" (Field notes, December 2015). This relates to the fact that pinkwatching, as emanating from a decolonial queer lens, is less interested in representing or un-masking the reality of the Palestinian gay, rather it focuses on dismantling the normative discourses and colonial regimes of power

that sets the parameters to imagine Palestinian *gay* subjectivity in the first place (see Alqaisiyah, Hilal and Maikey, 2016). In this manner, alQaws' pinkwatching turns itself into a 'sur-veil-lant gaze' from a present-absent location. Thus, it is a counter-gaze that *troubles more than represents* (Yegenoglu, 1998: 62) the logic of identifications through which a saviour-self construes its victim [gay] other.

Navigating pinkwatching from this logic of present-absent positionality permits to counter those arguments reducing pinkwatching to an identitarian - meaning homonationalist – frame. In particular, as Puar and Mikdashi contend: "pinkwashing and pinkwatching speak the language of Homonationalism. One does so in the name of Israel, the other does so in the name of Palestine" (2012: np). They argue, drawing on Puar's theory of homonationalism, that pinkwatching becomes a venue to generate questions, and so consolidate the reality of Palestinian 'gay identities.' Pinkwatching, therefore, reproduces the same functioning logic of the narratives around pinkwashing. As the latter promotes gay identities affiliated with the Israeli state, so the former operates from the opposite side of the spectrum, thus promoting gay identities for Palestine. Since homonationalism investigates how queer participates to dominant structures of power [nationalism/imperialism], it fails to take into account what meanings queer assumes from the standpoint of native, queered positionality and grass-roots work. In doing so, it does not capture the relevance of a Palestinian decolonial queer lens and locks its pinkwatching work within the terrain of power [homonationalism] that the theory critiques. As such, it "obscures specific, politically relevant features of pinkwatching activism that are particular to Palestine and Palestine solidarity work" (Schotten and Maikey 2012: np).

Furthermore, it is important to note that Puar's theory of homonationalism criticises "the humiliation of waiting for the national love" (2007: 27). This approach falls short if applied to Palestinian decolonising queer politics. It ignores how alQaws articulates a self-definition around belonging to 'historic Palestine' or, as Haneen explains, "a national queer movement that can stretch all over Palestine (Interview, June 2014). Such identification with a Palestine beyond borders (see Chapter 8 Section 8.2.2) strategically projects a unified nation/notion of Palestine against the Israeli colonial order and its colonial geography of enclaving and enclosure (see Chapter 4 Sections 4.1.1 and 4.1.2). The importance of this strategy is debased, if simply reduced to

homonationalism. Specifically, such an anti-nation conceptual approach overlooks how nationalist struggles remain at the centre of anti-colonial resistance from the standpoint of native people (Driskill, 2010: 76). A queer decolonial lens complicates queerness as defined and evaluated solely through an anti-nation stance. alQaws' self-positioning vis-à-vis Palestine and queer not only struggles to belong to a unified notion of home and nation, but also dares to imagine Palestine otherwise (see Chapter 8).

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter explores the case of 'alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society' and its emergence as queer, Palestinian and decolonial, by examining the decolonial frame found at the core of the group's queer Palestinian politics through the voices of alQaws' members and activists. It also shows how alQaws' work embeds the question of queerness in Palestine in a frame of decolonization though acknowledging the relevance of politics and relationality. It demonstrates the relevance of queering in its work towards 'decolonial modes of being' that strip naked the colonial power structure and its heteronormative grounding (hetero-colonialism). Palestinian queer politics, therefore, manifests *the will to gaze back* at the narratives of modern versus backward, gay haven versus homophobic, revealing their investment in colonising of Palestine and negating the existence of Palestinians. It also explicates how Israeli pinkwashing narratives promote pinkwashed geographies, i.e. Tel Aviv that reproduce those hetero-colonial frames first articulated by Herzl (see Chapter 4 section 4.1). Palestinian queer politics presents pinkwatchers' agency in order to disturb and trouble the colonial fantasies of power and control. Moreover, the chapter shows that alQaws' work not only shed light on how native positionality contributes to the question of queerness in Palestine, but also tests the validity of 'homonationalist' critiques of pinkwatching. Since alQaws articulates a distinctly Palestinian decolonial queerness, it affirms a national belonging to the land that throws into question those anti-nation theories vis-à-vis pinkwatching. The next chapter continues to explore what role queer plays in unsettling the colonial ga(yz)e through aesthetics.

6. Palestinian Queer Aesthetics Interrupts the Hetero-Colonial Gaze

The previous chapter explored how alQaws' decolonial queer activism confronts and gazes back at Israeli pinkwashing narratives, revealing their inscription in the structural reality of Zionist hetero-colonialism. This chapter examines the role of Palestinian queer aesthetics, which complement anti-pinkwashing [pinkwatching] politics whilst simultaneously unfolding the aesthetic dimension to queering politics (see Chapter 2 Section 2.3.2). By navigating the aesthetic component of alQaws' work, this chapter shows the relevance of an aesthetic queer lens for disrupting colonising ways of 'seeing.'

The chapter begins with an exploration of the cinematic lens of Nadia Awad, a Palestinian American visual artist. Her work brings out *A Demonstration* of pinkwashing that relates to the artist's queered positionality vis-à-vis the colonial ga(y)ze. In a similar vein, the photographic lens of Alaa Abu Asad, who is from Nazareth in the North of Palestine [citizen of Israel], unmasks the unethical and colonising premise of the photographic act. Alaa's lens projects a queer Middle Eastern-self that confronts the frame [pinkwashing] of its constitution. Moving from Awad and Abu Asad's queer photographic and/or cinematic lens, the analysis then traces how a dance performance by Knorn, who is an artist from Ramallah-West Bank, discomforts the liberal colonial ga(y)ze.

The chapter concludes by emphasising the aesthetic components of decolonial queer work in its contribution to the study of queerness in Palestine.

6.1 Nadia Awad's Queer Cinematic Lens in *A Demonstration*

On 10th July 2014, I was chatting with Haneen, director of alQaws, concerning the rumour circulating around the death of Mohammad Abu Khdeir (see Chapter 5 Section 5.2.3). She sent me several links - including the photograph, which had circulated on social media along with the Hebrew writings 'Arabs had killed him because he was gay.' Pondering how the circulation of such narratives serves Israeli pinkwashing

paradigms, Haneen also reflected on the 2009 Bar Noar shooting incident and how the commemoration ceremony entrenched a definition of Israel vis-à-vis LGBT rights (see Chapter 5 Section 5.1.1). This conversation introduced me to Nadia Awad's video 'A Demonstration.'

> This is a video (https://vimeo.com/99671737) that Nadia shot and edited from the 2009 vigil commemorating the killing of gay youth in Tel-Aviv. I found this video very powerful, especially when I watch it now. Just look at the actor who is doing the speech, the speech itself, the audience and Nadia's cold and distant camera (Facebook Chat with Haneen, July 2014).

'A Demonstration' (see Figures 6.1 and 6.2) is a short-film lasting just over 5 minutes, which focuses on the vigil that took place a few days after the shooting at Bar Noar (Nadia Awad, Skype Conversation, March 2015). In the description of the short-film, Nadia recounts her experience of the vigil in what is known as Rabin Square in Tel Aviv:

> I expected a small candlelit vigil with fifty activists. To my surprise, 10,000 people had gathered in Rabin Square. The vigil was, in fact, a benefit concert where Israeli government officials gave speeches equating the youth bar shooting to the Holocaust and suggesting that Ben Gurion's Zionist vision included LGBT communities. The video I produced from this event is called 'A Demonstration.' It focuses on the speech of a young man who appears to have been present at the shooting. However, several local activists told me he was an actor, paid by the Israeli state to represent gay youth at the vigil. Other locals claimed he arrived after the shooting, and some stated he was a relative of a victim. 'A Demonstration' questions the ambiguous relationship between public commemorations, mourning and individual memory (A Demonstration, Vimeo).[50]

[50] See: https://vimeo.com/99671737 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 6.1

A Demonstration by Nadia Source: https://vimeo.com/99671737 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

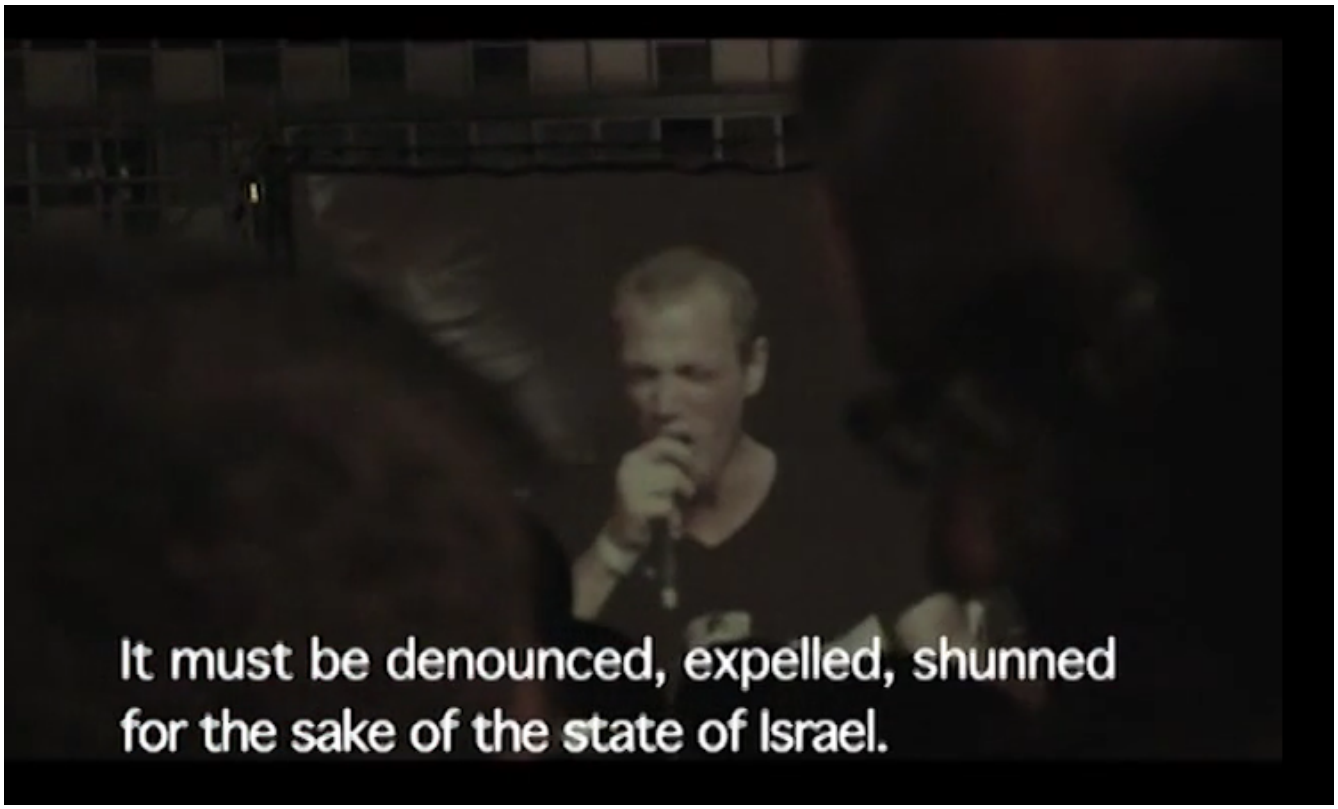

Figure 6.2

A Demonstration by Nadia Source: https://vimeo.com/99671737 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Watching 'A Demonstration,' one sees Nadia's camera wandering amongst the crowds in Rabin Square as they gather to hear a speech projected on a giant screen. The speech that runs throughout the whole video is loaded with strong emotional sentiments. From a distance and – at times – blocked by the crowd, Nadia's camera captures glimpses of the screen. Once the camera zooms into the speaker's face, one can spot his dramatic facial expressions, bursting into interrupted streams of tears. The speaker-on-the-screen begins by recounting how "bad this week" has been "for all of you good people who are here today in Rabin Square" (A Demonstration, 2014). Later, he starts reflecting on how the Jewish 'refuge,' in direct reference to the Israeli state, has become "a slaughterhouse for a despicable murder" (ibid). As the speaker begins to cry, the screen blurs slightly and remains blocked for a few moments. Continuing to sob, the speaker quotes a 'holocaust poet' who "found it impossible to recount what happened there" (ibid) and praises the significance of the work that he and other members of the AGUDA [Israeli national Association for LGBT][51] undertook. As the camera wanders among people gathered at the event, the speaker-on-the-screen states:

> Your presence here, along with the many who could not come, proves something. We are a nation that really does oppose violence and wants peace. Violence destroys the foundations of Israeli democracy, it must be denounced, expelled, shunned for the sake of the state of Israel (ibid).

Finally, the speaker draws our attention to the "nice little place called Bar Noar," which is "the only place that serves orange juice and salad with mini rainbow flags on one side and Israeli flag on another" (ibid).

Nadia suggests that many people joined this event in a casual manner, "as if they are going to see a movie" (Skype Conversations, March 2015). In the video, Nadia's camera moves around the crowds capturing their faces and focusing on their eyes. It also allows one to see the other cameras that are also filming the event. Nadia's video, moreover, captures the speaker only through the big screen, giving the viewer the impression of looking at a movie setting. Through Nadia's lens, one grasps the sense of theatricality that imbues the speech and speaker. In particular, Nadia's way of filming the speaker only through his re-presentation on the big screen conveys such theatricality. In other words, while the viewer watches what I describe as 'a representation of a representation,' the video reveals the performative (Butler, 1999:

[51] See: http://awiderbridge.org/the-agudah/ (Accessed 24 June 2017).

173) character of the performance. This ability to capture the 'performative' element troubles the 'reality' of the representation. Nadia's distant and detached lens, as Haneen describes it, prevents viewers from developing any empathetic feelings to the reality in representation. It accentuates further the distance between viewers and what is re-presented to them on the screen.

Nadia's 'A Demonstration' simultaneously reveals and undermines 'the reality' in demonstration. It mirrors the very description she provides about the conflicting narratives around 'the real identity' of the speaker. As Haneen refers to him as an 'actor,' so Nadia's lens reveals the elements of a cinematic context: actor, script, performance, spectators, and cameras shooting. It exposes and dramatizes the fictional elements of the reality on screen, scrutinizing the consolidation of a gay identity via narratives that celebrate Israeli-ness as equated to Jewishness. It is, therefore, 'A Demonstration' of pinkwashing (see Chapter 5 section 5.2). The next section explores Nadia's queered positionality vis-à-vis the colonial ga(y)ze in order to highlight further how her cinematic lens reveals Israeli pinkwashing.

6.1.1 Denied Palestinian-hood

Nadia Awad is a Palestinian visual artist and filmmaker living in the U.S whose family has been displaced in 1948. Nadia can only enter Palestine while accompanying international delegation. The filming of 'A Demonstration,' as Nadia clarifies, took place in 2009 during her first visit to the country as part of a solidarity delegation (Skype Conversation, March 2015). During our initial conversations, Nadia tells me that in 2011 she co-organised an artistic event[52] around themes comprising queerness, visual artistic production and Palestine. Furthermore, she explains that Palestinian identity influenced her work considerably:

> In Florida, I grew up in a really evangelical environment. My father is very dark skinned, so everyone thought my father was Black. To such an extent that we had moments - like in Halloween - where the KKK [Ku Klux Klan] would smash our windows. People were trying constantly to identify who you

[52] The event took place at Yale University. Nadia sent me the link to an article she co-authored with Collen Jankovic, who also co-organised the event. The article provides an over-view of the event, showing how it came about as the outcome of concerted efforts to build alliances with queer Palestinians, as they grow to 'talk politics' and challenge pinkwashing. Furthermore, the article discusses the other eight short videos screened during the event and their relevance to "a larger discussion on Palestinian vision for liberation" (Awad and Jankovic, 2012: np).

> were. So, I always think of Palestinian identity as something outside of time. Because I grew up surrounded by the kind of people who believe that - you know – 'Jesus is going to come back on a spaceship, and all the Jews have to be back in Israel and we are going to fundraise for them.' Thus, a lot of churches in the south would collect guns to ship to Israel because they are fighting 'a holy war.' There was a lot of isolation and struggle to deal with. Moreover, I am white and that was really isolating because I can fit in ostensibly. But you are in these communities that need to find out who you *actually* are! And there are other communities where to affirm that you are Palestinian means being a liar because - for them - Palestine 'is not a real place.' So I would get this kind of remarks from Jewish-Americans, such as, 'Did your parents tell you that there was 'a massacre' that happened? Because that's not true!'…and Muhammad Durra?[53] 'Actually *his* father shot him, not the Israeli IDF.' So it is an interesting subject-position to be encountering strangers throughout your whole life, and then they always ask you a second question, 'Do you actually think that who you claim to be is real?' (Skype Conversation, Feb 2015).

Nadia's questioned subjectivity, along with the persistent negation she faces when claiming any entitlement or even relation to Palestine, is fundamental to understanding her artistic work. She occupies 'this subject position' that entitles strangers to question 'the realness of who you are,' making her think about 'Palestinian identity as something outside of time.' In Chapter 4, I explored how colonialism functions via the heteronormative paradigms constructing and negating an Other's time. Nadia's narrative describes a similar process that stresses the emergence of the native queered positionality from its location vis-à-vis a masculine and racist 'colonial ga(y)ze' (see Chapter 4 section 4.1 and 4.2). Her queered positionality also explains her "obsession with ripping apart grand narratives and mediums of their representation in the media and popular culture" (Skype Conversation, March 2015).

> In the US there is a whole media culture around a Christian meta-narrative, where those people who used to identify with something, now they have 'seen the light' and transformed into something else […] After 9/11, people started to appear on news outlets declaring they are 'ex-Muslims.' Some Palestinians flaunted this 'ex-Jihadist' identification, where now 'They believe in the state of Israel.' You know this is all part of a propaganda machine, and it is very ingrained in American culture. It works together with the Christian meta-narrative of resurrection. So I want to work on a movie that synthesises these narratives together and demonstrate these

[53] Muhammad Al-Durrah is a Palestinian child who was shot by Israeli occupation forces in Gaza during the second Intifada. The story of his death went viral because the moment of his shooting was captured on camera. See: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arRgkXDLwlM (Accessed 24 June 2017).
And: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-killing-of-12-year-old-mohammed-al-durrah-in-gaza-became-the-defining-image-of-the-second-8624311.html (Accessed 24 June 2017).

> importance aspects of American culture. Another video I am working on takes these clips on 'missing Middle-Eastern women' and what is behind the veil. For instance, there is a National Geographic film that follows an Afghan woman, who was the subject of this famous photograph – many years ago - known as 'the Afghan girl.' The National Geographic troop goes in Afghanistan forty years later in order to find her eyes [the photograph was notable because of the girl's startlingly beautiful green eyes]. Finally, as they find her, she is clearly traumatised from the Taliban and the US obliterating her country. She refuses to be photographed but they insist and say they have to do it. Moreover, there this dramatic music that runs through the whole movie, and so there are so many films (or sic) of this kind […] I am working on getting these clips together, and synthesise them under this theme of hunting and disappearing Middle-Eastern women (ibid).

Nadia's work seeks to reveal what lies at the core of proliferating narratives of 'becoming' and 'disavowing,' or what she also defines as 'propaganda machine.' Those narratives entail the sudden conversion of 'ex-Muslim/Jihadi' after 9/11, or those who want to disclose the reality of 'Muslim women,' such as the National Geographic film. She brings them together in order to 'rip apart' their meaning and demonstrate how they are fundamental traits of American culture. As Nadia points out, she 'watch [es] them over and over and over' (Skype Conversation, March 2015) in order to unmask how they interact and circulate within dominant power structures.

Subsequently, Nadia combines these narratives in order to re-present them anew, revealing – and so questioning – the multiple dynamics and premises that influence the framing of these representations. In her co-written piece with Collen Jankovic, she describes the purpose of one of her videos as to:

> unsettle[s] the aesthetics of both narratives and the documentary, and create this experience where [the viewer] is conscious of every element –a technique that undermines the visual and rhetorical logic of both films and draws attention to the ways in which they construct truth claims and potentially sympathetic viewing positions (2011: 139).

While this piece confirms Nadia's artistic strategies as means to unsettle and trouble power paradigms, it is important to understand how those strategies relate to her 'subject position,' being constantly confronted with the denial of her Palestinian identity. For these reasons, Nadia's video 'A Demonstration' exemplifies queered positionality. It emerges when she describes how she had to make sure "not to slip as a Palestinian" in order to counter a feeling of unsafety while being in Rabin Square. In that occasion, to

reveal herself as Palestinian would be "problematic," given the "highly nationalistic Jewish Zionist sentiment at the event" (Skype Conversation, March 2015). 'A Demonstration' stems from an 'outside of Time' subject-position, who is excluded from and potentially threatened by *A Demonstration* of supposedly liberal values. Speaking from a position of exclusion and negation, Awad's queer lens [pink]watches the narratives of Israeli gay identity, and reveals how they participate to the reproduction of Zionist colonial structure.

6.2 Alaa Abu Asad: *Photowar Project*, *Masturbate bil Beit* and Other Works

Similar to Nadia's cinematic lens, the artistic work of Alaa Abu Asad also 'rip[s] apart' grand narratives and their representations. The artist comes from the predominantly Arab city of An-Nasira/Nazareth, located in the north of Palestine. I was acquainted with his work through several conversations with the fashion designer, Omarivs *Ioseph Filivs Dinæ* (Chapter 9 Section 3), and Nadia. Growing up within the borders of the exclusive Jewish state, Alaa is trapped within a peculiar state of absenteeism. Like the rest of the 'Arab minority,' Israel relegates the 'Palestinian citizens of Israel' to the status of the unrecognised,[54] dismissible[55] and transferable Other[56] (see Chapter 4 section 4.1.2).

> I never thought I would be an artist, I thought it was just a hobby. But somehow I ended up doing it. Being in this peculiar status as an 'Israeli citizen' has pushed me into this place. It meant having to study and gain a degree from an Israeli institute, which I – sometimes – consider to be bad luck. The fact that I graduated from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design in Jerusalem has influenced my work a lot. It pushed me in a certain direction, influencing how I engage with photography and filmmaking (Alaa, Skype Conversation, August 2014).

[54] In reference to the unrecognized villages in the Negev. See: (White, 2012).
[55] See Adalah reports on discriminatory laws against Israel's 'Arab minority': http://www.adalah.org/en/content/view/7771 (Accessed 24 June 2017)
[56] David Lieberman, current Israeli Foreign Minister, proposed to transfer Israel's 'Arab minority.' See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/mar/25/transfer-arab-israeli-citizens-palestinian-state (Accessed 24 July 2017).

As the previous section showed how Nadia's subject position informed her work, so the words of Alaa subject-position present a similar dynamics. Alaa links his artistic orientation to 'the peculiar status as an Israeli citizen,' describing how growing up in Israel influenced the ways he approaches and defines his artistic work. More importantly, Alaa also explains the aims of his art:

> All this obsession my work has with cropping and cutting comes from a desire to deconstruct and reconstruct photography. To deconstruct what both photography and the image is about. I feel that one of my duties is to challenge both the act of photography and the viewer. I think my work revolves around this dynamic of passive/active, who has the power and who takes control. This goes in all levels of relationships, including art. For instance, in photography you have the photographed object and the viewer/photographer. Like those photographers in war, their position is the same as the soldiers. Take, for example, all these reporters of Haaretz.[57] It reflects very much this power dynamic. If you think how Israeli film industry generates representations of Palestine and Palestinians. They do not just colonise us, they also have the power to tell our story (ibid).

Alaa aims to unhinge and queer power mechanisms whose functioning reproduces the colonial machine. Seeing power 'in all levels of relationships,' including art, he feels obliged or, as he describes, to trouble and challenge the premise of photography. According to Alaa the relation between the photographed object and the viewer/photographer is not a neutral one, rather, photography as an artistic act is caught in a complex web of power relationships. Seeing photography as a form of power, whose use can frame and 'tell our story,' Alaa explains how his work tries to move beyond the same idea of 'telling our story:'

> Maybe, it is more about being critical of this whole thing: the premise of making narratives. Think about the relation between the Israeli photographer and the photographed Palestinian. There are moments where Palestinians are photographed without them knowing. There are other moments where the Israeli, who occupies a superior position, imposes the photographing act onto 'its object', even if it bluntly refuses. Then, there are other cases where Palestinians see themselves as victims and Israelis as saviours. All these three cases demonstrate how un-ethical photography can be within such dynamic, because the Israeli is photographing essentially from a superior position (ibid).

Alaa does not perceive his artwork as an attempt to 'tell our Palestinian story.' Rather he aims to unravel the power dynamics that lie at the core of a photographic act.

[57] Haaretz is an Israeli newspaper.

Photography is always-already an act that reifies and reproduces a certain structure of power. There is no place left for neutral ethics, since it is power that determines the relationship between Israeli photographer and Palestinian photographed object. Alaa's words, therefore, espouse Jacques Rancière's reflections on art as a form of knowledge, which constructs fictions that "define variations of sensible intensities, perceptions, and the abilities of bodies" (Rancière, 2004: 35).

In particular, Alaa gives the example of the Israeli photographer Miki Kratsman, who also happened to be the head of department at Bezalel Institute, where Alaa studied. He states:

> He used to be the media photographer for the Israeli newspaper Haaretz. For a long time, he worked in the West Bank and photographed funerals and many other incidents. His current project is to go back to his photo archives, cut each face out and zoom into them enlarging the picture. Then, he posts those phots on Facebook on a public page called 'People I Met.' Next to each photo – and there are hundreds of them- he writes, 'Do you know what happened to the person in photo?' According to me, this is very unethical and reveals the analogy with the photographing act per se (Alaa, Skype Conversation, March 2015).

Alaa draws on the work of Kratsman to explain the 'unethical' components of art, indicating how the photographic act not only invades the lives of others, but also exemplifies the power dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians. In his final project at Bezalel Institute, called 'Photowar Project,' Alaa transports his ideas on the act of photography into an artistic work that challenges both 'the act of photography and the viewer.' Exhibited in the same institute, the installation comprises a big wooden frame without any picture inside, yet containing only a description (see Figure 6.3). Opposite the frame, a very blurred photograph of his mother, captioned 'Mum reflected image on LCD screen, Palestine 2013,' hangs on the wall (see Figure 6.4). In the middle of these two frames, a wooden table sits containing an open sketchbook with a photograph and a text (see Figure 6.5).

Figure 6.3, *Photowar* by Alaa

Source: Alaa Portfolio, http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/photowar(Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 6.4, *Photowar* by Alaa

Source: Alaa Portfolio, http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/photowar(Accessed 24 June 2017).

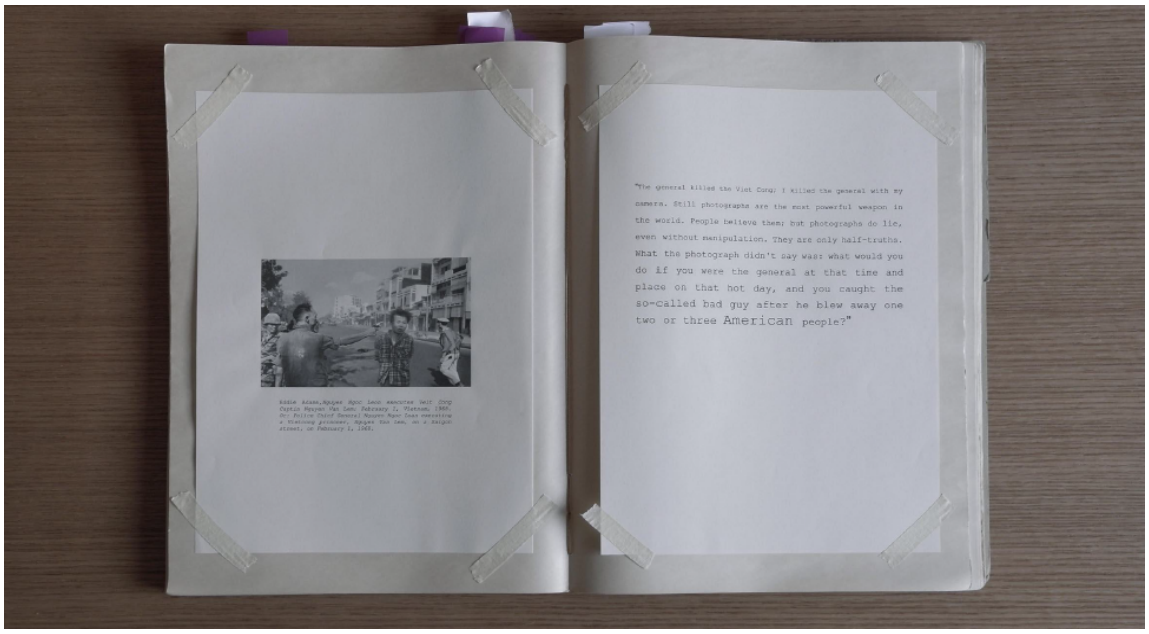

Figure 6.5, *Photwar* by Alaa

Source: Alaa portfolio, http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/photowar (Accessed 24 June 2017).

A careful analysis of the displayed elements of the exhibition shows how the artist interrogates what role photography plays and, at the same time, answers the questions he raises. Starting from the big wooden frame hanging opposite Alaa's mother blurred picture, it is possible to note that the frame does not contain a photo, rather a descriptive reading:

> What if the colonised has a camera in the hand the same way as the coloniser does, and s/he, the colonised, has a chance of using that camera while standing in front of her/his coloniser? Is the perspective the colonised chooses in order to photograph her/his coloniser the same as the coloniser's perspective when s/he often photographs the colonised? Does the same reason behind the photographing act performed by the colonised sit equally with the coloniser's act? And so, is the location where the colonised chooses to stand where s/he decides to photograph her/his coloniser the same location as the coloniser's? Will the colonised photograph her/his coloniser, ever, anyway? (Alaa Portfolio, 2017).

It comes as no surprise that this frame is the most fundamental element of the project, which forces the viewers/spectators to imagine and (re)orient their sensibilities toward the whole exhibition. The 'questioning-frame' provides a contextual background for viewers to immerse themselves in the exhibition and navigate what Alaa's artwork captures. Alaa urges viewers to switch their perspective and acknowledge those power paradigms. He explains the need to include such questions within the frame in order to demonstrate how the lens of the Palestinian photographer mirrors the structural conditions of power in which s/he lives.

> I chose to frame these rhetorical questions on the wall around the coloniser/colonised relation and whether the colonised would ever want, or have the chance, to photograph the coloniser. Of course, given the colonised position, they will not do it. How many Palestinians you would see going to photograph Israelis? Almost zero! And why is that? Because they are busy striving for survival. Even if they want to go photograph, they will not do it because they cannot even reach the other side with this fucking wall and all the checkpoints standing in-between. People cannot even gain access to see their families and relatives across the wall! Let alone go photograph Israeli faces! (Alaa, Skype Conversation, March 2015).

Alaa's questioning-frame brings a definition of politics as aesthetics, and vice versa (Rancière, 2004). In other words, what the colonised chooses to photograph intertwines with the dominant political conditions. The aesthetic terms of a photograph reflect the power paradigms structuring the relations between colonisers and colonised. Politics

and aesthetics intertwine, interact and defines each other (ibid). Moreover, what stands opposite the questioning-frame is a blurred photo of Alaa's mother, taken from the reflection of an LCD screen. How is such a photograph political, and how does it transform aesthetic-political possibilities, relaying what Rancière describes as a 'redistribution of the sensible'? (ibid: 7). How does Alaa's photo makes visible what had no business being seen, thus demonstrating the manner queerness (see Chapter 2 Section 2.3.2) modifies and produces aesthetic/political possibilities?

There are several elements to take into consideration. Firstly, the subject of the photo is an intimate one, Alaa's mother and secondly, the camera does not photograph her 'directly', rather she is captured through a reflection on an LCD screen. Thirdly, the caption reads 'Palestine, 2013' as to provide details over the location of the photograph, though Alaa – as mentioned previously – belongs to the so called 'Palestinians in Israel.' It is possible to show how the combination of all these elements speaks back to Miki Kratsman's project. The intimacy of Alaa's mother and the absence of a direct image of her life troubles Kratsman's 'coloniser' gaze, while the image maintains an ethical distance that contrasts with Kratsman's unethical zooming on both the faces and private lives of Palestinians. Furthermore, we can interpret the photo of the mother via LCD screen as a metaphor for the difficulties Palestinians face getting in touch with their relatives due to "this fucking wall and all the checkpoints standing in-between" (Alaa, Skype Conversation, March 2015).

For these reasons, the photograph, in part, answers those questions posed in the other frame. What kind of photography is possible for those who live under a colonial power that strips them of land and dignity? Alaa conceptualizes art as something that goes beyond the task of human survival. Art re-imagines the political into different aesthetical terms. The lens of the colonised has no interest in photographing the lives of the colonisers, rather it exposes the paradigms of power structuring the 'colonised/coloniser' relationship by focusing on an intimate, affective relation. The picture of the mother resembles, borrowing Rancière's terminology, the status of a 'pensive image' (Rancière, 2009). For Rancière, a pensive image positions a subject in a zone of indeterminacy between oppressive regimes and potential alternatives (ibid: 107). Similarly, Alaa's photo possesses an emancipatory power, as it redistributes the regimes of the sensible unveiling how the colonising power controls the everyday life of Palestinians. The photo troubles the work of Kratsman, whose gaze seeps unethically

into the everyday lives of Palestinians, reifying the colonial logic. This pensive image exposes how society normalises the hidden order of (in)tolerance – meaning Palestinians [colonised] being photographed by Israelis [colonisers]. While Alaa's photographic act reveals the established relations of power and privilege, it also engages queer as aesthetics.

The last element of the exhibition is a wooden table located between the two frames. The table only contains an open sketchbook with a photograph and a text. The photograph belongs to Eddie Adam, and it is a famous snapshot, for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize. Taken in Vietnam in 1968, it shows general Neguyen Ngoc Leon executing the prisoner Nguyen Van Lem. The text is a quote from the photographer:[58]

> The general killed the Viet Cong; I killed the general with my camera. Still photographs are the most powerful weapons in the world. People believe them; but photographs do lie, even without manipulation. They are only half-truths. What the photograph didn't say was: what would you do if were the general at that time and place on that hot day, and you caught the so called bad guy after he blew away one, two or three American people? (Alaa portfolio, 2017).

Once again, Alaa's work approaches the photographic act as a means of narration and representation in order to reveal the power dynamics endowed in them. By juxtaposing Adam's photograph and the photographer's commentary on how this shot 'kills' the general, Alaa problematizes the viewer's relation with the photographed image. Moreover, the questions Alaa poses in 'Photowar Project' resonate with Butler's discussion of photography and ethics (2007: 951-966), As Butler argues, the frames through which one sees and constructs human recognisability influence how we formulate moral and political responsiveness (Butler, 2007: 951). The political background and consciousness of the photographer, as Butler clarifies, embeds the frame itself. The frame, thus forth, does not require a caption or a narrative to clarify

[58] On the website 'Rare Historical Photos' we can read the following explanation about Adam's photo: "For all the image's political impact, though, the situation wasn't as black-and-white as it's rendered. What Adams' photograph doesn't reveal is that the man being shot (named Nguyen Van Lem) was the captain of a Vietcong 'revenge squad' that had executed dozens of unarmed civilians earlier the same day. Regardless, it instantly became an icon of the war's savagery and made the official pulling the trigger – General Nguyen Ngoc Loan – its iconic villain." See link: http://rarehistoricalphotos.com/saigon-execution-murder-vietcong-saigon-1968/ (Accessed 24 June 2017).

its underlying political drive; rather the frame itself is interpreting actively, even forcibly (ibid: 951).

> [A]s a visual interpretation it can only be conducted with certain kinds of lines and so within certain kinds of frames, unless of course the mandatory framing becomes part of the story, unless there is a way to photograph the frame itself, at that point the photograph that yields its frame to interpretation is one that opens the restrictions on interpreting reality to critical scrutiny (ibid: 952).

Butler suggests that "rarely, if ever does this operation of mandatory and dramaturgical 'framing' itself becomes part of what is seen, much less what is told" (ibid). Alaa's work does so, scrutinising the very processes through which we see and construct reality:

> I take the photographic act apart in order to test the relation between the witness and the document/image. This work is about what we [the viewers] see and what we are told to see and, at the end, to challenge the viewer's 'naked eye' of seeing and watching (Alaa, Statement for Exhibition, 2015).[59]

By challenging "what we see," Alaa "re-imagine the image through different acts such as cropping, retouching, changing, etc" (Alaa portfolio, 2017). He, thus, allows the viewer to see how the 'framing itself' dictates paradigms of seeing and watching, forcing the viewer to acknowledge the power relations involved in image production.

In another artistic work, he transforms the surface of a photo capturing his uncle in Palestine completely black, almost obscuring his face. He also juxtaposes another photo of a face with blurred red eyes, titled 'I want you to see this' (see Figure 6.6). By blurring the photo and covering the eyes in a striking red tone, Alaa explicitly direct the viewer to the process of 're-imaging the image.' He tries to expose the viewer to the 'framing process' of the photographing act and/or production of images, exposing power relations. The provocative caption, stating 'I want you to see this,' further manifests how the photographer/producer of images plays an 'active' role in carving the very frame of viewing.

[59] See link to the artist's statement for the exhibition 'Image, Imagination resurrection' in Al Ma'mal Foundation for contemporary art [Jerusalem]: https://gallery.mailchimp.com/f7198d36a43e6b2c1e6443d6b/files/Image_imagination.pdf?utm_source=almamal+mail+2015&utm_campaign=ec2a0cfae0-August_Newsletter6_25_2015&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1ae1d1494e-ec2a0cfae0-282002441&ct=t(July_Newsletter6_25_2015)&mc_cid=ec2a0cfae0&mc_eid=00b0637fdc (Accessed24 June 2017).

Figure 6.6, *image-imagination* by Alaa

Source: Alaa portfolio, http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/imageimagination (Accessed 24 June 2017).

In one of his art videos depicting a picnic with his family on the beach of the depopulated Palestinian village Alzeeb in the north of Palestine, Alaa films a fisherman. A text runs alongside the image of the fisherman: "A fisherman in the centre. To the right, what one does not see is the depopulated village"[60] (see Figure 6.7). Once again, Alaa's footage exposes the very frame of its imaging, revealing to the viewer the power of photographers as they zoom into an object [fisherman in centre] whilst purposefully ignoring other objects [the depopulated village]. By making the process of 'imaging the image' visible, Alaa's footage "exposes and thematises mechanisms of restriction" (Butler, 2007: 952). It forces viewers "to interpret the interpretation that has been imposed on us" (ibid).

[60] This video, entitled 'A Failed Confession Attempt' can be accessed on: http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/aunts (Accessed 25 June, 2017).

Figure 6.7, *Picnic to the Beach* by Alaa

Source: Alaa portfolio, http://aboasadalaa.wixsite.com/portfolio/aunts (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Since these artistic works make visible the 'mandatory framing itself,' they demonstrate how queerness characterises Alaa's lens:

> A lot of people look at my work and ask me in the way I blur imagery whether it is a man or a woman, but that's not the point I aim at. What concerns me more is challenging these frames through which you interpret 'man' and 'woman.' This is all part of the way I want to deal with and address the theme of power in daily relations (Skype Conversation, March 2015).

Another artistic work of Alaa, *Masturbate bil Beit*, tries to confront the constitution of those frames of power that constructs reality. In this video, which lasts for three and a half minutes and was shot in 2012, Alaa films himself masturbating at home, as the title indicates in Arabic. The video begins with a written statement on screen declaring that what viewers are about to watch is a 'Bruce LaBruce re-make.' Throughout the act of masturbation it is possible to note how a picture of the former Iranian president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, hangs on the wall behind him, close to the Iranian flag. While masturbating, Alaa seems to be holding a picture. When the video ends with Alaa's ejaculation, the picture is revealed to be a photograph of Ahmadinejad.

Alaa explains that a scene in LaBruce's 1999 porn movie 'Skin Flick/Skin Gang' inspired this video. In the original scene, one sees a man in his 30s lying on his bed, masturbating and then "finishing on a book with Adolf Hitler's picture on its cover" (Email Exchange, July 2016). Whilst LaBruce is known for the way he is "unapologetic about homosexual sex, uncompromising intentionally-politically incorrect movies," (Cavaluzzo, 2015: np) Skin Flick, in particular, manifests his 'philosophy of homosexuality.' As LaBruce (in Knight, 2015: np) declares, showing characters that have homosexual sex but do not necessarily identify as 'gay,' such as the skinheads of Skin Flick, "alienates him from 'gay orthodoxies.'

Similarly, Alaa's video contains a bluntly provocative perversion. *Masturbate bel beit* uses the Iranian flag and the Iranian president to draw an explicit reference to an Islamic context. However, by reading this reference against the meta-narratives depicting Iran as a country repressing sexuality and persecuting 'LGBT,'[61] Alaa's

[61] An article in the Guardian reflects on a 'study' that has been conducted by a non-profit organisation based in London on the life of LGBT community in Iran. The study reveals the level of persecution for

video projects an unapologetic queer-self. The video articulates queerness as embodying the reality of closeted-ness, which hides inside 'el beit' (the home), and perversion, which is found 'beneath the folds of [Islamic] fundamentalism.'[62] Alaa's video imposes a confrontation with queerness that challenges gay identifications as they evolve vis-à-vis perverted, closeted, Islamic otherness. It shows an explicit scene of masturbation and arousal in response to the very icons that pinkwashing narratives use as representative of Islamic/Middle Eastern repression of sexuality and homosexuals (i.e. Iran). Simultaneously, Alaa's *Masturbate bil Beit* invites viewers to penetrate 'the reality' of Middle-Eastern/Islamic desire only to reveal attributes of perversion and closeted-ness rather than the urge to come out and/or be saved from 'homophobia.' In such a case, Alaa's video presents an 'Arab pervert' who flaunts the very lens of their own representation qua perversion/closeted-ness. As Awad and Jankovic comment:

> Abu Asad's video unapologetically confronts viewers with the desiring embodiment of an unsanitized, non-normative version of queer Palestinianness, an image that irreverently flies in the face of (primarily Israeli and US) depictions of queer Palestinians who need to be saved from homophobic Arab and Muslim societies. In other words, 'Masturbate bil beit' defiantly refuses to respond to negative portrayals of Palestinians with a comforting version of queer Palestinian masculinity (Awad and Jankovic, 2012:141).

The video challenges the frames of pinkwashing that actively produce and dehumanize Arab/Middle Eastern 'gay' others, particularly in relation to homophobic, repressive societies, and questions the frames instructing "certain fields of perceptibility" (Butler, 2007: 951). *Masturbate bil Beit* demonstrates how a queer lens aims at undermining the colonial ga(y)ze and its superior position in relation to an 'inferior,' 'in-need-of-saving' colonised other (see Chapter 5 section 5.2.3). It confronts established relations of power and privilege through a redistribution of the aesthetic terms that allows an alternative imagination of the political conditions. Alaa's lens functions as entry point to the artistic work of Knorn, which also reconfigures the aesthetic/political field in order to challenge the normalising frames of liberal colonialism.

LGBT Iranians who live in secrecy. It draws further on the Iranian president denying the existence of 'homosexuals' as a product of Western immorality in his country. See: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/may/17/iran-persecution-gay-community-revealed (Accessed 24 June, 2017).

[62] Ibid.

6.3 Knorn Performs Against the Rhythms of White Liberalism

I encountered Knorn for the first time during a writing workshop organised by alQaws in Ramallah in the summer of 2013. Coming from Ramallah in the West Bank, Knorn's artistic work revolves mainly around drawings, performances and paintings. He consolidated his interest in art after being granted a scholarship to study a degree in fine arts in the United States. However, his 'subject position' and the study experience in the US influenced his approach to and engagement with art. In particular, politics occupy a central role in his definition of art:

> The courses I took were unstructured. The critique centred on technique, avoiding content, as there was very little attention given to political issues, especially among my peers – a majority of which was white, upper middle-class, straight guys. Coming back home every summer - to Palestine - helped me maintain a certain perspective, as my friends were extremely well-read and well-versed in the importance of activism. I began to focus on how policies affect people's lives in real ways, exactly like gender does. I am constantly reminded of the importance of political literacy, specifically from a Marxist, queer, feminist, anticolonial perspective. And I guess I can never feel fully comfortable identifying as an artist, unless I reach a point where I easily communicate political issues via art. This is hard, since art nowadays is merely decorative and endorses oppressive regimes (Knorn, Email Exchange, October 2014).

Knorn defines art as a medium to pose "questions about various issues, whether in society, politics or economics" (ibid). Thus, art ought to "inspire, engage, [and] open up possibilities for positive social change without necessarily giving a definite answer" (ibid). Although he acknowledges that such definition of art could come across as "noble and romantic," he explains that "this is what I strive for, should I ever refer to myself as an artist" (ibid).

Knorn's artistic work demonstrates how the question of queerness in Palestine intertwines politics and aesthetics. To utilise art as a tool for posing questions without necessarily pinning down a definite answer brings to mind the ability to 'reconfigure the sensible.' It paves the way for new possibilities that are not given within the current structure of power. This process alludes to an 'aesthetic of ambiguity' (Willford, 2009: 7), where new possibilities lurk behind the refusal to create a fixed solution or an 'authoritarian alternative' (ibid). By disclosing new ways of doing and being, thus '(re)distributing the sensible,' it 'hints at the instability of any given [re]distribution of

the sensible'(ibid). Knorn artistic work remains ambiguous and open to tumultuous results, creating a 'challenging and accessible' art:

> I want my art to say **'**No! We mustn't accept this, we deserve better as Palestinians, as queers, as women, as working class, as people of colour…etc.' Ideally, I hope I can create a propaganda machine that raises awareness and effectively critiques at the socio-economic level (ibid).

He deems art as a tool for socio-economic critique. This method of saying no as 'Palestinians' and 'queers' derives from Knorn's journey in the U.S., where he experienced how 'little attention' is given to politics within the artistic field, and faced pinkwashing narratives first-hand:

> I was hearing more and more stories about 'gay Middle-Eastern Men' who are being rewarded by Western liberal ideology, when the intention was to white-wash and normalise colonialism. I responded to them by repeating the argument on 'How are you saving them when your tax money and military is killing them?' (ibid).

While Knorn shows frustration over those narratives about 'Middle Eastern gay-men' serving to 'white-wash colonialism,' he also grows critical towards 'the consumption of the other' in 'liberal colonialism.' For these reasons, during an international dance event at the college, he decided to turn his frustration and criticism into an artistic performance:

> There was an end of semester event run by a student organisation, called 'Dance Alloy,' where twenty or so choreographers proposed to create a 3-minute dance routine with a group of dancers, picking a song of their choices. At the time, I was very politically involved and felt very resentful towards the lack of criticism within arts. This happened, in particular, with dance, since international students often become choreographers of those songs that are widely celebrated in their cultures. I was becoming more sensitized to the consumption of the other, and the use of international students' culture to create an illusion of peace and diversity, which legitimizes liberal colonialism. Several Western academic institutions exploit culture in ways that are identical to the 19th century model of anthropology, where indigenous subjects were studied and viewed as 'specimens' or 'missing links,' as 'savage, untamed exotic pleasures,' purely for a colonial (white) audience. (Email Exchange, September 2015).

Knorn's observations on 'liberal colonialism' directly connect with the analytical parameters outlined in Chapter 4. In particular, he emphasizes how liberal colonialism functions as a '19th century model of anthropology.' These remarks resonate with the

ongoing conquest under the liberal ga(y)ze, which stretches back to 19th century processes of Othering. Knorn's narrative establishes a parallel between the ostensible promotion of 'peace' and 'diversity' of liberal colonialism and Israeli use of 'development' and 'progress' to justify systems of domination and othering. For these reasons, Knorn's dance performance at Dance Alloy sought to 'discomfort' the white liberal gaze and the frames of its legitimacy.

6.3.1 To Yield Discomfort

Figures 6.9-6.13 show Knorn's performance in spring 2012 at the Alloy Dance show. Knorn's choreographed dance comes at the minute 45:09 in the YouTube clip of the full show[63] and starts with the entrance on stage of a group of women dressed as belly dancers. Splitting into two separate lines, they begin to move rhythmically to the beat of Arabic music. However, in the middle of these two lines of dancers, three cloaked figures sit on their knees at the back of the stage (Figure 6.9).

[63] Knorn provided me with a YouTube link to the full show in the spring of 2012: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA (Accessed 20 April 2016).

Figure 6.8, *Dance Alloy Spring 2012*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Figure 6.8, *Dance Allor Spring 2012*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Figure 6.10, *Dancy Alloy Spring 2012*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA (Accessed 24 June 2017)

Figure 6.9, *Dancy Alloy Spring 2012*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA(Accessed 24 June 2017)

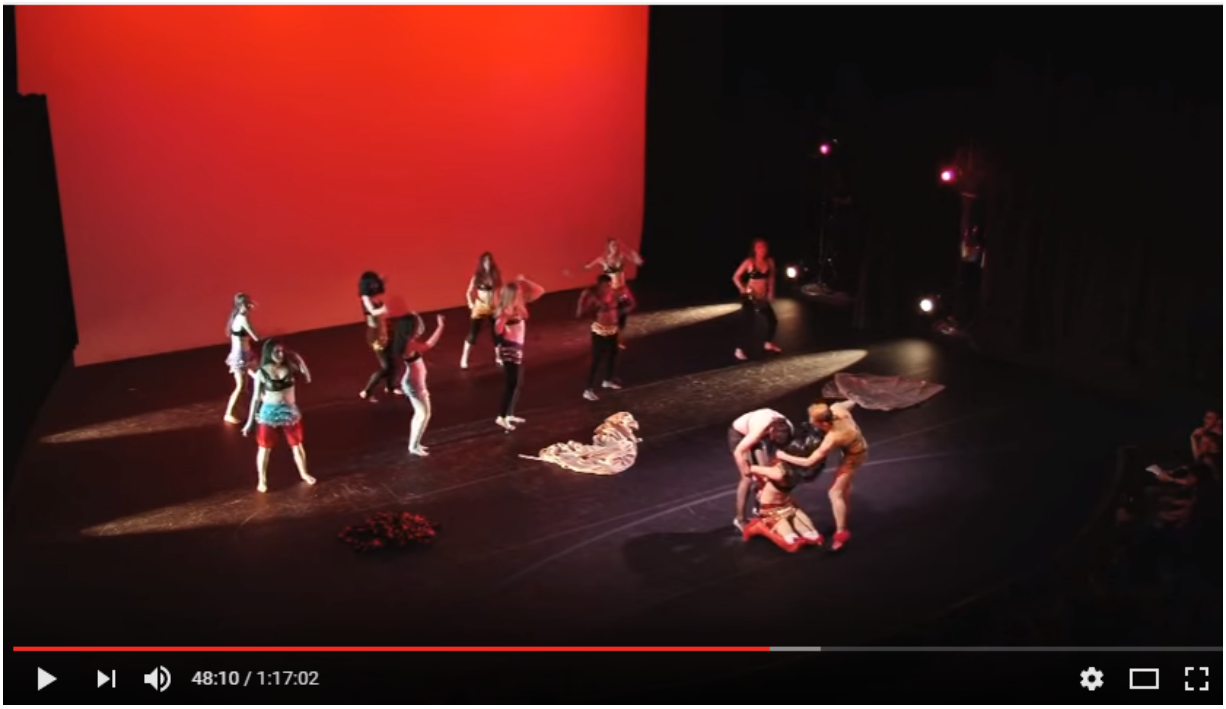

Figure 6.10, *Dancy Alloy Spring 2012*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gs8SOn-WZWA(Accessed 24 June 2017).

As the belly dance performance seems to move forward in a smooth manner, the Arabic music stops suddenly and the three-cloaked subjects come forward to reveal themselves to the audience. Dancing to the rhythm of M.I.A. song 'Bad Girls,' Knorn stands in the middle, dressed and dancing like a belly dancer. On his left side, there is someone dressed in black lingerie with handcuffs attached who dances with chains on their hands. On Knorn's right side, there is another dancer holding and flaunting a gun around (Figure 6.10). Knorn stops dancing and begins performing a series of bodily movements that recall a Palestinian mourning ritual, thus, leading the group into a burial ceremony ritual. The three dancers furiously hit their hands onto their chests, then onto their knees, shake their heads left and right, resembling Palestinian women wailers (Figure 6.11).

In the last part of the performance, the two dancers sitting on each side of Knorn stop dancing and, approach Knorn in a plotting manner (Figure 6.12), forcing him to kneel down. One of the dancers, who represent the police, handcuffs Knorn, while the one holding the gun covers his face with a plastic bag (Figure 6.13). Starting as a traditional performance with a belly dance, it moves slowly into a scene resembling a moment of torture (Figure 6.13), thus turning into an aesthetic performance bearing a more disturbing political message. This stands in contrast to other traditional performances that relate the dances directly to their culture without troubling the audience. Knorn explains:

> I wasn't sure how to include the political element, until I visited a sex shop in New York City and bought three lingerie costumes. One of the military, one of the police, and one of the black leather get up. The first portion I choreographed was a typical Egyptian belly dance routine, placing women at the forefront and allowing a snippet of the seductive temptress to come out to play (Knorn, Email Exchange, September 2015).

A moment of unveiling follows the 'seductive' display of the belly dancers, what Knorn describes as "the queer not cis men," dancing to the rhythm of M.I.A song.

> The liberal gays subjects come out - so to speak - to play, in a sardonic act of 'unveiling,' as the blankets fall to the ground and reveal the fabulousness. What better song to have than Bad Girls by M.I.A.! (ibid).

Knorn choose M.I.A. song Bad Girls because its official video-clip offers a typical version of orientalist imagery. It shows Arab men dressed in their traditional vest driving and dancing behind the singer in the desert. The video also includes

stereotypical scenes of horse riders in the desert of Arabia. One can interpret the 'Bad Girl's, or 'rebel girls' as the writing on the wall at the beginning of the video shows [fatayat mutmaridat], as the ones to whom M.I.A sings, while they drive stunt cars[64] under their burkas'[65] (Figure 6.14). It is, thus, to the rhythms of M.I.A.'s 'Bad Girls' that women in the 'Arab desert' reveal and liberate the rebelliousness under their burka. In this sense, the song reiterates stereotypical representations of Arabs, as associated with desert culture and burka-wearing women. The song seems to represent a Middle-East as backward, challenging its patriarchal oppression and desert-culture through the rhythms of a 'liberating West.' Following M.I.A. and the rhythms of her singing in English, women of Arabia finally reveal 'badness' and 'tamurd' (meaning resistance).

[64] Driving at a high speed while repeatedly rotating cars, and driving on two-tires/one edge of vehicle.
[65] The burka is a full body cloak that also covers the face of those who wear it.

Figure 6.11, *M.I.A Bad Girls*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uYs0gJD-LE (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Knorn's performance offers a clear critique of the song and a deliberate queering of its message. On the one hand, the song enables the 'gay Middle-Eastern subject,' like the 'Bad' Girls' in the song, to come out and unveil in 'all its fabulousness/rebelliousness.' The coming out of gay men, who also want to dance, interrupts what looks like a traditional belly dancing performance of women. On the other hand, Knorn's performance demonstrates power relations underlying such acts of unveiling, whose erosion takes place in celebrating narratives of Middle-Eastern 'Bad Girls' as exotic subjects in need of liberation. This is where the performance turns into a mourning-ritual, recalling both Palestinian death and struggle, and makes a clear reference to the context of colonialism. The desire to reveal the importance of power relations is also present in the last scene, where those two dancers representing the military and the police violently attack the gay oriental subject, re-enacting a moment of incarceration and torture. Knorn explains what his performance wanted to show:

> I wanted the audience to make the association between LGBT rhetoric and colonialism. The police and military are always there to maintain the status quo; hence trapping queerness within a limited stereotype, just so it cannot threaten its sovereignty. In essence, they normalize colonialism and imperialism. At the end, I made a reference to incarceration by having one of the enforcers place a shroud on my head and handcuff me - I was thinking of the Iraqi Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay as examples (Gmail Exchange, September 2, 2015).

Knorn's reflections describe the reliance on a dance performance as a means to confront the narratives on LGBT, which normalize and whitewash colonialism and imperialism. Moreover, his decision to stage the torturing of the gay oriental subject troubles the audience, making them 'uncomfortable.'

> I was intrigued when people's racism intensified after the performance. A lot of people complained it was too political, it was uncomfortable for many. However, I think that this kind of confrontation, this kind of literal illustration connecting our daily practices with politics helps me learning how to deal with such issue through creative means. And it also inspires debate. I'm not saying it's my job to educate the coloniser. However, if I'm to have a conversation, I'd like to come from a position of strength and have free reign [sic] in upsetting the often-immutable power dynamic (ibid).

Knorn's dance performance confronts and discomforts the colonial [liberal] gaze. In particular, it unveils the violence present in the rhetoric of saving and liberating [gay] Middle Eastern subjects. It makes visible what remains invisible within pinkwashing

narratives: “How are you saving them when you are killing them?” While the performance brings this violence on stage, making visible its links to colonialism; it also destabilizes the colonial gaze by upsetting its parameters of (in)tolerance and (dis)comfort. Therefore, Knorn’s dance-performance replicates the ‘counter-gazing’ work of anti-pinkwashing (see chapter 5 section 5.2.3). It confronts those regimes of power setting the parameters to imagine gay Middle Eastern subjectivity and triggers ‘discomfort’ because it interrupts the liberal gaze while it ‘views’ and ‘colonises’ the other within the context of an international dance show. In engaging with art beyond the liberal ‘apolitical’ frame, knorn’s performance invests in what Rancière describes as modifying and expanding “the aesthetico-political field of possibility” (2004). Knorn’s dance, therefore, upsets the gaze of liberal colonialism by creating the ground for aesthetic/political queer possibilities, which emerge beyond calls to ‘celebrate diversity’ and rhetoric to ‘save’ LGBT oppressed Middle-Eastern subjects.

6.4 Conclusion

Examining the work of three artists, Nadia Awad, Alaa Abu Asad and Knorn, this chapter demonstrates how Palestinian queer aesthetics complements and contributes to Palestinian queer activism. In particular, the analysis explores what meanings of Palestinian queer aesthetics emerge in relation to the hetero-colonial [liberal] ga(y)ze, showing the intersections between Palestinian-ness, queerness and aesthetics. Nadia Awad’s queered cinematic lens rips apart grand narratives and their representations revealing *A Demonstration* of pinkwashing. Alaa Abu Asad’s present-absent location within the Zionist state informs the production of an unapologetic queer lens that deconstructs the frame of its own narration. Knorn’s performance art makes visible the link between LGBT rhetoric and colonialism, upsetting the sense of comfort of a liberal audience that wants to celebrate diversity. Drawing primarily on Rancière and Butler, the analysis shows how these artists orient their work in order to redistribute ‘variations of sensible intensities, perceptions, and the abilities of bodies,’ thus challenging established relations of power and privilege. Collectively, these artists’ work indicates how aesthetics actively unsettle the colonial ga(y)ze and its constituting frame and not only promotes a novel relationship between politics and aesthetics, but also contributes and complements the anti-pinkwashing work and analysis of alQaws.

7. Re-instantiating the Colonial Order Within: Hetero-Colonial Paradigms in Imaginings of Palestinian Sovereignty

The previous chapters (Chapters 4, 5 and 6) demonstrate that exploring meanings of queer activism/art and their relevance to decolonisation follows the necessary contextualisation of heteronormativity of Zionist conquest - hetero-colonialism - of Palestine. This chapter represents another fundamental contextual bedrock to subsequent analysis of queer activism/aesthetics as they carve out other ways of imagining liberation and/or meanings of decolonisation (Chapters 8 and 9). It continues to explore hetero-colonialism in the context of Palestine, paying particular attention to its reproduction in visions of the Palestinian liberation struggle, 'free Palestine,' and thus imaginings of sovereignty.

The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section focuses particularly on the emergence of imaginings of national liberation based upon the figure of the Palestinian 'hero' who is masculine and endowed with the role of protecting the 'mother-land.' This analysis of gendered hierarchies within Palestinian nationalism benefits from feminist insights into the gendering of the nation (Enloe 1993; Anthias and Yuval-Davis 1992), as well as queer theory's critique of 'origin-stories' (Butler, 1999) consolidating a heteronormative vision of Palestinian national identity. The second section explores the signing of the Oslo agreement and the transition to a 'founding-father' role for Arafat/PNA. Oslo inscribes a politics of statehood futurity that enforces the rise of Palestinian Authority (PNA) state-making political elites via the agendas of modernising and securitising. At this stage, our analysis of PNA regime within an Oslo frame centres not only the hetero-patriarchal base, or gendered hierarchy within Palestinian nationalism, but also explores the reproduction of colonial temporal and spatial hierarchies, discussed in chapter 4, which allows the re-instantiation of hetero-colonialism. The overall analysis of Palestinian imaginings of sovereignty demonstrates the mesh of gendered and geopolitical hierarchies, which maintain rather than challenge Zionist hetero-colonialism.

The conclusion emphasises that Palestinian imaginations of sovereignty enfold hetero-colonialism and emphasises also the continued relevance of queer politics/aesthetics as they 'imagine otherwise.'

7.1 From *Nakba* to Imagining the Nation and Its Heroes

Following the founding of the Israeli state in 1948, 726,000 Palestinians were forcibly dispersed into neighbouring Arab countries, mainly Lebanon, Jordan, Syria and some of the Gulf countries. Palestinians know this year as *Nakba* (catastrophe) and marked the beginning of a gradual striving towards national self-determination. Throughout the 1960s, the generation of revolt (*jil al thawra*), as it became known, sought a critical divergence from the humiliation and degradation inflicted on the *Nakba* generation (*jil al Nakba*) (Lindholm Schulz, 1999: 37). From the heart of refugee camps, where a sense of dispersion, loss and exile reigned supreme, guerrilla fighter groups rose as part of self-identified anti-colonial and anti-imperial revolutionary struggle. The launching of guerrilla warfare aimed at creating mass mobilisation for the purpose of liberating the homeland (Abu Iyad in Khalili, 2007: 143), represented a major turning-point for defining Palestinians. The birth of revolt framed Palestinian identity as a conscious aspiration for liberation, stressing values, narratives, symbols and iconographies associated with heroism. This section identifies the gendered nature of the *thawra* vision through an analysis of these values.

Laleh Khalili (2007) argues that a discourse of heroism pervaded Palestinian liberationist discourse. Similar to many other anti-colonial and liberationist movements, it celebrated martyrdom of the *fida'iyeen*[66] as an act of self-sacrifice signifying rebirth and agency (2007: 18-20). In particular, it insisted on the figure of the hero and its masculine duty to defend the 'mother-land.' It comes as no surprise that those values were further reinforced when one guerrilla faction – *Fatah*[67] - took over the apparatus of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO)[68] in 1969. The Arab League founded the PLO in 1964 as a response to Palestinian desire for self-determination. Fatah's

[66] Those are guerrilla fighters who sacrifice their lives for the sake and love of their country.
[67] Reverse acronym to *harakt al-tahrir al watani al falastini* meaning "Palestinian National Liberation Movement."

emergence to take control of the PLO coincided with the defeat of the Arabs in the 1967 war, also known as 'Six Day' war, between Israel and three neighbouring Arab countries Egypt, Syria and Jordan, which had discredited the PLO's underlying Pan-Arabist ideology. Pan-Arabism, which represented Arab unity in the face of Western and colonial aggression, received a massive blow following the 'Six Day' war leading to its accelerated decline. Fatah's ascendency to the PLO represented, thus, a drastic move away from Pan-Arabism. Fatah, instead, capitalized on a discourse that insisted on the centrality of Palestine and Palestinian nationalism (see Lindholm Schulz, 1999; Parsons 2005; Sayigh 1997).

Other reasons also contributed to Fatah's ascendency, primarily its nationalist but non-ideological approach (Jureidini and Hazen, 1976: 31), which allowed it to become one of the most prominent factions in the diaspora. It enabled them to mobilise various segments of Palestinian communities, ranging from conservatives to seculars, as well as traditional elites and poorer strata. Emerging in Kuwait in 1959, the group received a great amount of patronage from conservative oil-rich countries, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait (Parsons, 2005: 28). This turned Fatah's leader, Yasser Arafat, into the "the central source of finance for the PLO's bureaucracy and armed forces through his unprecedented control over the purse strings" (ibid), and enabled an expansion of the bureaucratic machinery of the Fatah-led PLO. Following their expulsion from Jordan in 1970, Fatah's relocation to Lebanon generated what could be identified as the 'nationalist [bureaucratised] elite' (see for example: Parsons 2005, Jamal 2005, Sayigh 1997, Khalili 2007). Fatah then established a 'state within a state' [known as Fakihani Republic/or Fatahland] in Lebanon during 1970s. However, the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975, and Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, led to the forcible relocation of Fatah's headquarters to Tunis.

Under Fatah's leadership came the rise of nationalist [bureaucratised] elite to power, whose aim for an eventual fulfilment of statist aspirations, is essentially embedded in the heteropatriarchy that instructs the nation's imagination. Thus, central to Fatah's ascendency to head the PLO is a valorisation of Palestinian [only] nationalism [as opposed to Arab national unity], which conjoined the rising focus on masculinist heroism. For example, a particular event worthy of highlighting when examining Fatah's take-over of the PLO is the battle of Karama in 1968. It is through 'Karama,' which means dignity and honour in Arabic, that Palestinian fida'iyeen [freedom fighters]

were able to proclaim a much-needed victory against Israeli forces in the Jordanian village of Karama. Once again heroism takes hold in the eyes of the guerrilla fighters who, although suffering massive losses and needing to be supported by the Jordanian army, managed to celebrate the exceptionalism of *Palestinian*-fighters' heroic victory. Thus, in the official narrative of the Palestinian fighters, Karama represented the restoration of Palestinian dignity after being "jeered and humiliated for decades" (Abu Iyad & Rouleau, 1981: 60). Simultaneously, Karama, for Arafat, provided an important lesson for the Israelis and served as an example for Arab nations and their shameful defeats (ibid: 156). These concepts of pride, honour and restoration of dignity underpin the narrative of heroism central to Palestinian nationalist self-imagining. Whilst Karama shows the maximisation of the heroes of the nation, who are courageous men, fighting from exile towards a 'paradise lost' (Lindholm Schulz, 1999: 43), the first Intifada marks the epitome of heroism as it sparkles from *within* the territories occupied by Israel since 1967. The nationalist elites in diaspora were keen to make political gains through the Intifada, in valorising such values of heroism.

7.1.1 Intifada: A Palestinian Wedding[69]

Following twenty years of ruthless Israeli military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the Intifada [meaning: 'uprising' or 'sudden shaking'], in 1987, represents one of the most significant events in Palestinian political history. A reminder to Israelis of what their first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion had said once: "A people which (sic) fights against the usurpation of its land will not tire so easily."[70] The Intifada signified a collective Palestinian organised revolt by means including protests, throwing stones, civil disobedience and economic boycott. The Intifada also posed a mounting challenge to the Tunis-based[71] PLO who, far distanced from its constituencies, following exile from Jordan to Lebanon, then to Tunis, was now doubly challenged (Parsons 2005: 36) by indigenous nationalists and other emerging non-PLO affiliated factions in the West Bank and Gaza, such as Hamas and Islamic Jihad.

[69] Inspired by the annual Palestinian festival that celebrates 'Ors *Al Intifada' [Intifada as a wedding]* where the emergence of the Intifada is analogized to a Palestinian wedding. See for example (source in Arabic): http://www.qudsn.ps/article/101147 (Accessed 24 July 2017).
[70] http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7381369.stm (Accessed 24 July 2017).
[71] Following exile from Lebanon to Tunis after the Israeli invasion in 1982.

In order to bridge the gap between the 'insiders' [West Bank and Gaza] and 'outsiders' [Tunis-PLO] and institutionalise cooperation between Fatah and other Palestinian factions, the *Unified National Leadership of the Uprising* (UNLU) was established in January 1987. UNLU became a powerful tool in the hands of the Tunis-based PLO to affirm its political hegemony by subordinating the local leadership of the Intifada.[72] Through the UNLU communiqués one can also trace how the Palestinian national struggle becomes 'masculinised' (Enloe, 1993: 44). It is through Fatah's attempts to retain power that I will show how heteropatriarchy lies at the core of national imagining of sovereignty.

Analysis of UNLU communiqués reveals how the Palestinian masculine agent produces the nation and its symbols, which are cast as female-guardian (e.g. 'mother-land'). Liberation is imagined as a woman who needs protection from colonial penetration. Communiqués describe the mother-land, who give birth to the national hero, fida'iyeen, as she "rejoices twice: first on the day of her son's death and again on the day of declaration of the state" (In Malhi-Sherwell, 2001:162). Communiqués 'congratulate' Palestinian women on their role of mothering and birthing the nation, while urging nationalist 'sons' to launch the revolution, marking through their death the nation's glory and dignity (Lockman and Beinin, 1989; Massad 1995). If the death of the 'son' marks dignity, 'pregnancy describes the Intifada, and the colonizer's attempt to suppress it is an 'abortion' (Lockman and Beinin, 1989:360). Palestine's colonisation is the 'rape' of the land (Rubenerg, 2001: 219). The Intifada was also likened to a wedding, whose anniversary continues to be celebrated in relation to a Palestinian-wedding 'Ors al intifada.' In doing so, liberation becomes a celebration of heterosexual consummation, giving birth to the 'children of the revolution' (Palestine national council, political communiques, 1988, in Lucaks, 1992: 415). This language indicates how Palestinian national identity stems "from masculinised memory, masculinised hope and masculinised humiliation" (Enloe, 1993: 44). On the one hand, the bodies of women intertwine the symbolic body of the nation because "it is women who reproduce nations biologically, culturally and symbolically" (Yuval-Davis, 1997:

[72] The Tunis-based PLO also capitalised on the Intifada in order to achieve those diplomatic gains that it had failed to accomplish back in the 1970s. In fact, 1974 marked the PLO's road to diplomacy as it tried to work actively through diplomatic channels towards a two-state solution. However, such process failed because, although the PLO was granted the status as 'the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people,' the United States had refused to negotiate with the group (see Parsons, 2005: 26-34).

2). On the other hand, the agency to enact such (re) production of the nation is always-already a masculine privilege.

Exploring the central role family and women's reproductive abilities play in defining Palestinian visions of national liberation also requires an examination of the National Charter of the PLO. The document defines Palestinian identity as a: "genuine, essential and inherent characteristic; [it is] *transmitted from parents to children*" (my emphasis, Laqueur and Rubin, 1984: 366). The charter also indicates that: "The Palestinians are Arab nationals who until 1947 normally resided in Palestine regardless of whether they were evicted or have stayed there. Anyone born after that date of a Palestinian *father* – whether inside or outside Palestine – is also Palestinian" (my emphasis: ibid). These statements prove how the "cyclical life of the family" (Lindholm Schulz, 1999: 34) stands at the centre of identifying the true, authentic qualities of the Palestinian. The continuity of 'genuine' Palestinian identity hinges on the biological process of procreation 'from parents [Father, mother] to children.' However, as 1947 signals a historical rupture, thought about as a biological violation of the nation-as-woman or the Zionist 'rape of the mother-land,' the charter assigns the role of passing Palestinian identity only to the 'father.'

The exclusion of the mother demonstrates the privileges assigned to masculine agents in the process of nation-building. Joseph Massad argues that to disqualify the reproductive role of the land as mother means that "since the rape, it can no longer be relied upon to reproduce legitimate Palestinian children" (1995: 472). Through this lens of 'Al-ard al-mughtasaba' (the raped land), we also see how the Intifada constructs discourses of national 'heroes' via ideals of retrieving 'honour,' 'dignity' and 'respect' for Palestine. For example, one narrative of the Intifada valorised the Palestinian 'fida'iyeen' [freedom-fighters] at 'Karama,' who - as we saw above - represent the restoration of Palestinian dignity. It is the same masculinized memory and humiliation that, while it seems to elevate the body of the woman to that of the nation, does so in order to maintain a position of superiority and sole control over the nation-building process. Women assume a secondary, supportive role in the narrative of nationalism. It is important to maintain, however, that my aim to show this masculinized language does not by any means underplay the key role that Palestinian women played during the Intifada (see Jean-Klein, 2001).

However, the Tunis-based PLO nationalist narrative that privileges the role of masculine agents to liberate the 'raped motherland' also interacts with the Zionist discourse of conquest (see Chapter 4 Section 1.3). The mobilization of Palestinian society through the use of a nationalist discourse reliant on values of pride and honour resonates with the ways in which Israel, as a colonising power, fosters these values. For instance, Arafat's insistent use of rape as a metaphor to describe the colonization of the land builds on those blunt sexual representations upon which Zionism relied to envision its conquest. As Zionism envisioned the land as a woman in need of 'pioneer insemination' (Chapter 4 Section 1.3), so Palestinians constructed a vision of liberation as recuperating the honour of the 'raped motherland.'

To assess further how the concept of honour (re) produces itself, we also need to consider how Israel exploits this Palestinian discourse in order to recruit collaborators. The Arabic term *Isqat*, which translates literally as the downfall, is widely known amongst Palestinians to describe those whom Israeli secret services coerced into collaboration. Israel blackmails people and 'tusquit' (Arabic verb for Isqat, brings about their downfall through collaboration) through knowledge of those who violate certain societal codes, such as drug use, alcohol use, pre-marital sex and homosexuality amongst others. This 'fear of Isqat,' as Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009: 15) notes, triggers social and moral panic, renders topics concerning sexual abuse – and, more generally, sexuality - difficult to handle or even to talk about in Palestinian official and societal circles.

Fear of 'Isqat' also functioned against those groups, including 'unmanly' men and 'unwomanly' women, who failed to repeat the gendered performances deemed necessary for nation's self-definition via ideals of purity. During the period from the first to the second Intifada [1990-2000], various Palestinian factions started adopting cleansing strategies against stigmatised groups who were seen as an easy target for coerced collaboration with the enemy. Similar to Israeli methods, these factions blackmailed and threatened those engaged in non-confirming behaviours, including drug users, sex workers and expressions of gender or sexuality that were suspected to be homosexual (Alqaisiya, Hilal and Maikey, 2016: 127). The usage of such tactics further enforced patriarchal perceptions of sexuality whereby "these immoral behaviours are defined as a threat that need to be uprooted from political activism" (ibid). Palestinians' appropriation of the values of honour and dignity triggered a vicious cycle,

as it further legitimised Israeli intelligence to continue blackmailing into collaboration those Palestinians who did not wish to be publicly exposed. Palestinian political factions re-instantiated rather than challenged the colonial logic.

Honour and dignity, as dialogical elements representing the kernel of discourses of Zionist conquest and Palestinian liberation struggles, also demonstrate the centrality of the masculine. The famous Palestinian proverb "al-ard heya al-ard," meaning 'land is honour,' is a good example of how codes of sexual purity assigned to women instruct national self-imagining within the existing frame of Israeli colonisation (see also Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 38). The discursive intensification of *manly* men, whose refusal to be emasculated by Israeli colonial machine manifests in their ability to protect their *ard* [land/honour] from violation, comes through heightened confrontation with the coloniser. *Manly* men are juxtaposed to roles ascribed to *womanly* women, who are 'saluted' and recognised in their capacity to procreate the nation's martyrs and prisoners.

The production of art, including political posters that represent the struggle in gendered terms, enforce the discursive dramatization of gendered bodies vis-à-vis the nation's liberation. For instance, they juxtapose [figure 7.1] the hero, who is willing to sacrifice his blood for the sake of redeeming the nation, with the woman in her traditional Palestinian dress *thawb*, depicting the land [see figures 7.2, 7.3, 7.4]. Malhi-Sherwell (2001: 165) notes how the recurrent use of such imagery in Palestinian art, particularly from the mid-1970s to mid-80s, becomes a key signifier for an authentic Palestinian national identity by marking the retrievability of a Palestinian past. Drawing on Butler (1999), it is possible to see how the consolidation of an origin story, or a past 'before the rape,' enables the comprehension of Palestinian nationalism in masculinised terms. That is, in referencing an 'imaginary past' (ibid: 46) that is presumed to be pure and free of colonial contamination, Palestinian nationalist rhetoric cements its present constitution within the frame of heteropatriarchy. By imagining 'a state of origin' where the land is figured as woman in her peasant dress, they justify the continuous (re)production of the gendered narratives that buttress masculinised agency. The posters reiterate masculinised visions of Palestinian liberation struggle, and thus nationalism.

Figures 7.3, 7.4, illustrate how those posters echo nationalist masculinised rhetoric. They reiterate a message that relegates women to the role of guardians of the nation (in 7.3 depicted through the symbol of the ancient olive tree rooted in the soil of Palestine),

as well producers of future-generations, whose gaze is fixated on the to-be-liberated land. Figure 7.4, a popular image of 'the mother with a baby in her arms,' combines two fundamental elements: the role of the woman in giving birth, and the infant national-hero who will grow to re-take the feminine nation (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Nationalist agendas also frame the repudiation of non-conforming gendered identities when launching the 'Ors Al Intifada,' as political factions seek to 'purify' and 'cleanse' the constituents of 'genuine' Palestinian identity. They produce gendered performances vis-à-vis the nation, along with the exclusionary praxis upon which gender solidification takes place, "as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity" (Butler, 1999: 174). The reification of a discourse of nation-statism generates the heteronormativity of an intelligible Palestinian identity, together with its exclusionary and hierarchal elements.

Further consolidation of Palestinian nationalism through statist aspirations reaches its zenith with the signing of the Oslo accords where a 'founding-father role' for Arafat/Fatah unfolds. The next section takes into account intertwining dynamics of securitising and modernising that maintain the rise of statesmen elites, and so continued socio-political hierarchy, in order to trace how a politics of statehood futurity re-instantiate hetero-colonialism.

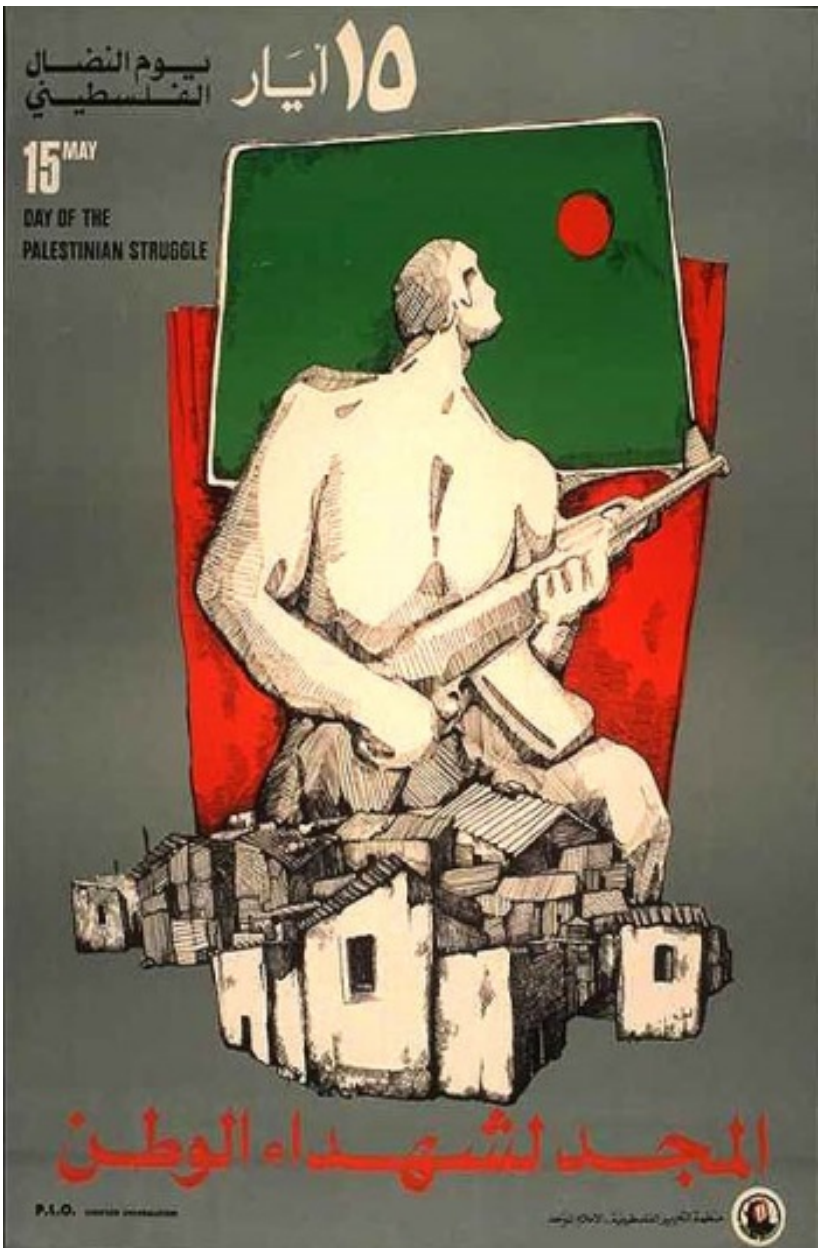

Figure 7.1, *Glory to the Martyrs*

Source: The Palestine Poster Project Archive (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 7.2, *The Revolution is a Gun and a Workers' Arms*

Source: ibid. (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 7.3, *Land Day*

Source: ibid. (Accessed 24 June 2017).

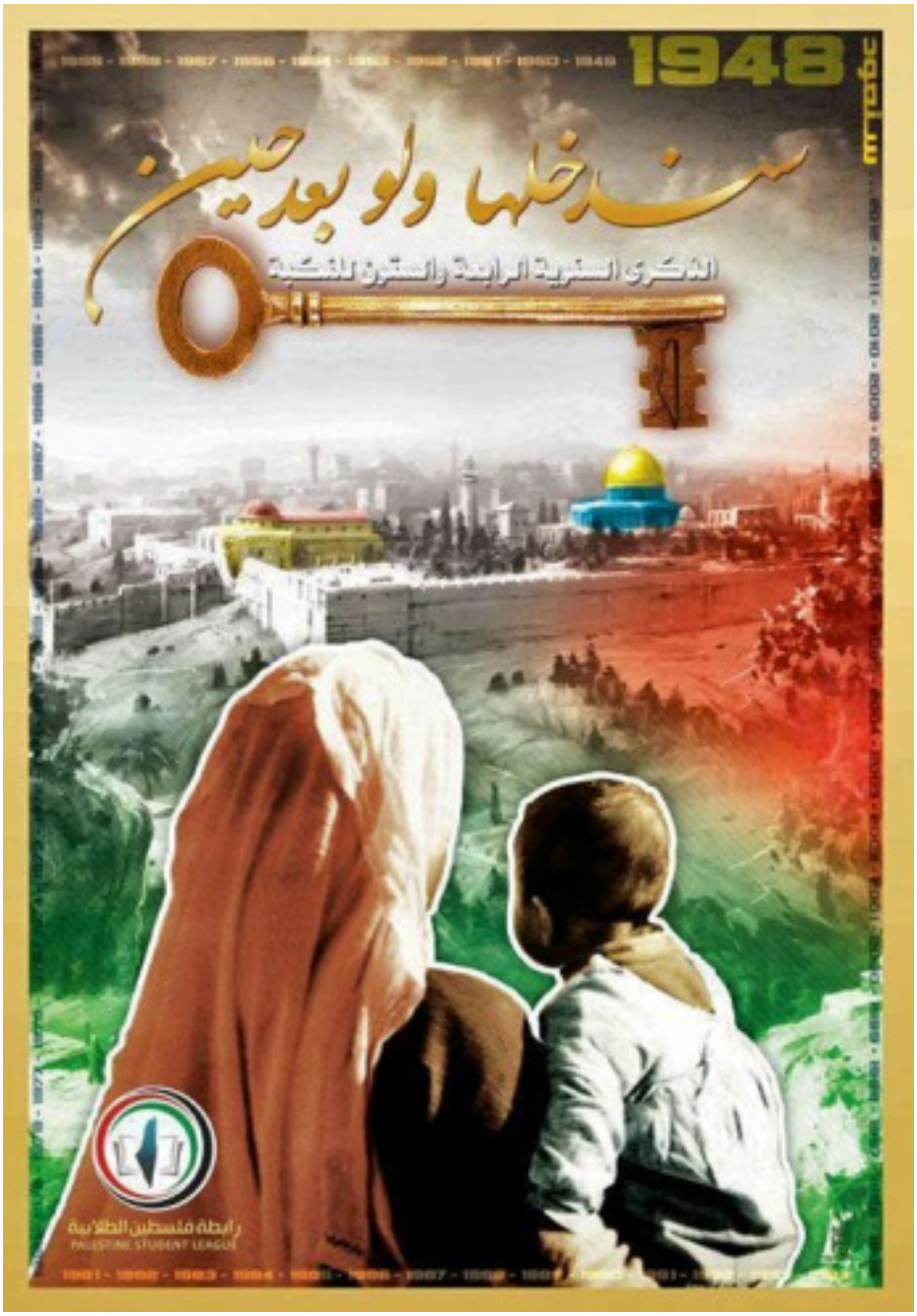

Figure 7.4, *In memory of Nakba*

Source: ibid. (Accessed 24 June 2017).

7.2 Dreaming the Future State: Dictating the Present Hegemony of the Statesman Elite

The signing of the Oslo accords in 1993 between the PLO and Israel was one of the most important events in the history of Palestinian liberation struggle as it triggered a number of detrimental dynamics. Israel's recognition of the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, through the signing of Declaration of Principles, brought in renewed legitimacy and guaranteed ascendency for Arafat's Fatah (see Parsons 2005: 47). In fact, Fatah's return to the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 1994 came hand in hand with the official transition into a quasi-state apparatus, known as the Palestinian National Authority [PNA]. This PNA apparatus governs semi-autonomous enclaves within Occupied Palestinian Territories [OPT]. Oslo stipulated the division of the OPT into Areas: A, B and C. The PNA was designated the task of serving Palestinians in areas with their highest concentration and least percentage of land: areas A (558,000 on 2.7% of the land) and B (25.1% of the land). By contrast, Israel continues to retain full control over security in area C which accounts for more than 60% of the OPT (OCHA, 2011). Moreover, area C encompasses Areas A and B that thus form 'islands' separated from each other by the surrounding military milieu. As such, the PNA has no sovereignty over its territory and, at the same time, it relieved Israel from its responsibilities to provide services and security as the occupying power.

The PNA/Fatah (see LeVine, 1989) hope to facilitate a 'peaceful' transition into a future Palestinian state has failed to receive Israeli and unanimous international recognition to this day despite abiding by the modernisation agenda of 'peace' and 'development,' as well as the recognition of Israel's 'security' needs. At the same time, the consolidation of a vision of 'free Palestine' in a statehood framework marked the transition of PLO from 'revolutionaries' to 'state-makers.' However, the structural imbalance of power and Israel's infinite requests for 'security,' which characterized the Oslo agreements since their inception (see Le More, 2008 and Reuveny, 2003), only enabled the continuation of Israel's colonisation. Therefore, Fatah's Arafat, as the following demonstrates, continued to rely on the 'origin story' to enforce a patriarchal system while enabling the rise of state-making political elites.

7.2.1 Founding-Father Inscribes Statesmen Elitism

Since the Oslo Peace Process represented a path toward 'peace,' it also triggered a gradual transformation of masculine 'revolutionaries' agents whose task was to liberate the 'mother-land.' Their role changes from national combat fighters, or 'fida'iyeen,' into guarantors of peace, forming a security apparatus, whose task is to maintain a close coordination over 'security issues' with the colonial Israeli authority. However, the very existence of this newly established PNA security apparatus –along with many other institutions – relied on the unprecedented flow of foreign funding, or international aid, which as Le More indicates (2008: 7), allowed the maintenance of 'a linear progress between peace, security and development.' For international assistance to flow and help the Palestinians to modernize, certain conditions needed to be met. Specifically, the international community directed foreign funds only to an apparatus – the PNA – that was keen to maintain the security concerns of the colonial authority, thus working for Israel's interests in order to implement the 'peace process.' Oslo marks the rise of the Palestinian, masculine, national agent to governance through the consolidation of state-making political elites. The role of the 'state's founding-father' (see also Khalili, 2007: 187) that Arafat occupied in the PNA derived legitimacy from earlier liberationist narratives of masculine heroism. The enforcement of such 'founding-father' legitimacy now intertwined a system of patronage and clientelism that guaranteed PNA/Fatah power. The relationship between Arafat and the security apparatus resembled one between a father and his children. As he stated: "nobody intervenes between me and my children" (Al Shu'ibi, 2012: 5). This logic of patriarchal dominance derives from Fatah's loss of control when the Intifada began. Thus, its significant efforts to enforce tribal/clan/family socio-political structures in the wake of the 'peace process' established enough legitimacy for its rule. The patriarch (Arafat/PNA) assigns various ministerial positions to loyal patriarch-heads of influential tribes and families in order to maintain his power (Dana, 2015: np).

The rise of a political apparatus, on the one hand, fulfills the colonial concerns over security and activates a 'patriarchalising' process that resulted in the rise of statesmen elitism (see also Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009: 16), while, on the other hand, a gradual change took place in relation to the 'origin-stories' previously analysed. At first, the state-making elites did not abandon the 'origin-story' describing authentic Palestinian

identity as a 'pure' woman. Palestine continues to be imagined in her peasant dress *thawb* (see posters above), and Yasser Arafat continues to wear the peasant/refugee *keffiya* [scarf] all the time. However, hetero-colonialism begins to be instantiated through the rise of a new masculine elite, in the shape of a 'security force' working for the colonial authority.

Oslo marks the rise of an elitist urban strata seeking to build a structure that contains and renders 'other' through whom the 'struggle' and 'revolution' gained its meaning in the first place. The signing of the agreements, triggering recognition of Israel and a turn to an agenda of 'peaceful dialogue,' went hand in hand with pushing crucial issues off the 'negotiating table,' particularly the status of East Jerusalem and the right of return of refugees. The embrace of the Oslo 'peace' and 'security' discourses by Arafat and the Fatah elite, marked the unofficial abandonment of refugees and peasants upon whom the "resistance leadership" relied for its "symbols and signs of authenticity" (Sayigh, 1994: 102). The PNA's aspiration to institutionalise their authority over enclaves of territory (Areas A and B) left refugees, particularly those in Lebanon, to "feel that their suffering in the camps were cynically used by this leadership to bolster its credentials in the OPT" (Khalili, 2007: 54). Thus, peasants and refugees began to share a similar fate to women as authenticating symbols and 'origin-stories,' consolidating their symbolic importance rather than their political agency. Their role as symbols of 'misery' and 'exile' became more crucial, as long as it provides legitimacy to the masculinist, elitist and urban strata of 'state-makers' working de facto under the coloniser's control. As these changes affected the structure of PNA power, so too they affected its hetero-colonial vision of Palestinian statehood futurity. As discussed below, while the adoption of a modernizing agenda legitimates a future state of Palestine, it also intertwines colonial notions of progress and hierarchy (see Chapter 4 section 4.1). For this reason, it is important to explore examples demonstrating how such agenda served to reproduce – rather than challenge –the colonial structure in order to capture the re-inscription of hetero-colonialism in imaginings of sovereignty.

7.2.2 Modernizing and Securitizing a Recognizable State: Reproducing Spatio-Temporal Colonial Structures

The signing of the Oslo Accord transformed the PNA into a security apparatus that cooperated closely with the colonizer, whose existence depended on international funding. The sparking of the second Intifada (2000) marks a new approach to Arafat's governance, hence, interference between him and 'his children' is now deemed necessary for international bodies, mainly the US, a staunch supporter of Israel. That is, with the second Intifada proving Arafat's inability to "deliver security for the Israelis" (Le More, 2008: 6), international criticism, including calls for regime change, started to grow against the Arafat-led PNA and calls were made for reforms particularly within the PNA's security apparatus. Following Arafat's death in 2002, security reform as per 'deterring terror' agenda, which Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon addressed in 2003 Herzaliya conference[73], became the prime priority for the agenda of Mahmoud Abbas, the new PA leader, after he took office in 2005 (in Dana, 2014: np). Abbas's proposal for security reforms was immediately backed up by the Bush administration at the time as well as the EU, which provided training and established a coordination office in the West Bank called EUPOL COPS[74] (ibid). Fatah's loss of 2006 elections to its main political opponent, Hamas, marked a Gaza/West bank divide with the latter taking hold of the Gaza strip and the former ruling in WB. This triggering of Palestinian in-fight and division, which continues up to date, was due to PNA [Fatah] rejection of the results of the elections and international governments backing of the latter [Fatah] authority against the democratically elected Hamas. At this juncture, further reforms and restructuring to PNA security apparatus takes place, leading to an unprecedented level of US investment in the PNA security apparatus after 2007.[75] The establishment of national security forces and the elite units of the 'presidential guards,' locally known as

[73] Former PM Sharon advocated at the 2003 conference: "1. dismantlement of all existing security bodies loyal to Arafat, ones which according to him are described as terrorists following their engagement in armed struggle against Israel during the Second Intifada 2. Appointing a New Minister of interior to oversee the dissolution and outlawing of Palestinian military wings 3. Immediate renewal of Palestinian-Israeli security cooperation. He stressed" the security reform must accompany sincere and a real effort to stop terrorism, while applying the 'chain of preventive measures' outlined by the Americans: intelligence gathering, arrest, interrogation, prosecution and punishment" (Dana 2014: np).

[74] See: http://eupolcopps.eu/ (Accessed 24 June 2017).

[75] According to U.S. Government and Accountability Office $ 392 million were allocated for PNA security reform during fiscal years of 2007 through 2010 see: http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-10-505 (Accessed 29 July 2017 2017).

'the Dayton Men,' [76] in 2012 signalled a turning point. The creation of those two units corresponded to the need to further clamp down on political opposition and protect the new PNA/Fatah leader, Mahmoud Abbas. The establishment of these units was based on two principles: 'counter terrorism,' marking continued security coordination with Israel and 'state-building,' a principle embedded within the paradigms of development and modernisation.

One major example of the PA's modernization is the figure of Salam Fayyad, former IMF economist. Under International pressure, Abbas appointed Fayyad to the Ministry of Finance, and subsequently made him Prime Minister by presidential decree after Hamas took control of the Palestine Legislative Council in the 2006 elections. Fayyad's policies and plans became known as 'Fayyadism,' a term coined by *The New York Times* columnist, Thomas Friedman (2010: np). Fayyadism involved a series of projects that resonated within a developmental state-building programme. They echoed the notion of 'economic peace' (Lunat, 2010: np) that Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, advocated, according to which economic development should lead to statehood recognition for Palestinians. Prominent foreign leaders praised such economic/developmental initiatives, describing Fayyad's policies as "first class and highly professional" (UK PM Tony Blair in Peraino, 2009: np). However, 'Fayyadism' also re-enforced the "inequitable and elite-based structures of power" (Tartir, 2014: 38) that further consolidated the power of the PA. Fayyadism reveals the underlying client-state nature of the PA to Israel, as the latter subcontracts its colonial occupation to the former through 'modernizing' and/or 'securitizing' projects. These produce a vision of the "eventual Palestinian state" as "a free and open market economy," thus emphasizing "the Palestinian private sector as the engine for economic growth" (ibid: 16). These economic initiatives are the epitome of a modernising agenda that conjoin a securitising paradigm, which reify hetero-colonialism.

I will unpack further this process by looking at the development project of the new Palestinian city, also identified as the 'promised city,' of Rawabi [meaning 'hills' in Arabic]. The Qatari Diar Real Estate Investment Company and the Palestinian American billionaire and entrepreneur, Bashar Al-Masri, developed the city in 2010.

[76] In reference to the American Lieutenant general Keith Dayton who took on the task of training Fatah/Abbas loyalists in effort to bolster Fatah power. The Dayton Men are part of an era of ushering in the 'New Palestinian Man' who is able to clamp down on opponent factions particularly after Hamas, an opponent to Fatah winning of 2006 elections.

Its construction represents the climax of of Fayyad's politics of modernizing Palestine for a futural statehood recognition. Rawabi captures a vision of futural Palestine within the agendas of modernity and progress. Under the slogan 'live, work and grow' Rawabi is designed to meet the dreams of 'Palestinian families,' providing "opportunities for 'affordable' home ownership, employment, education and leisure and an attractive environment" (Rawabi.ps).

It is possible to contemplate this notion of the happy family that projects such as Rawabi grows to promote. Figure [7.5] illustrates those billboards in Ramallah promoting visions of a *happy* Palestinian family who has received bank loans for purchasing a house. Drawing on Sara Ahmed insights (2010), Rawabi crafts 'an orientation' (ibid: 44) towards the family as 'a happy object' (ibid: 45) in order to maintain the structure of state-making political elites. The billboards portray photos of the modern nucleolus (maximum three or four children) Palestinian family against the backdrop of the 'most luxurious resident apartments.' These photos 'put on display 'or make visible' (ibid) for their viewers the ideal of happy family as an object to aspire for or as 'a fantasy of the good life' (ibid: 51). They outline the directionality of the idea of happy family as something that bears affective value. What remains significant to explore, however, is how such directionality is laid out via the objects that allow its circulation. In this case not only do the billboards themselves bespeak family as 'happy object', but also they enforce increased investment in construction projects [such as Rawabi]. They encapsulate a modern and elitist version of Palestinian identity; one that qualifies for 'international recognition.' Masrai states "Rawabi also sends a message to the international community. We are not what they are led to believe, a bunch of terrorists. We are ready to build our state. Here is the proof" (in Sherwood, 2016: np). 'Rising' to represent 'Palestine's potential' (Sherwood, 2013: np) Rawabi captures an imagination of Palestinian futurity qua universal notion of progress, which supposedly legitimize the rightfulness of the Palestinian state-to-be. This demonstrates how Palestinian politics of modernization and development, for the sake of a futural state, reproduces the temporal paradigms and notions of progress that enabled Zionist colonialism (see Chapter 4 Section 4.1.1). One of the comments about Rawabi captures its 'rise' to overlook the Israeli city of 'Tel Aviv' (Savir, 2015: np). Remarking on Rawabi's proximity to Tel Aviv is a way of describing not only a spatial proximity, but also a

temporal one. In other words, Rawabi depicts Palestinian ability to build a progressive modern city like the one that 'Tel Aviv' represents.

Figure 7.5, *Real-Estate Poster in Ramallah*

Source: Palestinian photographer and artist Lama Abu Odeh.

Furthermore, it is crucial to understand how the construction of the 'promised Palestinian city' relies on enforcing cooperation and peaceful economic relations with Israel. Masri bluntly announces "every construction project in Palestine must have components from Israel" (In Kozaczuk, 2015: 32). The construction of the Palestinian 'promised city' does not only bear components from Israel, as Masri declares, but also generates, as Palestinian architect Yazid Anani and Al Khateeb[77] argue (see figures: 7.6-7.7), the very spatialities of colonial conquest.

> There are striking similarities between new housing projects and already existing settlement patterns. When comparing Psgot, a Jewish settlement, with Al Rawabi, a new Palestinian city, we notice how they engage the landscape in similar ways. There is a strong similarity with the colonial mechanism of gazing at space, fragmenting space, controlling the mountain tops, creating gated communities and fostering elitism in the planning of these housing projects (Anani, 2011: np).

Anani further clarifies, drawing on other examples of Palestinian architecture, how Palestinian political structures have come to rely on the same spatial mechanism of the colonisers. In Chapter 4, I discuss how Israeli Wall and Tower system stands at the essence of defining Zionist socio-spatial configuration(s). I draw on the Wall and Tower tactic to demonstrate how a Zionist spatial regime comes to generate/infuse the temporal paradigms defining Zionism and hence a quarantine of and Other [Palestinian] space/time takes place. Rawabi's 'over the hill' location resonates with settlements locations over peaks of mountains and hilltops, which are able to rise- above and observe 'an other' (see Chapter 4 section 4.1.2). Moreover, Anani examines how the Mukat'a, headquarters of PNA in Ramallah reifies Israeli wall and watchtower (2011: np). Whilst Anani (ibid) explains that such architecture depicts the way the "political entity fears its own people," hence comes the usage of a 'defence' system against 'passer-by's' or 'citizens.' However, relying on the lens I employ in Chapter 4, it is important to stress the interplay of temporal and spatial constituents to exclusionary and hierarchical structure which is hetero-colonial. The continuity of hetero-colonialism can

[77] In his essay on Al Rwabi, Palestinian architect, Palestinian architect and artist Youself Al-Khateeb, makes a similar argument to Anani. In this regard, Al Khateeb uses two aerial photos, one of an Israeli settlement - Pigat Ze'ev - and one of Rawabi (see Figures 7.6-7.7), in order to show striking similarities between the two.

be traced in this new Palestinian regime whose dreaming of a futural [state of Palestine] relies on the very colonial paradigms that allows hierarchy exclusion and othering within Palestine to continue. The distribution of happy family paradigms not only fulfils a linear continuation of Palestinian identity as per 'cyclical life of the family,' more crucially, it reflects the 'modern' aspect of this 'happy family,' who can afford and own the luxury homes it dreams. This modern aspect is caught within the larger web of power, which uses modernisation as a means to enforce its own hegemony.

Figure 7.6 Rawabi

Source: Al Khateeb, 2012.

Figure 7.7 Ze'ev, *Israeli settlement Pigat*

Source: Al Khateeb, 2012.

7.3 Conclusion: On the Possibility to Imagine Otherwise?

This chapter highlights significant moments in Palestinian national struggle from *Nakba* to waging 'Ors Al Intifada,' showing how 'origin stories' enforce the rise of the national and 'masculine' heroes as agents of the revolution. At the same time, their privileged position vis-à-vis the 'mother-land' is caught within the web of solidifying a politics of statehood-futurity, which culminated in the signing of the Oslo agreements. The Accords marked the zenith of a political trajectory that worked to establish and then maintain the present hegemony of PA/Fatah state-making elites in colonised Palestine and their continued reinstatement of hetero-colonialism. The colonial order is re-produced at the juncture of intertwining hierarchies of 'peace, security and development.' The chapter traces the hetero-colonialism within Palestinian liberation struggle and highlights the significance of queer politics and queering in relation to Palestine and decolonisation. A politics of the future, therefore, works to reproduce an oppressive heteronormative order in the present, which "buoys the powers of colonial governance" (Driskill *et al*, 2011:19).

The next chapter stresses the challenge of decolonising queerness to the naturalisation of social hierarchy within 'futurity politics,' where nationalist elites continue to "govern improperly colonised subjects" (Smith, 2010: 56). In other words, where this chapter delineates the hetero-colonialism within Palestinian imaginings of sovereignty, the following chapters (8 and 9) trace the will of queer politics and aesthetics to *imagine otherwise*.

8. Decolonising from Within: alQaws' Mechanisms for Imagining Otherwise

The previous chapter charted the re-inscription of hetero-colonialism in imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty. This chapter and the following one (chapter 9) explore alternative visions of Palestine, navigating the role Palestinian queer activism and art play in what I term 'imagining otherwise.' Focusing on the local work strategies of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, this chapter probes into queer activism's role in decolonising from within. It continues the task, undertaken in Chapter 5, of exploring alQaws' decolonial frame, revealing simultaneous work vis-à-vis Palestine and queering. In paying particular attention to the theme of 'imaging otherwise,' it analyses how alQaws challenges the re-inscription of hetero-colonialism in imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section examines 'internalised pinkwashing,' as alQaws' members define it, and sheds light on the layers of victimhood mentality and Palestinian reproduction of binaries of 'Us versus Them.' This process, as I argue, is symptomatic of imaginations of Palestinian sovereignty within discourses reifying hetero-colonialism. The second section focuses on 'the will to imagine otherwise' via an exploration of alQaws' modus operandi, demonstrating practices to 'decolonise desire,' 'build communities,' and 'queering the home-land.' The analysis of these practices permits us to comprehend the relevance of Palestinian queer 'dis-identifications.' In the case of Palestinian queerness, these dis-identifications, challenge gendered-sexual and geopolitical hierarchies within visions of Palestinian sovereignty. The last section rejects the reductive critiques of alQaws elaborated by Joseph Massad (2007, 2013) and Nisreen Mazzawi (2014), which fail to 'see otherwise.'

The conclusion emphasises the theme of imagining otherwise, which is explored further in the final chapter (chapter 9) through the lens of [queer] aesthetics.

8.1 Internalised Pinkwashing: Symptomatic of Re-instantiating Hetero-Colonialism

In February 2014, Haneen, director of alQaws, explained that the primary task of the group was to address and deconstruct 'internalised pinkwashing' within local communities in Palestine (Maikey, 2014: np). Conversations with Haneen and other alQaws members help demonstrate how internalised pinkwashing functions, firstly, via a 'victimhood mentality,' and its connection to enforced dichotomies of 'us versus them' amongst Palestinians (Field notes, Sept. 2014) and secondly via the colonised [gay] striving for happiness. The following discussion elaborates on these two elements showing how they are closely tied to imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty that instantiate hetero-colonialism.

8.1.1 Internalised Victimhood and Binarism: Colonised [gay] Identifications

During a meeting in Ramallah, Ghaith discussed how alQaws realized that there was a presence of a victim mentality within groups they worked with. Palestinians who struggle to live comfortably with their own sexual orientations grow resentful toward their families and communities, developing what Ghaith calls a 'rejectionist approach.' He expands:

> We discovered through our work in the field that the image 'we are victims' is internalised within so many people we work with […] There are lots of people that, once they start recognising their sexual orientation, develop a rejectionist approach toward their society and family. They start viewing themselves as separated from their families and communities, which they perceive as a source of oppression. There is this growing rift, therefore, between them and Palestinian society at large (Ghaith, interview, September 2014).

Ghaith's reflections identify a problematic factor in recognising sexual identities for some Palestinians. This recognition goes hand in hand with rejecting one's society and community. Hence, 'a victimhood mentality' starts to emerge. This victimhood mentality emanates from what Ghaith describes as "fantasies that we have, where the

coloniser has something to offer us," which "neither a group like alQaws or 'my community' can offer" (Ghaith, personal interview, August 2014)). It is against this background of victim mentality that alQaws undertakes the task of 'breaking the victim image.' alQaws seeks to "decolonise Palestinian identity within our local community" by working on dismantling the "pinkwashing logic that many, especially Palestinians self-identified as LGBT, have internalis[ed]" (Field notes, December 2015). alQaws' modus operandi emphasizes the centrality of politics and "who we are in our organising mechanisms" (Field notes, July 2014). Comprehending this is important because it lays out the reasons why alQaws refuses to adopt an identity-politics approach to sexuality. Instead, it maintains a vision of the collective in order to avoid the divisive consequences of internalised pinkwashing. Ghaith further elaborates:

> [W]ithin the Palestinian context we cannot have an identity politics approach that divorces us from society because we do not live in an individualistic capitalist context. Our land is occupied, it is colonized, and our society is community-based. This is related to our political situation because the coloniser always tries to divide us, separating communities from each other. It's a Zionist strategy of divide and rule, manifested not only in the physical reality of borders and the wall separating Palestinians but also in mentally and emotionally separating us from one another […] We cannot build our own 'gay communities' and ghettos like elsewhere. This happened in the West because of capitalism and individualism. Here, we did not have an industrial revolution or whatsoever, so there is always a connection between extended families and communities that is enshrined in our societal structure (Ghaith, personal interview, September 2014).

Ghaith and other alQaws activists describe the dangers lurking in the adoption of victimhood mentality, which will entail one's separation and rejection from their community (Field notes, July 2014). They explain how this victimhood imagery replicates a Zionist/colonizer strategy of divide and rule. For these reasons, an 'individualistic frame' does not suit the Palestinian context. Haneen adds:

> It is the aim of the coloniser to categorise us into various groups rather than recognise us as one people. Ever since Zionism was established, Palestinians were always seen as either Bedouins, Druze or shepherd

> herders. This process is part and parcel of negating their identity, their recognisability as a nation (Maikey, 2014: np).

alQaws activists' understanding of this victimhood image determines the strategies used to challenge it, since it entails unpacking the layers of wider Palestinian internal divisions and the production of dichotomies of 'us versus them.' Most importantly, alQaws' understanding of these divisions derives from their local work with various groups. As Ghaith explains:

> Since alQaws' spaces bring together various Palestinians from different places, including those '48 Palestinians' [Palestinian residents of what became Israel in 1948 are locally called 48 Palestinians] or 'East Jerusalemite' Palestinians and 'West Bankers,' we started to notice the kind of problematic language emerging between these various groups: one that is divisive and enforces the projections that one group has of another (Ghaith, personal interview, August 2014).

Haneen comments on a growing dichotomy of 'us versus them' in relation to the way "West Bank Palestinians talk of 48 Palestinians, or vice versa" (Field notes, July 2014). The proximity that one group shares to presumed spaces of 'sexual freedom' or 'oppression' exerts an influence on the ways they describe each other, enforcing a dichotomous logic of 'us versus them.' For example, some 'Palestinians from the West Bank' assume that 'more freedom' is granted to '48 Palestinians' in their spaces by virtue of them residing in 'Israel.' At the same time, '48 Palestinians' assume that coming from the 'West Bank' is synonymous with 'homophobia' and 'sexual oppression.' It is this dichotomous logic opposing 'West Bank victims' and '48's sexual freedom that alQaws' activists define as 'internalized pinkwashing.' This term suggests that some Palestinians, keen on exploring sexual orientation and cementing a gay identification, can reproduce the frames that Israel, the colonial power, uses towards them [liberated gay/oppressed victim, progressive/homophobic]. "One's struggle for sexual freedom" necessarily entails – for some – identifying as "a victim of society and family" (Field notes, December 2015).

Within the process of 'seeking sexual freedom' and/or identifying as a 'victim,' some Palestinians perceive Israel as a space to aspire to and "within which 'sexual freedom'

can be both desired and exercised" (Ahmed interview, November 2015). Haneen highlights how:

> Palestinians too want to go and visit 'Tel Aviv sandy beaches,' hug 'gay men' and consume tourism […] we also want to be 'free' with this growing concept of freedom that is so absurd (Maikey, 2014: np).

The Palestinian reproduction of desires and concepts of sexual freedom reflect both a pinkwashing logic and imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty within the paradigms re-instantiating hetero-colonialism. To strive for 'closeness to Tel Aviv,' where supposed freedom lies, connects to the agenda of modernising activated by the Oslo process. The example of the modern Palestinian Rawabi city (see Chapter 7 Section 7.2.2), which 'rises' to depict proximity to Tel Aviv, perfectly captures this fact. At the same time, this modernising agenda enforces the reality of spatial enclavisation across Palestine (ibid). Desires for 'Tel Aviv-ian sexual freedom' foster such colonial spatial-temporal hierarchy, denoting Palestinian/Palestinian fragmentation. When alQaws points out this 'us versus them' dichotomy, it warns against the consolidation of spatial-temporal colonising hierarchies amongst Palestinians themselves. Simultaneously, the use of this dichotomy enfolds the web of self-victimisation. To define oneself as a 'victim' of an 'oppressive' society is also a means of seeking proximities to spatial-temporalities of 'freedom.'

This proximity and distance translates into a 'growing rift' within Palestinian society, which occurs as LGBT identifications are articulated within discourses of 'oppression' and 'victimhood.' The concept of gay freedom/identity is also constituted in relation to the idea of 'happiness.'

8.1.2 Striving for Gay Happiness

It is possible to trace the manifestation of internalised pinkwashing via the concepts of freedom and happiness that emerge from the solidification of LGBT identifications. Such a discussion came about during a conversation I had with Haneen and other members and friends of alQaws. The following ethnographic reflection is a summary of this discussion.

> Haneen comments on the phenomena of liberal Palestinian LGBT and she pronounces each letter in a French-like manner, thus extending their sound in a campy fashion: '*ehll jhay bay tay*.' These *'ehll jhay bay tay'* are 'the

> happy ones,' as she describes them laughingly. Later, throughout the evening, we use the term 'Sa'eedoon [happy ones]' to describe those Palestinian 'liberal' 'out and abouts' [Happy gays]. In particular, Haneen and Ghaith refer to some individuals who, having had the chance to travel abroad, in America or Europe, are now accepting to talk about their experiences as 'gay Palestinians' in 'Zionist-funded' initiatives and events (Field notes, August 2014).

This ethnographic moment is important because it offers a chance to examine alQaws' critique of 'internalised pinkwashing' via '*ehll jhay bay tay'* [Palestinian gay liberal] striving for 'happiness.' These 'happy' directionalities, which emerge as a result of gay [liberal] identifications, comply with Zionist frames of 'narrating' the life and experience of 'Palestinian gayness.' Sara Ahmed's (2010) work helps us explore how happiness orientates gay Palestinians towards 'Tel Aviv [gay] freedom.'

In *The Promise of Happiness* (2010)*,* Ahmed argues that happiness and discourses on the good-life operate within existing structures of power. She demonstrates (ibid: 29) how subjects orient themselves toward happy objects because happiness is positioned as 'the right thing' (ibid). In other words, to desire happiness also means that happiness is what you get in return for desiring well (ibid: 34). This is where the regulatory premise of happiness lies, since it includes a historical distribution of good/bad, happy/wretch that sustains the dominant power structure. For instance, dominant heterosexual frames impose a shared orientation towards certain 'right' paths conducive of social goods, such as marriage and family. Crucial to this discussion is her unmasking of the history of colonialism and empire in enforcing 'happiness.' The colonising power justifies colonisation as a 'civilisation mission' (2010:125) which is presumed to produce 'goodness' and/or 'happiness' for the colonised 'wretched' other.

Frantz Fanon's work (1986) on the 'good habits' of the coloniser that the colonised seek to emulate links to Ahmed's insights.[78] Fanon refers to the internalization[79] by the colonised [black man] of the colonial order, as he seeks acceptance within the civilizational paradigms of the coloniser [white man]. Such internalisation manifests itself in a way that echoes Ahmed's happiness dynamics. In particular, the orientation

[78] In her exploration of the 'mimic man' (2010: 129-130), Ahmed references Homi Bhabha. She also uses Fanon's insights in *Black Skin, White Mask* and *Wretched of the Earth* elsewhere in the book.
[79] He also calls it epidermalization of the inferiority dynamic (Fanon, 1986: 13).

by the colonised towards the coloniser's spaces creates a need to distance oneself from the 'wretchedness of the colonised.'[80]

Similarly, quests for 'freedom' by 'gay' 'happy Palestinians' reveal a desire for proximities to Israeli spaces, such as 'its [gay] sandy beaches.' In fact, this notion of happiness for gay subjectivities that alQaws identifies echoes the notion of the happy family, which – as was explored in Chapter 7 – demonstrates the re-instantiation of the hetero-colonial order in imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty. It is possible to contemplate how the colonial structure, and its re-instantiation amongst Palestinians, orientates such subjects towards Israeli socio-spatialities, while at the same time creating a growing 'rift' with the Palestinian community. alQaws' identification of 'internalised pinkwashing' offers a useful mapping of 'this absurd concept of freedom' and/or 'happiness.' alQaws creates a space for critique (Martin & Secor, 2014) that combines both topological (absurd concept of freedom) and topographical (internalised colonial geopolitical divisions) spaces. Tracing how Israel operates through 'pinkwashing' (see Chapter 5 section 5.2), and uses gay freedom to justify and perpetuate colonialism and its heteronormative foundations (see Chapter 4) allows a critical examination of the colonising and hetero-colonial premise of Palestinian 'internalized pinkwashing.'

alQaws' use of the term 'Happy ones' and the camp sounding *'ehll jhay bay tay'* [LGBT] brings to mind an *unhappy queer* positionality that is able to trouble (Butler, 199) such paradigms of happiness. According to Ahmed, positive psychology explains happiness as something that promotes flow rather than restraint vis-à-vis the world, yet it fails to take into account how power structures affect this flow. She wonders what happens to those who fail to be 'in flow,' facing the world as 'resistant' or 'alien' by indicating:

> What if to flow in the world is not simply understood as a psychological attribute? What if the world 'houses' some bodies more than others, such that some bodies do not experience the world as resistant? We might need to rewrite happiness by considering how it feels to be stressed by the very forms of life that enable some bodies to flow into space (2010: 12).

The questions that Ahmed poses about happiness as 'a flow' echo alQaws' efforts to disrupt gay/happy '*ehll jhay bay tay*' paradigms through a critical inquiry into those 'bodies that Israel erases and those others it wants to save' (Field notes, December

[80] Fanon describes this as the urge to alienate oneself from one's 'fellow Negro' (1986: 58).

2015). alQaws' analysis unpacks how this flow of the happy Palestinian '*ehll jhay bay tay'* is based on the hierarchy that the colonising power creates between various Palestinian bodies/spaces/temporalities.

> On the one hand, there are the bodies that Israel cares to kill and erase – as happens in Gaza. On the other hand, there are those bodies – the queer bodies – that should be saved. The only Palestinian who is worth saving, therefore, is the one that falls within Israeli exotic fantasies about who the Palestinian queer is (Alqaisiya, Hilal and Maikey, 2016: 134).

The Israeli Ga(y)ze (see Chapter 4 section 4.2) construes a specific fantasy of the 'happy Palestinian '*ehll jhay bay tay*.' It is based on an idea of happiness as a 'flow' into the world that relies on seeking a freedom that is otherwise denied by 'wretched' society. alQaws aims to disrupt this flow and 'make room' for 'other possible worlds'(Ahmed, 2010: 172). This brings into view alQaws' spaces for 'imagining otherwise' and how they operate at the juncture of queer and decoloniality, shaping a lens that tries simultaneously to queer and decolonise from within.

8.2 On the Will to Imagine Otherwise

On 18 December 2014, alQaws organised a three-day academic workshop entitled "Sexual politics in the colonial context of Palestine." The workshop, which was held in the town of Beit Jala in the West Bank, brought together a mixture of Palestinian activists, academics and professionals from both inside and outside Palestine. All were invited to discuss the relevance of gender and sexuality in the Palestinian context. Speaking about alQaws' work on pinkwashing and its relevance at the local level, the director of alQaws – Haneen – pondered:

> Can we imagine beyond the reproduction of the pinkwashing binarism [Palestine is homophobic/Israel is a gay haven] that we find in the dichotomising narratives of: 'my father wants to kill me and Israel is a democracy?' (Field notes, December 2014).

This question was posed on the last day of the workshop and an open discussion of alQaws' experience of organising in relation to the global gay rights approach followed. The debate assessed the tendency of global gay right's movements to adopt a single-issue politics approach crosscuts with Israeli pinkwashing, which represents Israel as a gay liberator and Palestine as a gay oppressor. Other alQaws activists also explained

how alQaws' work has evolved to address 'the fantasy' that many Palestinians have about Israel, which posits the latter as a sexual haven in contrast to 'My society is oppressive and backward. Therefore, I want to find a way out' (Field notes, December 2014). To counter this, alQaws raises possibilities for decolonising from within through both its work and the creation of spaces from which to 'imagine otherwise.' The following discussion identifies and elaborates on these spaces.

8.2.1 Decolonising Desire, Carving Out a Space for Transnational Queer of Colour Solidarity

In the summer of 2013, I attended a writing workshop that alQaws had organised in cooperation with 'DarkMatter,'[81] a transgender south-Asian performance duo who identify themselves as second-generation immigrants from the US. The writing workshop was one of many activities that DarkMatter conducted with alQaws during its solidarity visit to Palestine that summer. The visit of Alok and Janani, the two members of DarkMatter, was the result of a desire to build transnational solidarity between queer of colour and Palestinian queer activists. The workshop, which took place in Ramallah, included alQaws' member and facilitator, Ghaith, as well as other active members and friends of the group. There were also those, including myself, who heard about the workshop either from friends or alQaws' members. For some it was their first time attending and participating in an alQaws workshop. The group comprised of 15 participants who all came from different parts of Palestine, including East Jerusalem, Hebron, Bethlehem, Beit Jala and Ramallah.

This workshop is an example of alQaws' capacity to organise spaces hosting transnational queer solidarity within the frame of decoloniality work. With the help of alQaws facilitator, the South-Asian duo led a discussion on gender and sexuality in relation to colonialism and its connection to racism and capitalism (Field notes, July 2013). In particular, the discussion raised questions about 'who,' 'what' and 'why' people desire. Alok intervened to challenge the idea of 'desire' as innocent and natural, claiming that power dynamics shape desire and affect individuals' choices. Reflecting on this statement, participants[82] in the groups started commenting:

[81] See Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/darkmatterpoetry/ (Accessed 28 July2017).
[82] For the sake of anonymity I refer to participants with numbers.

> -1: "It is interesting to think how we measure beauty and attractive people."
>
> -2: "Whiteness, for example, is very much desired in our society too. We love products that make us whiter. To be white and have blue eyes is certainly the epitome of beauty here in Palestine, and certainly for many a reason to marry someone."
>
> -1: "I am always attracted to white boys."
>
> -3: "Well, it is interesting to think about why whiteness is desired, and how it follows white hegemony in the world."
>
> -Alok: "Because historically they built their power through colonisation and came to circulate whiteness as better than anything else. Can we think of our relation to the coloniser here, i.e. desiring Jewish Israeli bodies?"
>
> -4: "I would not want to be in a relation with an Israeli woman, even if we share the same sexual orientation. Why would I want to be with those who steal my land and destroy my home on a daily basis?! She is an occupier!" (Field notes, July 2013)

It is important to note that participant n. 4 comes from the town Beit Jala near Bethlehem. The land belonging to her family is on the border with Jerusalem and her family has been undertaking a long struggle against Israeli confiscation for construction of the separation wall between Jerusalem and Beit Jala (Field notes, July 2014). Her comment is particularly crucial as it directly activates the critique of desire that the workshop space enabled. The confrontational utterance 'she is an occupier, who steals my land and destroys my home' reflects Alok and Janani's efforts to confront, via their spoken word poetry performance, any dis-location of desire from the structural reality of colonialism, capitalism and racism.

In a piece reflecting on their visit to Palestine, Alok and Janani emphasise the importance of building solidarity centred on 'Palestine's liberation' (http://darkmatterrage.com/part-1-white-supremacy-in-queer-palestine-solidarity-work-3/). They situate themselves in relation to the frame of queer 'of colour' solidarity, challenging the dominance of 'white queer bodies and ideologies' in Palestinian solidarity work (ibid). Alok and Janani explain that solidarity is built beyond the frame of 'single-issue politics.' They insist on recognizing 'settler-colonialism,' as well as being 'self-reflexive about racial and class violence,' (ibid) in order to build transnational solidarity.

While hosting transnational queer of colour solidarity, the workshop as a space enabled the envisioning of what I call 'decolonial consciousness.' This process took place by allowing what Ahmed defines as the will to recognise the causes of wretchedness. That is, to recognize how occupation and coloniser-inflicted violence has turned the native into an affect alien, who feels stressed by the power paradigms that restrain him (Ahmed, 2010, 169). In this manner, revolutionary consciousness emerges and at the same time challenges 'false-consciousness' or native 'misrecognition' (ibid: 164-169) of the cause of suffering. This idea of revolutionary consciousness resonates with my interpretation of those spaces through which alQaws enables decolonial consciousness. In particular, confronting the desiring of whiteness and its attributes of colonialism, racism and class violence, the workshop brought forth what Ahmed describes as the 'will to be stressed' (ibid). In other words, it is a space that allows participants to reflect critically on how desire, interacting with dominant power structures, perpetuates rather than alleviates the causes of one's suffering. This recognition works against misrecognition or false consciousness, where flawed acceptance of the colonial order continues.

alQaws creates a space that enables recognition of how the Israeli colonial system and violence lie at the core of Palestinian suffering. This challenges the misrecognition that develops when desiring Israeli-ness, whether for Jewish Israeli bodies or 'freedom.' To acknowledge that 'occupiers,' who 'steal my land' and 'destroy my home' alienate oneself, means to activate a decolonial consciousness. It shakes the grounds of false consciousness that produces acceptance of a subordinate place.[83]

8.2.2 Not Victims but Agents for Building Communities

The decolonial consciousness that alQaws spaces enable entails also a critical rejection of victimhood narratives and their circulation. We can start tracing this process through the words of Mohammad from Yafa, who joined alQaws in 2007 to organise groups for support and counselling in various spaces throughout Palestine. Discussing alQaws' modus operandi, he reflects on its political and ethical stance.

> We in alQaws are conscious and cautious of this idea of circulating personal narratives of suffering because of sexual orientation […] You see, I worked

[83] Fanon discusses such processes as double alienation, where to see through native alienation allows an alienation from the alienation that guaranteed acceptance of a subordinate place (1986: 60).

> as a freelancer with different organisations and I have seen how personal stories get used in their reports and in order to draw funders. In alQaws, I see how we have a completely different approach. The very idea of using individual stories or circulating them on Facebook or through other means is a red line. At the same time, it reflects alQaws' political and social approach. We are not interested in circulating stories of victimhood. We are aware of how it feeds the expectations of certain institutions and cements grand narratives on the Palestinian LGBT who need saving by Israel. A lot of people continue to try and drag us into this place but, unlike others, we refuse to go there (Mohammad, Skype Conversation, November 2014).

Mohammad explains how the focus of alQaws is to bring out 'a collective story' (ibid) rather than investing in the personal narrative of victimhood. In a similar vein, Ghaith describes alQaws' goal as one of building communities and agents for social change (Ghaith, personal interview, Sept. 2014). Starting from the summer of 2013, the year marking my introduction to alQaws, I could see how the group works at building communities through the creation of spaces for care, safety and sharing. As I had travelled all the way from Hebron – south of the West Bank – to Ramallah in the north to attend the three-day workshop organised with DarkMatter, Haneen informed me that a friend and a member of alQaws would host me in her house. By staying there, I learnt how this house accommodated "other alQaws members that [she[84]] loves so much and considers her true family" (Field notes, July 2013). Furthermore, I realized how the house provided a comfortable space for alQaws members and friends to meet, as we all gathered there after the workshop to eat and talk, as well as watch people perform drag. This space also allowed the workshop to continue, since Alok and Janani staged another poetic performance and other participants shared personal stories and reflections in relation to the workshop. For instance, a participant read a satirical Arabic reflection on the homoerotics of the Palestinian Intifada. Two members from 'Istiwanat,' a local Palestinian all-female band, performed their songs. Throughout my stay in this space, I also had the chance to meet and converse with Palestinians coming from diverse parts of Palestine, ranging from Nablus, Hebron, East Jerusalem, to Haifa and Ramallah.

It is precisely through the creation of these informal spaces that alQaws consciously challenges victimhood narratives. By building these communities, alQaws aims to 'make room' for what I describe as a home-making where 'so much love' to one's 'true family' resides. Via its spaces of home-making, alQaws creates a notion of queer

[84] In reference to the host.

belonging, one that is possible to juxtapose with the heteronormative notions of belonging that Palestinian nationalism enforces (see Chapter 7 Section 7.1.1). In particular, as discussed in Chapter 7, the Palestinian national struggle imagined an authentic Palestinian identity via a hetero-patriarchal vision of belonging where the cyclical life of the family enables the transmittance of identity from 'fathers to sons.' Home-making as alQaws enables it exceeds the confines of the 'nation-state' as conceived in PA 'self-governance' (see Chapter 7), but offers nation as a community of feeling (Ahmed *et al,* 2003) that transmits on different geographical scales :individuals, homes, poetry, singing, activist/artist networks.

Palestinian feminists and scholars, Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Sarah Ihmoud (2014), offer a compelling argument on the concept of home as space and return which sheds further light on alQaws' practices. Taking the Palestinian *Nakba* as the point of departure for their analysis, Shalhoub and Ihmoud construe a definition of home that goes beyond its physical attributes. Instead, they reflect on home as a "psychological and epistemological space of yearning, of belonging and of radical thinking and becoming" (2014: 377). They contemplate the concept of homing as "a powerful force that gives voice, spreads love and maintains continuities" (ibid). The colonial authority denies Palestinians a home-space by creating refugees, demolishing houses, imposing borders and legislative measures that prohibit return to the homeland. Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud draw on bell hooks' insights on the home space as it "enables and promotes varied and ever changing perspectives, a place where one discovers new ways of seeing reality" (2014: 394), to understand the value of home as a "site of resistance and a radical space for 'becoming'" (ibid). They stress:

> An analytics of returning to our home/land as a space for reconstructing Palestinian socialities and identities, or re-rooting through a radical praxis of love that can give birth to new forms of resistance (ibid).

alQaws enables 'home-return' through its spaces in order to build communities. The assemblage of underground home-sites for care and safety function as 'counter-spaces' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud, 2014: 382). Counter-spaces are, therefore, native spaces of *regrounding* (Ahmed *et al, 2003*) one's belonging to home and community. They challenge the denial of 'home' which the Israeli settler machine enacts in a constant manner, as noted above regarding the occupier who steals our home. They also contribute to the reconfiguration of Palestinian spatialities, which are the outcome of

imagining sovereignty through modernisation agendas. In chapter 7 we examined how PA structure of state-making political elites fosters private housing projects, which fragment spaces and create gated communities. The informal spaces of home-making that alQaws foster are 'spaces of the interior,' where networks of kinship and support are enabled and mobilised, thereby challenging Palestinian fragmentation and hierarchy within the agendas re-instantiating hetero-colonialism.

alQaws' efforts to build communities underlie what alQaws activists describe as possibilities for 'imagining(s) [of] decolonised Palestine'(Field notes, December 2015). Building communities via a return to 'our home' complements alQaws' conscious refusal to 'circulate narratives of victimhood.' Narratives of victimhood –reifying grand narratives of the Palestinian gay (see chapter 5 section 5.2) –are symptomatic of internalised pinkwashing, which further enforce the Zionist separationist agenda by 'making us hate our communities and grow disconnected from them.' alQaws' creation of home-spaces rejects and opposes this disconnection. Mohammad describes alQaws as located "across *historic Palestine* unlike so many Palestinian NGOs which accept local division and ghettoization" (Mohammad, Skype Conversation, November 2014). Haneen also indicates that alQaws makes a strategic choice to function and bring together people from across the Green Line, the official dividing line between Palestinian residents of Israel, '48 Palestinians,' and the West Bank (Maikey interview, July 2014).[85] This spatial fluidity is important because, as the next section argues, it is a critical element in queering the homeland.

8.2.3 Queering the Homeland: (de)Territorializing Spatial-Colonial Hierarchies

alQaws has a strategy of reuniting Palestinians from the different territories to reconstruct the homeland, Palestine. It is a way of challenging both the coloniser's hierarchies and their reproduction by the PA. During both the three-day workshop on 'Sexual politics within the colonial context of Palestine' and in private spaces of care, it was evident that various Palestinian identities come together as part of a collective

[85] It is worth noting that, although alQaws tries to operate within as many spaces as possible throughout *historic Palestine*, the group and its members also acknowledge the material impact and deterrence that those colonial divisions, including the legal statuses under which different communities live, impose on its work, especially the inability to reach out to Gaza (Ghaith, Skype Conversation, November 2014).

exercise on thinking of liberation in relation to gender and sexuality. Reflecting on pinkwashing, alQaws members spoke not only of the Palestinian LGBT internalisation of this logic, but also of the wider Palestinian aspiration for a 'good life.' This 'good life' is also closely related to Israel, for example in the form of tourism permits to 'visit Israel…enjoy and consume Israeli products.' During the sexuality school, discussing 'sexuality in the colonised context of Palestine' necessitated discussions of 'Oslo' as a significant stage in Palestinian history, stressing how it enforced divisions between the various 'insiders/outsiders' (Field notes, December 2014). Such insider/outsider binaries are measured in relation to what could become a visibly recognisable 'state of Palestine' in the West Bank and Gaza, excluding '48 Palestinians' and the hundreds of thousands of refugees who live beyond the 'nation-state's' territorial borders. One of the participants commented that:

> Oslo was instrumental to produce sub-identities, classify us into blue and green document holders. We should also look at how, for example, we – Palestinians – are performing the very sub-identities that Israel issued for us. Thus, the very 'green' or 'blue' material ID documents that are supposed to separate and categorise us from one another are also seen in our perception of each other (Sexuality School, December 2014).

Criticism of the PA regime for buying into this colonial spatiality (see Chapter 4) of Palestinian division (see Chapter 7) also realizes how these important and multi-layered issues connect to discussions around sexuality. Sexuality becomes another threshold to measure 'authenticity' and it reflects the same divisions observed above. As Haneen reflects, "many Palestinians would quickly assume that 'I must be from Haifa' and 'I must carry an Israeli passport'" (Maikey, 2014: np) because of her attempts to start a debate around the topic. Ghaith also underlines how alQaws faced assumptions while networking with some institutions based in the West Bank. He emphasises:

> Part of our aim is to widen our networks across Palestine. Therefore, we approached the Institute of Women's Studies at Birzeit University [in Ramallah]. Their immediate response was 'Will you people be coming all the way from Haifa/Israel?' To which we explained that 'We also come from Ramallah and Nablus.' In the end, cooperation never happened (Ghaith, Interview, September 2014).

Palestinian society often equates (homo)sexuality to either acting like Israelis [Israelised] or – in the worst scenario – (homo)sexuality becomes a synonym for Israeli collaborator (Field notes, June 2014). In this context, where discussions around

(homo)sexuality are alert to the constant reproduction of these colonial hierarchies, we grasp – once again – the importance of alQaws' spaces for 'homing.' By bringing together Palestinians from different territories, alQaws homing spaces foster the notion of 'becoming,' as home represents a "site of resistance and a radical space of *becoming*" (my emphasis, Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud, 2014: 394). Butler describes gender as a process of 'becoming,' which she defines as "an ongoing discursive practice that is open to intervention and resignification" (1999: 33). alQaws' spaces provide room for re-signification and (de)territorialisation of spatial colonial hierarchies, enabling the formation of a new language of resistance. New imaginaries of Palestine that move beyond the confines of a geopolitical vision of Oslo emerge.

An example of enabling such imaginaries took place during the final day of the Sexuality workshop. On this occasion, alQaws invited Palestinian academic Lena Maeri from Birzeit University in Ramallah to initiate a conversation drawing on 'the lessons learnt from the experience of Palestinian political prisoners within the interrogation room.' Maeri's discussion raised two main questions. First, she asked whether the segregated space of the cell offered room for resistance for the constrained body, which is totally at the mercy of the guard/occupier. Second, she encouraged the participants to think about the political relationship between 'inside' and 'outside' spaces and how they re-imagine the collective struggle of the Palestinians. She pondered:

> How does the prisoner's body – through resisting confessing and launching hunger strikes – become the mechanism to reclaim a space to challenge the interrogator? What is the effect of that on the 'outside of the room,' especially when we witness how it brings Palestinians from across Palestine – whether 48 Palestinians, from Gaza or the West Bank – to mobilise in the streets in solidarity with the prisoners' struggle? How does the prisoner, whose struggle takes place at 'an individual' level in the interrogation room, come to speak for, as well as mobilise, the body of the collective […[bridging the gap between the individual and the collective? The 'inside' and 'outside'? (Maeri, Sexuality School in the Colonial Context of Palestine, December 2014).

Maeri's questions prompted a collective discussion around definitions of 'resistance' and the 'praxis of liberation.' One of the participants reflected on the importance of this space as enabling us to think what it means to be for the first time in the same room with Palestinians who come from the 'other' side:

> …there is a need to broaden the prism of Palestinian identity as it grew to be much more centralised [in West Bank/Gaza], especially since Oslo and the call for a state (ibid).

Analysis of those practices and spaces that alQaws fosters resonates with those homing geographies that, according to Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Ihmoud, function by "transcend[ing] territorial borders and nation states and as symbols of national struggle" (2014: 394). Thus, within its spaces, alQaws 'makes room' for imagining Palestinians coming together and what that means. In doing so, alQaws emphasises the necessity of dis-identification with sovereignty imaginings, as they reproduce the colonial logic of enclavisation (see Chapter 4 section 4.1.2 & 7 section 7.2).

Most importantly, dis-identification as a strategy also challenges those identities that the colonial power imposes, or as Ghaith explains above, forces Palestinians to re-think how "we are performing the very sub-identities that Israel issued for us." This is how the queering project of dis-identification functions, as it reveals the tenuous base of an identity (Butler, 1990: 179) upon which the colonised perform – by virtue of repeating and reproducing – those identifications [blue, green] the colonial power imposes. As much as dis-identification aims to challenge Palestinians' performance of those colonial identifications, it also confronts how those categories are re-instantiated at the level of statehood aspirations and visions. alQaws' work across 'historic Palestine' is a conscious 'refusal to buy the logic of divisions.' Thus, it (de)territorializes those Oslo-enshrined statist and *static* identifications of Palestine that recuperate colonial hierarchies of power.

Through the creation of spaces for thinking 'sexuality in colonised Palestine,' alQaws challenges centralised political paradigms and exclusionary visions of sovereignty that limit 'a free Palestine' to enclaves within the West Bank and/or Gaza.' Whilst dis-identification vis-à-vis geo-political hierarchies in imaginings of sovereignty is significant, it is also important to examine dis-identifications in relation to gendered hierarchies. Drawing on examples of 'circulating queer' and 'tackling gendered violence,' the following discussion examines how alQaws *makes room* for Palestinian imaginings beyond hetero-normative gendered and sexual expressions within attempts to build a collective identity.

8.2.4 Circulating Queer: 'al-Khat' Support Line

alQaws spaces of becoming, enabling a vision of Palestine beyond colonial divisions, also articulate a necessary dis-identification from gender hierarchies. It is important to examine the spaces created by alQaws because they open possibilities for gender and sexual performances that are 'failing' (Butler, 1999) to subscribe to the gendered paradigms enshrined in Palestinian nationalist thought (see Chapter 7). It was in alQaws' spaces that I became acquainted with the role alQaws' support line 'Al-Khat' plays in circulating queer, thus challenging the heteronormativising of Palestine. One member spoke passionately about the work the 'Al-Khat Information and Listening service' has been doing for five years, where she and other group-volunteers provide the necessary support and advice on sexuality, LGBTQ and gender identity issues for callers and/or online chatters (Sexuality school, December 2014). Haneen also explained that Al-Khat is one of the most sought-after services that alQaws provides: "We get callers from everywhere in Palestine looking for a safe space to discuss all their doubts and questions on sexuality issues. She adds that: "People with all sorts of problems call us on Al-Khat, including those who engage in pre-marital sex or only need someone to listen to them" (July 2014). The importance of Al-Khat not only lies in the support provided to callers from everywhere in Palestine, it acquires further relevance through the number of alQaws support initiatives, the launch of which draws on the needs and doubts of Al-Khat callers and chatters. Mohammad provides an interesting example, describing how a group of 13 transsexual people who had initially contacted Al-Khat now formed a group meeting for support and consultation, which alQaws facilitates (Mohammad, Skype Conversation, November 2014).

Furthermore, alQaws launched an initiative for the creation of posters based on the stories and concerns of those who call Al-Khat. Figures 8.1-8.3 are illustrative posters concerning some of the questions and concerns that Al-Khat volunteers encounter. They lay out in a visual manner the questions that callers raise with regard to their sexual and gender identity: "feelings of attraction to 'girls' not 'boys' (Figure 8.1) or feeling the need to dress differently (Figure 8.2) and finally the case of being a 'boy' not 'a girl,' as opposed to what people often assume (Figure 8.3). Through such posters and their circulation, alQaws communicates its supportive role in relation to these concerns. Each poster contains the Al-Khat phone number and information on when it

can be contacted, as well as the address of the online website for chatting. These posters make their way into public spaces through volunteers and friends of alQaws, who hang them in random Palestinian towns and cities, such as Jerusalem, Yafa or Ramallah. While these posters target those in need of "a safe space" to communicate concerns about gender and sexuality, there are other visual methods that alQaws employ as a means of "drawing people's attention and inevitably opening discussions with wider segments of society" (Haneen, personal interview, June 2014). We found an example in the graffiti (Figure 8.4) along the route to Ramallah city centre which was present in the summer of 2014. The graffiti, which alQaws members in Ramallah created, comprises writing that translates from Arabic as "Queer passed through here" and close to it there are two kissing faces. A member of alQaws showed the group's excitement at the creation and making of such a poster, since "it makes me happy to see it every day on route to work, it is like queering up the city a little bit" (Maher, July 2014). Similarly, Mohammad considers the graffiti as part of these 'interventions' that alQaws slowly enables and "can be thought of as spreading queer glimpses here and there" (Mohammad, Skype Conversation, November 2015). The capacity of alQaws to introduce these 'queer glimpses' thus underlies a call for "widening discussions on gender and sexuality across Palestine" (Haneen, June 2014). What follows delves into how alQaws' work insists on the relationship between the question of liberation and tackling gender violence and its reproduction amongst Palestinians.

Figure 8.1

"*Nobody knows that I'm a boy not a girl*" by alQaws

Source: http://alqaws.org/news/Akhats-New- (Accessed 12 June 2017).

Figure 8.2

"*Sometimes I feel like this, other times like this*" by alQaws

Source: http://alqaws.org/news/Akhats-New- (Accessed 12 June 2017).

Figure 8.3

"*Nobody knows that I'm a boy not a girl*" by alQaws

Source: http://alqaws.org/news/Akhats-New- (Accessed 12 June 2017).

Figure 8.4

"*Queers passed through here*" by alQaws activists

Source:
https://www.facebook.com/AlQawsorg/photos/a.586867441369976.1073741828.550374051685982/588879291168791/?type=3&theater (Accessed 17 July 2017).

8.2.5 Tackling Gender Violence

It is important to analyse these 'queer glimpses' alQaws creates because they are vital in addressing the violence present in Palestinian reactions to non-heteronormative gender and sexual expressions. Speaking about the Haifa-based bi-monthly discussion forums on gender and sexuality in Palestine known as *Hawamesh*[86] (meaning: margins), Haneen (Skype Conversation, July 2015) refers me to an alQaws article on the Arabic *Qadita*[87] about "gender violence in social media."[88] The writer(s), identified as Louise Louise, reveal(s) how: "fighting patriarchy in our society as a human feminist cause is one of the major pillars upon which is based our queer struggle" (2014: np). The piece adds further, "To connect our struggle with women's oppression in our society is a necessity to understand gender violence on a deeper, more comprehensive level" (ibid: np). Reflecting on the violent comments that circulate in graffiti or a Facebook post about a 'man who wears tights,' thus passing like 'a woman,' Louise's article critically examines the viral spread of gender violence in the realm of both social media and daily interactions within "our schools, streets and homes" (Louise, 2014: np). It encourages the reader to understand the phenomenon of 'gender violence' through alQaws' discussions and analyses. It explains how gender violence persists in Palestinian society, drawing the necessary connection between 'queer politics' and the patriarchy of Palestinian society that alQaws' work reveals. In addition, Louise addresses the 'common misconception' that follows violence towards those assumed 'to be gay' because they look 'more feminine,' or those assumed to be 'lesbian' because they appear or 'act manly.' Instead, the piece reveals "the complexity of sexual identities that do not rely on gender performances" (Louise, 2014: np).

Louise's article and the *Hawamesh* forum allow us to trace how alQaws channels dis-identifications to gender hierarchies and their reproduction in Palestine, which the phenomenon of 'gender violence' represents. Louise's article demonstrates how the

[86] Hawamesh, Arabic word for 'margins,' is a "Haifa-based monthly discussion-forum about issues related to sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society. It aims to fill a void in the mainstream discourse – including the rhetoric of local queer organizing and sexuality activism – in order to disrupt and broaden its domain." (alQaws, 2014, http://alqaws.org/news/-Hawamesh-Monthly-discussion-forum-about-issues-related-to-sexual-and-gender-diversity-in-Palestinian-society (Accessed 28.07.2017)

[87] On the relevance of Qadita as a space for 'queeryat' writings, see Chapter 5.

[88] Louise, L., 2014. 'Gender violence in social Media' (in Arabic), *Qadita*, available online at: http://www.qadita.net/featured/luis/ (Accessed 5 January 2017).

question of gender and its 'regulation' (Butler, 1999) within Palestinian society stands at the core of what alQaws does, demonstrating further the queerness of the group's positionality. In fact, alQaws' need to challenge the concept of 'manly' roles and behaviours versus 'womanly' ones stems from those efforts to trace how patriarchy activates a gender hierarchy. Identifying 'gender violence' on the basis of this regulatory premise allows both oppression against women and violence perpetuated against 'un-manly men' and/or 'un-womanly women' to be traced. It is the process of identification of this violence that leads alQaws to "trouble" (Butler, 1999) its regulatory premises, elaborating an analysis that challenges the 'compulsory order of sex/gender/desire (Butler, 1999: 9).

alQaws provides the necessary arguments to question 'common misconceptions' construing an innate link between sexual and gender identity. For instance, Louise's article criticizes the culture/nature dichotomy by referring to those "who appear to perform perfectly a 'proper' gendered identity (that is, 'manly' [looking] men) and have – at the same time – 'non-heteronormative sexual orientation" (Louise, 2014: np). This argument challenges a 'common misconception' around 'gayness' that connects it with some 'feminine' or 'masculine' essence. alQaws interrogates these assumptions about innate sexuality because they also appear to exist within 'LGBT identified groups' whose own perception [gender identity/sexuality] echoes that of society. To be 'gay,' for some, means to reinforce gendered binary hierarchies rather than challenge premises that reproduce ways of being and desiring "just like any other 'woman' and or 'man'" (Louise, 2014: np). alQaws pursues these efforts and reaches out to schools and youth groups in order to tackle gender violence.

Moreover, the article reflects on the power structures that regulate gender and therefore violence "against anything that looks different" (Louise, 2014: np). Louise's article unpacks the relationship between colonial occupation and social structure which ascribes gendered hierarchies. It discusses how colonial occupation has led to enforcing a collective identity whose 'reputation' justifies violence and exclusion against certain 'non-conforming individuals' (ibid). The relevance of this point has already been highlighted in the analysis of the solidification of Palestinian identity around the term 'honour' and the ensuing establishment of heteronormativity within the process of carving out a definition of/identifying Palestinianism (see Chapter 7 section 7.1). In this regard, Louise insists on the importance of challenging the vision of a collective identity

based on paradigms reproducing heteronormativity, which justify violence against non-conforming individuals.

It is important to note that alQaws' challenge is not a complete overthrow of the collective vision of Palestinian identity; instead it is one that "works on, with and against" (Muñoz, 1999: 12) such a vision. For these reasons, on the one hand alQaws rejects an 'individualistic frame' deemed unsuitable for the Palestinian context, since it relegates gender to a single-issue identity politics. On the other hand, it confronts the dichotomous logic in Palestinian nationalism which puts the liberation struggle 'first' while other issues – including gender violence – should only be addressed 'after' liberation (Ghaith, September 2014). In this regard, alQaws activists explain the criticism that the group faces as it tries to raise awareness of the intersectionality of these struggles, stressing the heteronormative paradigms that define 'liberation.' Ghaith and Haneen stress:

> Not only homosexuals continue to be branded as Israelised and collaborators. Rather, the mere fact of talking of the intersectionality of struggles and/or trying to break the hierarchy of struggles (national freedom first, women/sexuality struggles afterwards) is judged as a divergence from the main [priority] national/collective struggle for liberation (Field notes, December 2015).

Moreover, to judge gender and sexuality issues as 'a divergence from the main issue' corresponds to maintaining imaginings of sovereignty that rotate around the heteropatriarchal structure of the nation-state model (Goeman, 2013: 37). Andrea Smith reflects on such calls for 'purity,' revealing how they often become synonymous with 'political silencing,' allowing the indigenous elite to maintain their power:

> Native feminists are often accused of selling out to white feminism because decolonized Native subjects should address sovereignty to the exclusion of gender oppression. Calls for political and cultural purity then contribute to a political vanguardism in which the indigenous cultural elite govern improperly colonized subjects (ibid).

It can be argued that tackling gender violence and circulating queer 'glimpses' across 'historic Palestine' is far from a 'divergence' from the Palestinian [national] priority, namely liberation. alQaws' work challenges Palestinian imagining of sovereignty which reinstates colonial heteronormativity and allows a national elite to maintain its power. In fact, alQaws' work enables a vision of Palestine through 'becoming' which

moves beyond the exclusionary and hierarchical frames of post-Oslo nationalist elites. In such a scenario, where possibilities of 'imagining otherwise' emerge, alQaws' activism brings about a simultaneous interaction between queering and decoloniality. It is through these critical analyses and practical initiatives that alQaws creates spaces to decolonise desire, build communities and queer the homeland. The position taken by alQaws and the nature of its activism has been subjected to criticism by Palestinian scholars and activists who judge it to be 'Westernised' or to not be doing enough for the 'Palestinian homosexual.' In what follows, I examine these criticisms to demonstrate that they emanate from an essentialised understanding of decolonisation and/or queering, and thus fail to see otherwise.

8.3 A Failure to See Otherwise: Critiques of alQaws

Joseph Massad (2007, 2013) and Nisreen Mazzawi (2014) are tow vocal critics of alQaws, Massad accuses alQaws of being agents of the West and Israel, while Mazzawi views the group's local role as far from the reality of the Palestinian homosexual. I argue that while Massad and Mazzawi approach their criticism of alQaws from seemingly opposing positions, their critiques emanate from a similar failure, stemming from a conception of decoloniality and/or queerness that fails to balance the interactions between these two elements. Their frames, in fact, collapse respectively into essentialist frames for envisioning sovereignty – a decoloniality devoid of queerness – or a reproduction of colonised [gay] identifications – a queerness devoid of decoloniality.

Joseph Massad argues that Palestinian queer work, including that by alQaws, reproduces western colonising identities in a naïve manner, defining them as "copies of the Euro-Americas" (Massad, in Éwanjé-Épée and Magliani-Belkacem, 2013). His critique explores and denounces the complicity of "gay Arab internationalists" who aim at "transforming practitioners of same sex contact into subjects who identify themselves as 'homosexual' and 'gay'" (2007:162). In particular, Massad targets those movements based in Lebanon and 'Israel' that are "staffed with Palestinian citizens" who:

> participate in the heterosexualization of the majority of Arabs and the homonormativization of a minority of them. What these organizations want to impose as part of the gay international is a regime of sexuality predicated on a recent Western ontology wherein one's sexual desires become the TRUTH of one, of one's identity and of who one is (Massad, in Éwanjé-Épée and Magliani-Belkacem, 2013: np).

Massad's analysis insists on there being a lack of an anti-colonial perspective among Arab queer groups generally and Palestinian ones particularly. He stresses that these groups fail to counter LGBTQ 'liberationist' (2007: 189) discourse and their work merely reproduces an image of the colonial order and its modes of [sexual] imperialism. In his more recent work, Massad refers directly to alQaws and accuses its members of being far from radical but instead Israel-based and Western-funded liberals who are nothing but an extension of gay internationalists (2015: 271). Massad's branding of alQaws as yet another 'gay internationalist' group which merely promotes 'western sexualities' corresponds to a denouncement of intersectionality in the process of crafting anti-colonial identity/positionality. It is important to read Massad's critique through the lens of dis-identification that alQaws elaborates. It is possible to observe that his critique collapses into an essentialising frame of imagining anti-colonial sovereignty that equates to a 'call for cultural and political purity' (Smith, 2010: 56). On the one hand, Massad formulates a very critical analysis of the Palestinian 'national elite' (1995: 479) showing its inherent masculine and bourgeois premises and thus dismantling the heteronormative paradigms that characterize them (see also in Chapter 7 section 7.1.1). On the other hand, his critical assessment of alQaws as a naïve importer of colonising identifications resonates with the way that Palestinians brand the Palestinian (homo)sexual as an Israel-ised/Westernised collaborator. It is precisely such frames that foster, as we have already seen, the reality of masculine elites, which are criticized by Massad (1995) for allowing the reproduction of the colonial order with its gendered premises.

Massad's contradictions appear in his failure to see otherwise. They correspond to essentialising the frame of sovereignty, echoing 'calls for cultural and political purity' where native elites continue to govern and reproduce the hetero-colonialism that he criticises (see Massad, 1995). Simultaneously, this essentialising frame functions through a logic of silencing the voices it speaks for, which are the ones Massad calls naïve and Westernised. Therefore, we see that Massad's critique relies on those 'calls

for purity' in a similar manner to those launched by the ruling indigenous elite in order to maintain its power. His critique is an *intellectual* equivalent to the ruling elite power, as they both continue to speak 'improperly' for colonised subjects. Moreover, it is worth noting that when asked about Massad's assessment of the group members of alQaws, such as Omar, defined 'speaking improperly as follows:

> The irony lies in the fact that if Massad had tried to talk to us he would have seen that we agree on many points. But he never did. Instead, he writes about us calling us Westernised from his academic seat in Colombia. (Khoury, Alqaisiya and Abu-Ziyad, LSE talk[89], 26/02/2015).

Furthermore, we can view Massad's argument in the light of other criticisms of alQaws which accuse the group of spending too much time 'fighting the West and the occupation' and thus failing to address the local struggle of LGBT Palestinians. In an article written in Arabic and entitled "*Queer Palestinian discourse: against the occupation, far from Palestinian reality*," Palestinian feminist researcher Nisreen Mazzawi asserts that the 'so-called queer discourse and positionality' of alQaws is irrelevant to the local struggle of Palestinian *mithlyeen* or gays (2014: np). Mazzawi, who is also one of the founders of the Haifa-based group Aswat for gay Palestinian women, comments on alQaws' anti-pinkwashing narrative describing it as one that in its focus on tainting Israel's image internationally denies the suffering of the Palestinian homosexual locally. She argues that scoring political goals at an international level is the price that the local Palestinian homosexual has to pay for Palestinian homophobia and the Palestinian culture of honour (ibid). Moreover, she sees both alQaws' anti-pinkwashing narrative and its work as practices giving the wrong impression of a 'Palestinian paradise for homosexuals, who in reality remain in the closet and suffer from a lack of sexual tolerance' (ibid).

While Massad's anti-colonial critique reduces alQaws to a group that has adopted Westernised positionalities, Mazzawi's critique emanates from a local gay positionality deeming alQaws' "anti-occupation" work to be irrelevant to "the barely surviving Palestinian homosexual." These two critiques may initially seem to convey opposite assessments of alQaws. I argue, however, that both Massad and Mazzawi's positions come from the same place. Both their positions essentially fail to capture the significance of queer and decolonial intersections. They fail to see how such

[89] This talk was organised as part of Israeli apartheid week.

intersections ‘make room’ to imagine Palestine and/or ‘gay identifications’ otherwise. Massad’s argument relies on an essentialising anti-colonial frame that absolves the relevance of queer politics. He depicts queerness as a Western/coloniser-imported concept with no relevance to the local context – decoloniality devoid of queerness. In this scenario, Massad’s critique denounces the relevance of a ‘queering of the homeland’ that meets a need to decolonise from within and thus re-imagines a Palestinian liberation beyond the colonising paradigms of the nationalist elite. Mazzawi, instead, adheres to a single-issue frame that absolves the relevance of a decolonial political frame – LGBT devoid of decoloniality. In such a scenario, Mazzawi fails to see the relevance of decolonisation politics to ‘the liberation’ of Palestinian ‘homosexual’ from oppression. Her position fails to capture the importance of moving beyond a struggle for gay identifications. Holding onto the frames of societal oppression and victimhood (re)produces colonised gay identifications within the call for liberation of the ‘Palestinian homosexual’. Mazzawi and Massad fail to see liberation - for Palestine and/or gay Palestinians - beyond the logic of hetero-colonialism, which alQaws’ will to imagine otherwise enables. The efforts by alQaws’ activists to queer Palestine and decolonise from within through simultaneous engagement with queer and decolonial politics enables imaginings beyond frames insisting on either colonisation (Massad) or heteronormativity (Mazzawi).

8.4 Conclusion

By focusing on alQaws’ modus operandi, this chapter explores potentialities for imagining otherwise in relation to Palestine and queerness, and illustrates its ‘will to imagine otherwise’ through analysis of ‘internalised pinkwashing’ and its impact on crafting gay ‘happy’ orientations. Thus, it shows that identifying internalised pinkwashing, and the layers of its activation within the paradigms [of imagining freedom] re-instantiating hetero-colonialism essentially entails raising the question of the will to ‘make room’ for something else. alQaws’ spaces for transnational solidarity work to decolonise desire, complementing the group’s work on building communities while blocking a victimhood story. It, therefore, enacts a queering of the homeland within its home-return spaces, showing how those spaces enable a Palestine ‘becoming’ beyond the confines of hierarchical/essentialising sovereignty visions. The dismantling

of statist-enshrined geopolitical identifications complements the necessary circulation of queer and/or gendered and sexual identifications that fail to subscribe to an exclusionary [gendered] premise of Palestinian identity. alQwas's will to imagine otherwise (where queer enfolds decolonisation and decolonisation enfolds queer) addresses also the critiques of the group and its work. In particular, Massad and Mazzawi's critiques demonstrates an understanding of liberation [colonised, gays] that re-instantiates hetero-colonialism and fails to see otherwise.

The next chapter will continue to explore otherwise imaginings and their significance via queer aesthetics.

9. Imagining an Otherwise Through Queer Aesthetics

The previous chapter focused on alQaws' will to imagine otherwise via an exploration of its modus operandi. This chapter builds on that by delving into queer artistic productions as they imagine otherwise. Firstly, it explores the role of queer *hikaya* (Arabic for stories), satirical images, performance art and fashion design in countering the hetero-colonialism in Palestine (see Chapters 4 and Chapter 7). Secondly, it navigates queer aesthetics in order to identify efforts to make "visible and audible" (Rancière, 2004: 1) other possible worlds beyond "the prison house of the here and now" (Muñoz, 2009: 1). This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section examines writings and songs encountered within alQaws' spaces of distributing queer *hikaya*. Focusing on alQaws' musical project *Ghanni A`an Taa`rif* and its promotional videos, this section navigates the queer tracks as they narrate a mix of emotions, hopes, and desires striving for an-other world(s). The second section investigates Knorn's political caricatures and performance-art *Wihdeh Watanyeh*, gesturing towards a decolonial consciousness. The third section explores Omarivs' *zey al Tashrifat* fashion-design, as it troubles the reality of male- and state-making, thus enabling the imagining of other possible futures for Palestine.

The chapter shows the aesthetics complementing the role of queer activism, which enforces a wider frame of intersection between aesthetics and politics (see Chapter 2). At the same time, the exploration of aesthetics unpacks further the idea of *imagining otherwise* found at the conjunction of Palestine, queer and aesthetics.

9.1 alQaws' Queer *Hikaya*[90]

Throughout my interactions with alQaws, I came to see how its spaces function as a major force for creative energy. There are no clear distinction(s) and categorizations between activists and artists, writers and/or poets in alQaws' spaces. Rather they collapse altogether as the collective work blurs and nullifies such distinctions, making them emerge as one. The same activists also revealed themselves as poets, writers

[90] Arabic equivalent for story and/or narrative.

and/or artists within alQaws' homing spaces (see Chapter 8 section 8.2.2). My earlier reflection(s) on alQaws' homing spaces demonstrates how activists celebrate poetry, music and their narration(s). Here, I explore more fully the queer stories encountered via alQaws and their significance to imagine beyond hetero-colonialism. In particular, a thorough examination of alQaws' *Ghanni A'an al taar'fiff* or 'singing sexuality' musical project identifies how the queer-tracks narrate stories filled with emotions, hopes and desires for an-other world(s). It is possible to chart the endeavour for a different [queer] futurity that is yet to be inhabited by investigating those queer narrations that, relaying the mesh of feelings and/or sensory experiences, "make seen what has no business of being seen" (Rancière, 1999: 30). By focusing on the affective rhythms of 'queer directionality' (Ahmed, 2006: 12), I argue that analysis of an "indigenous structure of feeling" (Rifkin, 2011: 182) "re-distributes the sensible" (Rancière, 2004: 40).

The following focuses on an understanding of these queer *hikayat* or stories, and what they fully signify in relation to re-imagining Palestinian socio-political reality, starting with an exploration of the [queer] phantom figure, which is the central figure of *Ghanni A`an Taa`rif*'s promotional videos.

9.1.1 The Phantom Queer Figure

The musical project *Ghanni A'an al taa'riff* [Singing Sexuality] represents one of alQaws' initiatives that "brings together volunteers comprising activists, artists and singers from across Palestine to perform, write about and sing sexuality'" (Ghaith, Interview, September 2014). The queer tracks of *Ghanni* (discussed more fully below) demonstrate alQaws' investment in distributing queer *hikaya* that aspires for an-other world. Those tracks should be examined in relation to the emerging figure of the phantom because it captures the relationship between queer and Palestine.

The release of three promotional videos (see Figures 9.1-9.4) preceded the launch of the musical project *Ghanni A'an al taa'riff*. Watching those videos, it is possible to observe how an unknown figure, eccentric looking and out of ordinary, occupies a central role in each one of them. It is my assertion that the whole project speaks and relays certain meanings in relation to such figures.

Figure 9.1, *Ghanny 01*

Source: httpzs://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsyliiaD290 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 9.2 Ghanny 01

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TsyliiaD290 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 9.3, *Ghanny 02*

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHrrK-AIGEI (Accessed 24 June 2017).

Figure 9.4, *Ghanny* 03

Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTuvpWPnKi0 (Accessed 24 June 2017).

The captions from the three promotional videos show the presence of an unknown figure in an eccentric theatrical attire, which consists of white heels, large white trousers and an overly ornamented-floral-top with a golden piece of jewellery. The figure also wears a pink tiara on its head and a pair of stockings hangs over its face, covering it completely. Both of its hands hold respectively a pair of coloured toilet-brushes and a fan. Although it is difficult for the viewer to ignore its presence, the figure wanders around people, desperately trying to gain their attention in order to have its existence recognized. Yet everybody ignores it. What the viewer sees is that no matter in what context the figure wanders, among the people in the street (Figure 9.1, 9.2), in the house of a family gathered around a table (Figure 9.3), or in a frequented café (9.4), the figure remains unseen. It maintains an illusory or ghostly presence.

It is my assertion that the queer character of the figure lies in the combination of those possessed qualities, such as strangeness and illusionary presence. On the one hand, strangeness signifies a non-familiarity, something out of the ordinary that is difficult to pin down. In this regard, the exceptionality of the figure poses an impossibility to categorise it according to known and familiar gendered attributes – meaning: man and/or woman. It demonstrates how queerness, as Eve Sedgwick describes, is "against the strictures of received classifications," thus, a "continuing movement […] troublant […] and strange" (1993, xii). The figure possesses phantasmal qualities that articulate its strangeness as Sedgwick describes. This also manifests through its constant re-appearance in the videos, despite people's nonchalance and – most importantly – their inability to see the figure. While the video allows the viewer to see how the figure remains invisible to the people it encounters, its illusionary and ghostly presence re-affirms strangeness, thus queerness.

To identify the phantom figure helps in comprehending a reality of ghostly haunting, where that "which appears to be not there is often a seething presence, acting and often meddling with taken-for-granted realities" (Gordon, 1997: 8). Those videos make the viewer feel *haunted* by the ghostly strange figure, which only appears via its invisibility among the people. The phantasmal [un-real] figure, attempts to 'give notice' (ibid: 15) of its presence through its continued acts of gesturing to the people encountered in diverse settings. A call for scrutinising the very terrains of the visible, which constitutes

"a complex system of permission and prohibition" (ibid: 17), instructs this very process of 'haunting' that the phantom figure triggers. To engage with the ghostly figure means to get a sense of its social and political effects, representing how power instructs what can be seen and what is in the shadows (ibid: 17-18). In this regard, Gordon argues:

> to be haunted draws us affectively against our will, and always a bit magically, into a structure of feeling of reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition (ibid: 8).

A reading of ghostly affects, as Gordon proposes, connects to Jacques Rancière's reflections on the potentialities of the aesthetic regime to "redistribute the sensible" (2004: 40). That is, in these promotional videos of the musical project of *Ghanni*, the haunting figure gestures towards a reconfiguration of the regime of the sensible. It tries to re-configure what is visible, speakable or audible (ibid: xiv). Drawing again upon the strange unfamiliar outlook of the figure, one can detect what I describe as a 'haunting of queerness.' In its desperate attempt to draw people's attention by continuous gesturing, the figure reveals to the viewer, who is able to see its (in)visibility, a desire for acknowledgment from those who continuously ignore it, as if it does not exist. The figure encapsulates a "desire to open new discussions about sexuality and gender diversity in Palestinian society through music" (Haneen, July 2013), which is what alQaws aims to generate with the launch of *Ghanni*. It, thus, captures a haunting of queerness. It is a conglomeration of the desires of those who fail to ascribe to the regulating structures of gender and sexual familiarity in Palestinian society. This process can be understood further, as I shall demonstrate, through an analysis of the queer tracks that *Ghanni* contains, the lyrics and melodies revealing emotions and desires beyond heteronormative [gendered] structures.

It is also important to emphasise how this haunting of queerness emerges in relation to a Palestinian sense of haunting. This is where the story, identified in Arabic as '*hikaya*' that shall 'hover over a local Arab space,'[91] which *Ghanni* promotes via these videos develops in relation to 'present-absent' Palestinian self (see Chapter 4 section 4.1.2). The following ethnographic note from the launching day of *Ghanni* captures this haunting:

[91] See website: http://www.ghanni.net/#about (Accessed: 24 July 2017).

Ghanni A'an al taa'riff launch event took place in an underground Haifa club during the summer of 2013. Although being a 'West-banker'[92] and thus being normally never allowed to gain access into what are identified as 'Israel proper' space, I was able to attend this event as a result of staying longer than what the Israeli one-day 'permit' allowed. I had secured this 'permit' thanks to the international organisation[93] I was working with at that time.

As I walked into the Haifa underground club at 8pm on a Saturday, I saw Haneen and we started chatting about me 'making it' [being able to attend] and how it felt to be 'here for the first time in Haifa!' "It feels very strange - you know - being here," I said as we both tried to make our way in. In the midst of darkness and disco-lights, we blended into a group of people who stood chatting and smoking. Haneen introduced me and, as we continued to talk about my experience, Jihad, a Palestinian from Haifa, joined to comment: "Wala', I feel closeted all the time here, 'nahnu mughayabun' we are absented in this state of theirs. '*Present-absentees*,' that's what they call us!"

The feeling of 'closetedness' that Jihad expressed was familiar. It did not only relate to my fear of being caught with no valid 'permit,' which governed my whole day, but it also was a consequence of an encounter with an Israeli-Jewish couple with whom my friend and I hitched a ride[94] to arrive in down-town Haifa. I recounted to Jihad how I had to hide behind my silence during such trip, while my friend, who is French, was conversing about a trip the couple had recently made to Paris. I reflected on how my silence found its echo amongst the walls of the emptied houses of the depopulated Arab neighbourhood of Haifa's Wadi Al Salib,[95] which I had visited later that day. It was amongst the ruins of Wadi Al Salib that one could feel the *ghostly presence* of those who have been forcefully absented in order to create 'this state of theirs,' I thought to myself. Jihad and I exchanged prolonged looks, filled with silence and sadness, before the voice of Haneen interrupted such moments announcing the launch of *Ghanni* and thanking everyone who had contributed to the project. Music and singing commenced and we all had our eyes fixed on the stage" (Diary Notes, Haifa, May 2013).

[92] Someone who comes from the 'West Bank' in Occupied Palestine.
[93] While I was working with an international organisation in Hebron, I acquired a one-day permit into Haifa, where Palestinians from the West Bank are usually denied entry.
[94] Public transport does not function on Saturdays because of Shabbat. Thus, the norm is to hitchhike with random people.
[95] A depopulated Arab neighbourhood in downtown Haifa. A visit to the ruined and emptied houses of Wadi al-Salib attests to Palestinian forceful dispossession since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948. The neighbourhood, which overlooks the sea, is juxtaposed with new modern buildings manifesting the slow gentrification processes that are taking over the area. Palestinians classified in Israeli law as 'absent-present' are unable to come back or reclaim their homes in Wadi Al-Salib. For more information, see: http://www.wrmea.org/2016-january-february/palestinian-homes-abandoned-in-nakba-attest-to-history-of-haifas-wadi-salib-neighborhood.html (Accessed 21 June 2017).

My encounter with Jihad in that Haifa club and the surge of emotions in relation to my denial of entry, his 'clothedness,' and our silenced presence in 'that state of theirs' – echoing the ghostly presence of forcefully exiled Palestinians – enable *Ghanni*'s emergence in relation to sense of Palestinian haunting. The figure in *Ghanni*'s videos, who continues to be blanked by the people, substantiates a Palestinian [closeted] subject-hood, whose presence is denied within the structural reality of Jewish Israeli colonialism. Although Palestinians are everywhere, similar to the phantom figure in the videos, their right to exist as a people continues to be denied. Israeli colonialism blanks them, rendering their presence invisible, thus ghostly. Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevorkian's (2016) enquiry into the 'occupation of the senses' explains the sensory ways in which Israeli settler-colonial system excludes and dominates its other [the Palestinians]. Kevorkian's essay sheds light on Israeli technologies used to manage sight, language, smell, among other sensory stimuli, and cement exclusive hegemony over the bodies and spaces of colonised (ibid).

Such sensory paradigms of colonisation re-appeared at the entrance to the club in Haifa. While a guard mumbled something in Hebrew, Haneen responded in Arabic: "why do you have to assume that we should be speaking Hebrew?" As Haneen's statement interrupted the flow of Hebrew, so it gestures toward the world of *Ghanni*. Like the three promotional videos pushing to make audible *Ghanni'*s queer stories, Haneen's words also gestured towards the *hikaya*, pushing to be seen and heard against the [sensory] will of the occupier. The ghostly presence announces its arrival vis-à-vis [present-absent] Palestine and/or queer. The following discussion examines *Ghanni*'s queer *hikaya*, revealing hopes, desire and emotions that 'draw us affectively.' It discusses how imaginings beyond hetero-colonialism are mapped within endeavours towards a queer directionality.

9.1.2 Queer Tracks

I was introduced to the first song of *Ghanni, Mnakir* [Nail Polish], in Haneen's car. During that conversation, she explained how alQaws approaches *Ghanni* as a "multimedia project initiative […] a smart way to proliferate narratives on sexuality that can reach out, through use of social media to everyone and everywhere" (July 2013). The song starts with the soft voice of Haya Zaatry, singing in local Palestinian dialect, to the rhythms of her acoustic guitar. 'Manakir' speaks of the quotidian and

mundane acts of 'waking up' and 'putting on blush' and 'manakir.' In this everyday reality, however mundane it sounds, a search for meaning begins, as Haya declares:

We wake up early in the morning	منفيق الصبح بكير
We put on blush and nail polish	منحط بودرا ومناكير
Searching for a meaning	مندوّر عن معنى
	قوانين بدها تكسير
Rules that need to be broken	منقول الله كبير
And we say that God is mighty (Allah kbeer)	منشكي ما حدا بسمعنا
We complain, but no one listens	
I feel like I am…	حاسّه حالي
Moving on my own	بتحرّك لحالي
In a traffic jam, that's suffocating my imagination	بزحمة سير، عم تخنق خيالي
imprinted masks walking in the streets	اقنعة بتنطبع وبتمشي بالشارع
Arrows pointing the direction, but my way	اسهم بتأشّر بس طريقي
Is in the other side[96]	بالجهه التانية

To wake up, therefore, and put on daily blush and nail polish is no longer a simple, taken-for-granted reality; rather meanings emerge from this 'manakir' day-to-day investment. Through the song, we quickly grasp how these meanings relate to power structures, as their stabilisation translates into rules or rather laws [quyanin in Arabic], so Haya suggests they 'need to be broken' [bedha takseer]. Haya then conveys an array of feelings to its listeners. She experiences a feeling of imagination and suffocation when she is left to 'walk on her own' in the 'traffic jam.' The song talks about those imprinted masks, which are walking the streets and all seem to follow "the arrows pointing the direction." She ends the song by pondering 'but my way is on the other side' [bas tari' bel jiha al tani].

The song gently sets out what I call, following Sara Ahmed (2006: 107), a queer orientation. Haya Zaatry's song *Manakir* enfolds those 'orientations' of bodies and

[96] The song is originally in Arabic [see parallel box]. The translated version can be found on alQaws website. However, I use the word 'imprinted' rather than 'fake' to describe the masks in the song, as it relays better the Arabic meaning 'btintibi.' Moreover, the word laws – rather than rules – captures better the meaning of quyanin. See: http://alqaws.org/videos/Manakir-Nail-Polish-?category_id=0 (Accessed 6 June 2017).

spaces. It is our daily orientation to objects such as manakir 'nail polish' and boudara 'blush' that reveals how people 'inhabit' (Ahmed, 2006: 10) their bodies. By mapping bodies' relationality to such objects, measuring their proximities, these same objects, in turn, 'give [us] meaning.' At the same time, these bodies 'extend' beyond the lines that point towards a particular direction or, as the lyrics of the song say, 'arrows pointing the direction.' Some spaces 'extend certain bodies' (ibid: 11) making what is 'strange' look 'familiar' (ibid: 10). Those arrows pointing to a certain direction only assume meaning for those who accept them. However, a failure of extension occurs when Haya reveals that 'my way is on the other side.' This is a moment of 'disorientation' (Ahmed, 206: 11), or queer orientation, whereby failure to follow the prescribed lines goes hand in hand with a feeling of being 'out of place' (ibid). This failure to follow the lines instructs an urge, a desire for another direction.

This directionality gestures towards the 'yet-to-be inhabited places' (Ahmed, 2006: 12), it creates potentialities for bodies and desires, un-restraining their imagination. The feeling of being out of place – "moving on my own in traffic jam" – restricts or "suffocates my imagination." Thus, when the body encounters difficulties to find a space providing room for its existence, it seeks for an-other imagination. This striving for un-"restricted imagination" via queer orientations demonstrates how queerness points to other worlds, beyond what Jose Muñoz calls the present reality of "the here and now" (2009:1). Combining the ideas of Muñoz and Ahmed, queerness becomes a *dis*-orientation that extends a feeling beyond present reality and fixity of 'meaning.' It is a queerness that walks out of those 'lines that direct us' (Ahmed, 2006: 12) towards 'an-other side' (ibid: 8) that allows room to inhabit the 'not-yet-imagined' (Munoz, 2009: 30). Queerness as 'a utopia,' therefore, unfolds in those attempts to step out of "naturalised" (Munoz, 2006: 29) spaces and directions. It paces towards queer "orientations" (Ahmed, 2006), gesturing to the *then and there of queer futurity* (Munoz, 2009). To map a desire for queer futurity is not only about desiring - in semi-abstracted forms - a "better world or freedom" (ibid: 30) [of the imagination]. Those potentialities for other worlds and 'directions' beyond present meanings or "the prison house of the here and now" comprise a desire for "more immediately better relations with the social, and that includes better sex and more pleasure" (ibid: 30). The queer tracks of *Ghanni* articulate these desires and the song *al-Qased Ashirria* is another illustrative example.

9.1.3 Celebrating Queer Erotica

In the song *Al-Qaseda Ashirria* [The Evil Poem], Hasan Nakhleh turns the poem of one of the most famous Arab contemporary poets, Nizar Qabbani, into a song to the rhythms of pop music. *Al-Qaseda Ashirria* draws the listener into a direct confrontation with the imagery of love-making between two women:

Rain[97]…Rain..	مطرٌ.. مطرُ..
Her girlfriend with her, and October's lamentation	و صديقتها معها, و لتشرين نواحُ
And the door's joints moaning	و البابُ تئنُ مفاصله
And in it the key has gone wild	و يعربدُ فيه المفتاحُ
There's something between the two of them Only me and the lamp know about	شيءٌ بينهما..
	يعرفه إثنان أنا و المصباحُ
It's a love story	حكأية حبٍ..
That shouldn't be told	لا تحكى في الحب.. يموت الإيضاحُ
In love	الحجرةُ فوضى ..
Clarification dies	فحليٌ ترمى.. و حريرٌ ينزاحُ
The room is a mess	و يغادرُ زرٌ عروته بفتورٍ,
Jewels are thrown	فالليل صباحُ
And silky clothes	الذئبة ترضع ذئبتها
Are removed	و يد تجتاح و تجتاحُ
And a button is unfastened calmly	و دثارٌ فر ..
Because the night	فواحدةٌ تدنيه , و أخرى ترتاحُ
Has turned into morning	
The female wolf	[…]
Is feeding her companion	
And a hand that keeps invading and invading	
And clothes that ran away	
One of them is unzipping it/ is getting close to it	
And the other is resting peacefully	
[…]	
And the conversation of four bosoms	و حوار نهودٍ أربعةٍ
They are whispering	تتهامس و الهمس مباحُ
Whispers are allowed	كطيورٍ بيضٍ في روضٍ تتناقر..
Like tamed white birds	و الريش سلاحُ
Quarrelling and the feathers are weapons	حبات العقدين انفرطت من لهوٍ..

[97] alQaws provides the translation of the song on its website. See: http://alqaws.org/videos/al-Qaseda-ashirra-The-evil-poem-?category_id=0 (Accessed 21June 2017).

The beads of the two necklaces	و أنهـــدَ وشـاحُ
Are lost in joy and pleasure	و يكســـر نهـــدٌ واقعـــه ويثور ..
A bosom got rid of its scarf	فللـجرحِ جـــراحُ
And a bosom rebels and revolts	
Behind the scar are many scars	[…]
[…]	

Written – thus narrated – from the perspective of an observer, the song describes a love story on a rainy day of October. Although the singer tries to describe such story, it rushes to warn that "in love clarification dies." Thus, from the very beginning the song clarifies how this story of love exceeds all the singer's attempts to describe it. To emphasize further this sense of ambiguity around this love story, the singer describes how nobody knows what stands between the two lovers apart from the lamp in the room and "me," meaning the poet. The poem takes the listener inside the room where, in the midst of the mess of "jewellery thrown," the sexual encounter begins to unfold slowly as "buttons are being unfastened calmly." The sexual encounter between the female lovers turns the present *night*-time, which signals an end, into a *morning*-time, marking beginnings. This metaphor, in turn, alludes to the endless time for un-rushed lovemaking. It is important to contemplate how the mounting desire between the two women disrupts bodily boundaries, which breakdown as 'a hand keeps invading and invading.' Later, the 'conversations of four bosoms' in the form of 'whispers' between 'tamed birds,' who shortly fall into quarrels, revolts, scarring and breakage of the beads of two necklaces in the midst of 'joy and pleasure.'

I can demonstrate *Al-Qaseda Ashirrira's* significance in articulating queer desire through a wider reading of Nizar Qabbani and his poetry. The Syrian poet, known for his dedication to women and love,[98] is one of the pioneers of contemporary Arab poetry. His writings combine questions of both the political and the erotic. Mohaj Khaf explains that Qabbani's poetry reveals the relation between the two elements as "freedom, equality and dignity are prerequisites for erotic joy" (2000: 44). At the same time, Qabbani's use of the erotic also challenges systems of coercion and socio-political repressions, as Salma Khadra Jayyusi argues:

> Qabbani was not embracing fashionable causes when he began his concentrated attack on the way women were induced, through a narrow

[98] Qabbani is widely known in the Arab world as 'sha'ir al mar'aa', or 'women's poet.'

> conservative education, to deny their own humanity. He began his campaign long before feminism in the Arab world became a fashionable pursuit. It was through his erotic verse that Qabbani first discovered, for himself and others, the full meaning of freedom, the fact that genuine freedom is not divisible, cannot be sought except in its totality. (1996: vi).

Jayyusi also contends that Qabbani stands out amongst other contemporary Arab poets to tackle through "his well-honed pen" political coercion and "the most sacrosanct taboos in Arab traditional culture: the sexual" (ibid: vii). A reading of Qabbani's "dealing with the sexual" should also take place in relation to a whole tradition of classical Arab poetry that never shied away from its celebration of eroticism and sexuality. However, whilst the poetry of those who belonged to a Medieval Arab Islamic society, such as the (in)famous Abu Nuwas,[99] delved mainly into the subject of male homoeroticism; Qabbani's poetry marks a shift away from this tradition. It evokes the subject of women's (homo)sexuality, as the text of *Al-Qaseda Al-shirrira* clearly demonstrates.

More importantly, a careful examination of the title *The Evil Poem* should also explain how the poem employs the very meanings it aims to reverse. The Arabic term 'shirrira' [denoting female-devil] comes hand in hand with a deployment of the imagery of "she-wolf who is feeding her companion." The poem uses this later image to describe the act of lovemaking between the two women. Some argue that the reference to the "wolf suckling her wolf" demonstrates the poem's location vis-à-vis "a voyeuristic male voice" (Alkhalil, 2005: 133). However, it is my assertion that such reading fails to take into account the overall purpose of the poem, which functions as both a confrontation and celebration of the joys and pleasures of female-female homoeroticism. This, in turn, shows that a purposeful reference to such "evilness" and monstrosity, including through the imagery of the wolf, is part of a "re-signifying praxis" (Butler, 1999: 177). That is, the poem intentionally *re*-deploys the terms, meanings and/or imagery that condemn or ignore female-female homoeroticism from the point of view of male writers/poets, enacting a reversal of these meanings. Thus, the poem's celebratory *re*cital of this "evilness" and monstrosity contests the rules of female sexual legitimacy. In Butler's words, it "renders hyperbolic the discursive conventions that it also reverses" (ibid: 177). *Ghanni*'s adaptation of *Al-Qaseda Ashirrira* into a pop song

[99] The poet of Caliph Harun al Rashid, he was well-known for his poetry celebrating love of boys and male homoeroticism (see, Kennedy, 2005).

is hardly surprising for this matter. Written in Standard Arabic, or Fusha,[100] the adaption of this poem into a popular, commercial song allows more accessibility and diffusion of Nizar's legacy as a means to re-imagine the socio-political. Continuing to explore how alQaws' activists rely on these types of poetics. The following section explores further the potentialities of the sensual to both engage with and re-imagine Palestinian socio-political reality.

9.1.4 Mapping the Role of Queer Native Emotionality

During my conversation with alQaws' activist and member, Mohammed Halim, I discovered that he was the author of the song *Bhibik*.[101] The song, which is interpreted in the local Nazerth accent of its famous singer Roula Azzar, recounts another story of love declaration between two female lovers:

I love you, she said, and my love for you cannot be measured The waves were shy and on the wall fell a star and lit up Akka's lighthouse I love you, may god bless… That smile which liberates prisoners and excites rebels	بحِبِك، قالتلي، وحبي الِك مالو مقدار الموج استحى وع السور نزلت نجمة ضوّت فنار بحبِك ويسعد الله هالضحكه بتحرّر أسرى وبتحمّس ثوار
I love you Since my childhood days When you got skinny… and when you got fat When you went wild… and when you went quiet When you were Nefertiti[102] and when you were a tomboy	بحبك من أيام الولدني ولما نصِحّتي...لما ضعِفتي ولما سَكتّي.....لما فِعتي لما نفرتيتي ولما حسن صبي كنتي
I love you, and if I must I would climb Akka's wall and shout Till I stop the tides And till the people of Haifa hear my voice	بحبك ووقت الجد ع السور بطلع بصيّح تا وقّف الجزر والمد وتا اهل حيفا يفزعو وتصل الرملة ع اللد

[100] Standardized literary Arabic form of writing.
[101] Bhib*i*k here is directed to a female lover as opposed to bhib*a*k directed to male.
[102] An Egyptian goddess known for her beauty.

And till Led and Ramllih are one

I will buy you Khan Al – Umdan Our wedding would be in the Knights' Hall Al Kobeh and Tabouleh would be made by your mom And I will bring the sweets from Lebanon I love you Should I explain more…	لشتريلك خان العمدان والعرس بقاعة الفرسان الكبه والتبوله ع امك والحلو بجيبو من لبنان بحبك ؟ ...ولاّ أقول كمان
I love you she said, and my love for you is without measure The waves were shy And on the wall fell a star that lit up like a beacon of light I love you, my god bless… That smile Which liberates prisoners and excites rebels	بحِبِك، قالتلي، وحبي الِك مالو مقدار الموج استحى وع السور نزلت نجمة ضوّت فنار بحبِك ويسعد الله هالضحكه بتحرّر أسرى وبتحمّس ثوار

Narrated from the perspective of one of the female lovers, the song describes how love manifests itself by extending into surrounding space. The story relates the shyness of the sea-waves and the lit-up lighthouse of Akka[103] to the lover's smile and its ability to "liberate prisoners and excite rebels." The lover recounts that such feeling, which dates back to 'childhood days,' remains consistent throughout the bodily 'thinness or fatness,' 'wildness and calmness.' Nothing alters such love, not even changes of gender-identification from 'tomboy' [masculine] or 'Nefertiti' [feminine]. This love manifests a certain power in its ability to influence places and people. For instance, the wall of Akka functions as the platform for the lover to declare her love, which will 'stop the tides,' reach all the way to the people of Haifa[104] and unite the villages of al Ramlah and Al Lyd.[105] The song also paints an image of a wedding around Akka's heritage sites, such as Khan Al-Umdan and the knights' hall, dating back to the Ottoman and Crusades era respectively. The song mentions how the mother of the lover shall prepare

[103] Acre: city north of historic Palestine, considered part of Israel territory and identified in Hebrew as Akko.
[104] City in North of historic Palestine, considered part of Israeli territory. Haifa is located very close to Akka.
[105] Towns of Lyd (also Lod) and Ramlah in central parts of historic Palestine, considered now part of Israeli territory. In 1948 Zionist forces committed massacre as well as mass expulsion of Palestinians in these two cities. See: http://www.palestineremembered.com/al-Ramla/al-Lydd/ (Accessed 23 July2017).

the famous Levantine dishes of koubeh and tabouleh, while the sweets shall arrive from Lebanon. The song ends as it started, repeating the first declaration of love, celebrating the shyness of the sea-waves and blessing the lover's smile "which liberates prisoners and excites rebels."

Bhibik juxtaposes the emotional connection of the two female lovers vis-à-vis the bodies of the collective and the territorial, as well as their crosscutting relationality to the question of Palestinian [native] imaginings of liberation. It also maps the role of the affective in launching the Palestinian revolution to-come, for the lover's smile 'excites rebels and liberates prisoners.' Drawing on Sara Ahmed's insights into the role of emotions in shaping bodies and their orientations towards others (2014: 4), I argue that this feeling of love recalls a collective struggle for liberation. The emotional value between the two lovers transcends an individualistic paradigm, orienting towards a collective liberation. Boundaries collapse between the individual lover's feelings and the social/collective liberation struggle, revealing the "sociality of the emotion" (2014: 8). In Ahmed's words: "emotions are not 'in' either the individual or the social, but produce the very surfaces and boundaries that allow the individual and the social to be delineated as if they are objects" (ibid: 10). It is useful to understand emotions and their circulation vis-à-vis socio-political configurations because it demonstrates the role of a native queer emotionality and the effect of its distribution across re-claimed native bodies/worlds.

Moreover, the song presents a feeling of love that reverberates across surrounding geographies and places. The shy sea-waves convey local Palestinian female-female emotionality and, therefore, register a native [Palestinian] territoriality in its capacity to transmit the emotions of the two lovers. This, in turn, challenges the colonial order of abstracting space from its native other. Places such as Haifa, Akka, Lyd and Ramlah, which are said to constitute 'Israel' proper via Palestinian forceful absence, emerge in the song to celebrate and *feel* the lover's *way.* The song shares the sensual power of love as experienced by the female lovers, making them feel one and unique, through the re-emergence of those spaces into oneness: 'Ramlah and Lyd become one.' The unity of the two cities marked by history of colonial violence, signals defiance and resistance. Such transformation complements the idea of liberation that the lover's smile instigates.

This unity towards liberation comes hand in hand with "the mesh of emotive and sensory experience" in "push[ing] against the boundaries inscribed by [colonial] settlement" (Rifkin, 2011: 182). The emotionality of the two female lovers also confronts imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty via the paradigms re-instantiating hetero-colonialism (see Chapter 7). In particular, the role attributed to queer [female-female] emotionality, as it provokes a revolution, trumps the image of the hyper-masculine nationalist hero. Simultaneously, this revolution imagines beyond the Oslo Accord-enshrined nation-state territoriality. This can be traced in how both the feeling of love and call for liberation stretch beyond the confines of Palestinian geopolitical aspirations, which instead reify colonial enclavisation (see Chapter 7 section 7.2). In particular, *Bhibik* conveys a feeling of love that 'excites' Palestinian liberation across those spaces, such as Haifa, Akka, Ramlah and Lyd; while the Palestinian Authority (PA) recognises them as part of Israeli territoriality after the signing of the Oslo Accord and its 'two state' logic.

Bhibik enfolds a combined challenge to gendered and territorial boundaries, situating this feeling of love in relation to Ihmoud and Kervorkian's analysis of home-becoming spaces as they "transcend[s] territorial borders and nation states and symbolics of national struggle" (2014: 394). In fact, Lebanon becomes just like any other reachable place in the song, as the lover avows to bring the sweets from Lebanon on the wedding day, thus challenging inscribed state-boundaries. The wedding imagery appears as a problematic investment in what Muñoz (2009: 32) would call 'pragmatic gay and lesbian politics.' However, such a reading proves insufficient for this song as it overlooks how a wedding imagery between the two-female lovers serves, primarily, as an enforcement of Palestinian queer emotionality. It defies boundaries and formulates hopes for the yet-to-come collective revolution. Moreover, queer emotionality also emerges when the song refers to Khan al Umdan and the Knight's halls of Akka, linking the past imperialist conquests (Crusades and Ottoman eras) to the present reality of Israeli settler colonialism. The celebration of this love against the backdrop of past and present colonial settlements demonstrates how "the geopolitical becomes encoded and remembered as a feeling" (Rifkin, 2011: 179).

It is possible to stress further how *feelings* are used to convey geopolitical inscriptions by looking at the writings of Hiyam, whom I met during alQaws' writing-workshop.

This piece of prose, which was written in Arabic and published on Qadita,[106] describes feelings of love and desire between the female narrator and her female lover in relation to the existing colonial structures in Palestine.

> I remember April when I was a few seconds away from breaking all the boundaries of nature and geography, just to look at you enjoying the beauty of Karmal and the sea while a few hairs drop from your braids to land peacefully onto the orange scarf. I remember how I got out of my bed to find myself blocked by a wall and the long distances that draw us asunder, yet bring us closer. The front street of my house was destroyed by Israeli tanks during its brutal invasion of the city, I remember how your far-distant voice echoed promises of a nearing meeting. It was the only reason for me to continue living. I remember when I had to smuggle myself from across their borders and through holes in the wall to get to Jerusalem. I remember the amount of adrenalin flowing into my blood and the numbers of times I said to myself nothing matters but you. Because if I die without seeing you, I will leave with pain in my heart inflicted by my inability to touch you for once. And so I hung your jewellery on my purse, wrapped your scarf around my neck and circled my hand with your bracelets. That was my way to wrap you around me on my way to you. I entered Jerusalem that day. Today, five years since then, I can still remember all your details. In my memory I hold nothing of my last visit to Jerusalem, but you.[107]

Through this piece we can map significance of what Mark Rifkin defines "an indigenous structure of feeling" (2011: 173). That is, an indigenous structure of feeling not only registers the emotive effects, often rendered 'private' and/or dismissible, of living under a regime of colonial domination. It also indicates an underlying connection to those "socio-political configurations that lie outside or challenge the parameters of existing structures of dominations" (ibid: 173). Hiyam's piece relays the feelings of anguish and pain that the narrator has to deal with, whether in the form of brutal Israeli invasion or Israeli denied access to the lover's shared places. At the same time, the lover narrates how she continues hoping for a meeting with her beloved. The 'far-

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[106] In Chapter 5 (Section 5.1.1) I explain the relevance of Qadita for queer writings. Hiyam's piece can be accessed here: http://www.qadita.net/archive/queers/%D8%B1%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A9-%D9%85%D8%A4%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%A9/ (Accessed: 12 June 2017).

[107] The Arabic original reads:

وأذكر ابريل عندما كنت على بعد لحظات قليلة من أن اخترق كل قوانين الفيزياء وأجتاز كل حدود الجغرافيا وأراك وأنت تنظرين من شبّاكك تصفين لي أذكر كيف نهضت من سريري، ونظرت من شبّاكي .جمال الكرمل وهواء البحر وبعض الشعيرات التي سقطت من جدائلك لتستقرّ على الشال البرتقالي لأرى جدارا لا أراه، ومسافات طويلة تفصلنا وتجمعنا؛ الشارع الأمامي لبيتي وقد دمرته وكسّرته الدبابات الإسرائيلية التي صالت وجالت فيه أثناء اجتياحها للمدينة، وأذكر كيف أنّ صوتك كان يأتي من بعيد بوعد بلقاء قريب كان دافعي الوحيد للاستمرار.

أذكر هجمات الأدرينالين في دمي وعدد المرات التي ذكرت نفسي بها أنّ لا شيء .أذكر حين تسللت إلى القدس من خلف الحواجز ومن ثغرات الجدار أذكر كيف علّقت تمائمك .لا شيء يهم، لأنني إذا متّ من دون أن أراك سأرحل وفي قلبي غصّة واحدة سببها أنني لم ألمسك يوما .يهم ما دمت سألقاك أردتك، أنت بصورتك التي رسمتها رائحتك وأشياؤك أن تكوني معي في طريقي .على حقيبتي، و لبست أساورك في يدي ولففت شالك على رقبتي خمس سنوات مضت، و لا زلت أذكر كل تفاصيلك، و لا أحمل أية ذكرى عن آخر زيارة لي للقدس سواك" .دخلت القدس في ذلك اليوم …إليك

distant voice' of the beloved, promising a meeting, provides the needed hope to keep going and 'continue living.' Once again, in a similar vein to the song *Bhibik*, the feeling of love, together with the desire to 'touch' the lover and unite with her, becomes the drive to challenge existing geopolitical configurations. She, therefore, smuggles herself from across colonisers borders and through 'the holes in their wall' into the city of Jerusalem.

The narrator describes the feeling of adrenaline while crossing through the borders, which combines both excitement and fear. This experience instigates a mixture of feelings that the narrator explains as a way of 'wrapping' the lover around her body on the way to the meeting. This scene, first, expresses a need of protection and safety in order to cross the dangerous borders, thus helping to control her fear. Second, it expresses the mounting excitement and desire to meet her lover. Another important point is how the narrator marks the memories of Jerusalem to the details of her lover. Similar to the song *Bhibik*, those forces of desire and intimacy with the female-lover signal how the narrator establishes a relationship with those surrounding spaces via love, in Haifa or Jerusalem. These narrated desires, as the piece declares early on, break the rule of 'nature and geography.' On the one hand, the piece maps a queer native emotionality against presumed 'natural' orderings of gender/sexuality, denoted as "quyanin phisya'iyah" [laws of nature] where desire follows a presumed 'natural' essence. On the other hand, an "indigenous structure of feeling" (Rifkin, 2011: 182) informs such queer emotionality mapped out in the piece, and breaks the rules of geopolitics. Hiyam's piece and the song *Bhibik* demonstrate how queer native emotionality prompts the "continuing presence of native socio-political formations that are not reducible or substantively recognizable within settler ideologies and administrative networks" (Rifkin, 2011: 173).

Exploring alQaws' queer *hikaya* sheds light on the prominent role of the *phantom* figure, who struggles to make the *affective* rhythms of a queer [native] directionality seen, heard and felt. Queer *hikaya* also expresses circulating emotions – such as hope, love and desire – towards the not-yet-inhabited (Ahmed, 2006: 12). Developing further the exploration of the 'not-yet,' the next section examines the artistic work of Knorn, focusing on how satirical drawings and performance-art gesture towards the "not-yet-conscious" (Munoz, 2009: 21).

9.2 Knorn's Political Satires and Performance Art

As discussed in Chapter 6, my first encounter with Knorn took place at the writing workshop that alQaws organised in the summer of 2013. When we started conversing via emails in late 2014/beginning 2015, I discovered his art-page on Facebook named "Knorn Art," which I began to follow more regularly in order to remain updated about his art-posts. It was one of those posts, comprising a collection of political satire drawings, that sparked an interesting conversation between us and revealed Knorn's growing interest in political cartoons. As he explained, such interest resulted from "being influenced by Palestinian culture of political satire as brought forth by our famous political caricaturist Naji Al-Ali" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). Knorn's drawings (see Figures 9.5, 9.6) illustrate ongoing conversations between a hyper-sexualised figure - named throughout the collection as '???' - and a black cat, 'pusspuss,' in colloquial Palestinian. Inquiring about the role of the cat in his drawings, Knorn replied:

> I absolutely love what cats symbolize in popular culture. They are perceived as sassy, vain, spoiled, regal, feminine, megalomaniac divas and they always demand to be taken seriously. Those are qualities that describe to the letter the notoriously apolitical Ramallah-elite. However, I decided to make the cats very politically literate and snarky, directing the hyper-sexualized and apolitical liberal - which I called '???' – on the path to revolution using protest chants. I like people whose minds and personalities clash oxymoronically with how they appear visually and physically. I love when a sharp mind catches you off guard. It's a turn on. Cats were also used in Internet Memes as a symbol for Slacktivists and ivory tower intellectuals**.** There's a lot to work with here, and each comic has its own dynamic and its own campaign. (Knorn, Gmail Exchange 2015).

What Knorn achieves through the use of the cat in these drawings is twofold. First, the cat challenges the viewer's expectations of what it ought to represent. Knorn turns what the cat symbolizes for 'slacktivists' or 'ivory tower intellectuals' to a politically literate and snarky figure. It is my assertion that the cat exhibits a *failure* to identify with its own image. Therefore, "It's a turn on," as Knorn suggests, because it brings to forth the erotic dimension of such dis-identification. Second, the cat resembles 'Il Grillo Parlante' [The Talking Cricket] of Carlo Collodi's Pinocchio. As 'Il Grillo Parlanta' admonishes Pinocchio who prefers not to face his responsibilities, so the cat voices

those concerns and worries that "the hyper-sexualised apolitical/liberal Ramallah elite" suppresses.

The cat is also very similar to Naji Al-Ali's *Handala* figure, which appears almost in all of Naji's cartoons. For the Palestinian cartoonist, who was assassinated in London in 1987 because of his highly provocative and political work, *Handala* represented the faceless, refugee-child, whose constant presence confronted Zionists' denial of Palestinian refugees' right of return. *Handala* also spoke truth against those Arab and Palestinian political structures that failed to stand up for and protect their people. Naji explained that *Handala* is the ten-year old refugee child whose hands are "clasped behind his back as a sign of rejection at a time when solutions are presented to us the American way."[108] Therefore, Knorn's employment of the cat appears to be similar to Naji's *Handala*, as both deliver politically provocative messages. However, what makes Knorn's cat differ from *Handala* is the clear investment in the erotic dimension that, as Knorn claims, "catches you off guard." While delivering a political/satirical message, the cat also functions as a "turn on," which echoes the cartoon's overall-purpose in tackling the politics of sexuality.

9.2.1 '???' and 'Pusspuss': Sexuality (in) Politics Matters

[108] See: http://muftah.org/understanding-politics-in-the-arab-world-through-naji-al-alis-cartoons/#.WJ2sitLc7IU (Accessed 09 June 2017).

Figure 9.5

Source: Artist.

Figure 9.6

Source: Artist.

Figure 9.5 presents '???' in swim-suit and red heels, as it appears to be walking with an effeminate gait, complaining in Palestinian dialect: "Oh, I forgot to tan my ass!" Walking alongside '???,' there is 'pusspuss' who comments: "Boycott Israeli beaches!" In one of our exchanges, Knorn discusses how he drew this satirical comic in order to stress the relevance of Israeli boycott to queer politics. He tried to highlight "how Israeli pinkwashing is a serious issue that needs to be added in our anti-colonial resistance tactics" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). He also added that:

> The main aim is not only to refer to pinkwashing and the need for boycott, but to also talk about the need to become more involved and mobilized politically as there's a hateful exclusion of the political and historical among liberals, and that seriously harms our resistance (ibid).

The importance of Knorn's statement, which urges those who uphold a liberal agenda to address "the hateful exclusion of the political and historical" dimensions, resonates with the idea of *internalized pinkwashing,* as explored earlier (see Chapter 8). Knorn's statement enraptures a warning against those Palestinian "liberal" agendas, whose side-stepping of politics and history, has meant naturalizing and normalizing the colonial power regime (see Chapter 7). In the previous chapter I mapped how alQaws' effort to tackle 'internalized pinkwashing' is one way of addressing Palestinian reproduction of hetero-colonialism. Knorn's cartoon and the message behind it make a similar critique. In fact, the cartoon unmasks how such desire for a full-body tan, which could be seemingly interpreted as apolitical, is based on a total dismissal of politics and history. In particular, it depicts how some Palestinians, who are keen on exploring sexual identity, fail to realize the problematic aspects of seeking a full body-tan at Israeli beaches. Knorn's drawing questions how the desires of '???' for the freedom, joy and full-body tan that Israeli beaches offer are de facto symptomatic of what alQaws identifies as 'internalized pinkwashing.' They feed those pinkwashing narratives that Israel uses to continue its colonisation of Palestinian bodies and lands. The role that 'pusspuss' plays, as its call for 'boycott,' becomes a means to address and challenge those 'apolitical' desires that normalize the existing power [colonial] structures in Palestine.

Figure 9.6 presents another conversation between '???' and 'pusspuss.' As 'pusspuss' defiantly declares: "I do not recognise the state of Israel," '???' instead replies: "Pusspuss! We agreed no politics before tucking into bed!" In this case, the cat

articulates a political statement that challenges and refutes the liberal 'peace-building model' of Oslo, which recognized the existence of the state of Israel (see also Chapter 7). The response of '???' expresses instead what Knorn also describes as the "disdain of some LGBTQ groups for the political dimensions of sexuality" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). On the one hand, Knorn satirizes the problematic aspects of a single-issue approach, where "tucking into bed" means "no politics." This single-issue approach to sexuality organising dismisses the relevance of politics, thus, the value of upholding anti-colonial frame. This reminds us of the critique Shireen Mazzawi makes of alQaws, which re-proposes a certain 'disdain' toward the relevance of alQaws' decolonial political frame by adhering to a single-issue framework (see chapter 8).

This cartoon also highlights a much-needed "link between nation state's projects and sexuality" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). Knorn's satire addresses the debate about the well-drawn distinction between the sexual and political dimensions, as respectively relegated to the private and public domain. The exchange between '???' and 'pusspuss,' therefore, not only challenges single-issue politics of sexuality, but also brings to light the very dimension of the sexual that lies at the premise of the political (i.e. the nation-state project). In particular, the trans-sexuality of '???' is a striking confrontation with the heteronormativising premise of the nation-state and its imagining within the paradigms of heteropatriarchy (see Chapter 7). The transsexuality of '???' complements the cartoon's political message, articulated via 'pusspuss' rejection of recognising Israel. Knorn's ability to unite those two elements into a context of intimacy confronts us with imaginings - gendered: signified by '???'; and geopolitical: signified by 'pusspuss' – beyond the reproduction of colonial heteronormativity.

9.2.2 *Wihdeh Watanyeh* in Performance

Figure 9.7

Source: Artist.

Figure 9.8

Source: Artist.

Figure 9.9

Source: Artist.

As Knorn's comics aim to provoke what he calls the liberal Ramallah elite, so his artistic performance, organized in the same city, delivers a more direct criticism of such elitism. *Whideh Wataniyeh* [National Loneliness] is an artistic performance staged as part of 'Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre Festival for Video and Performance Art' in the summer of 2013. The place where the performance takes place and to whom it is directed is important. Knorn emphasizes the relevance of performing at a local level, within spaces that are accessible to Palestinian local audience. This view of performing art for a local audience challenges exclusive performances, as I have traced in chapter 6, against what Knorn calls "the colonial white gaze." Knorn explains:

> Performances and film screening outside conventional venues are important as they tend to be more accessible, we need to realize that our audience shouldn't be exclusively international and white. There's a time when we need to experiment and stop giving the position of audience member to the coloniser. This is a privilege because it focuses on the direction of the colonial white gaze (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015).

Knorn's *Whideh Wataniyeh* goes beyond a critique of the colonial white gaze (see chapter 6) and instead moves towards queer imaginings of an otherwise for Palestine. The title of the performance plays on the famous Palestinian slogan "Whideh Watanyeh," meaning: national unity. As the word 'whideh' in Arabic can also signify loneliness, Knorn uses it to indicate the latter meaning (loneliness) rather than the former (unity). From 'unity' to 'loneliness,' the performance takes place in one of the streets of Ramallah, adjacent to a Coca-Cola billboard, and Knorn's words help us understand the importance of performing in such spaces:

> How challenging it is to penetrate public space especially with the implementation of neoliberal policies [in Ramallah], where everything is privatised and rendered inaccessible for the sake of profit maximization and stifling uprisings (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015).

In *Whideh Watanyeh*, Knorn and the other performers come out as "walking coke bottles wearing a sheikh Abayah or 'garment,' with red ribbons tied around the waists. Those ribbons stand for the red sticker on the bottle of Coca-Cola, representing the brand name" (see Figure 9.9). Dressed in a costume resembling bottles of Coca-Cola, the performers stand in the street and serve Coca-Cola to passers-by. However, as people accept Coca-Cola and start drinking it, the performers began to bleed. In fact, while serving, the performers are also holding needles in their hands and, as they start

puncturing the squibs[109] attached to their bodies, their simulated bleeding begins. It is important to note that Coca-Cola was being served during Iftar, which is the moment when people break their fast in the holy month of Muslim fasting 'Ramadan.' During this month, the consumption of Coca-Cola increases significantly and the performance tries to underline the connections between religion and consumerism, whose relation transpires also from the Facebook description of the event:

> We've witnessed a matrimonial occasion. On this glorious wedding season, we will celebrate a love consummated between religion and consumerism. Let there be a spectacle, and let that spectacle be a cleansing, sponsored of course by none other than Coca-Cola. While enjoying the show, we - the performers - hope that you reflect on this, but also feel free to interact with us. (https://www.facebook.com/events/538829609486988)

Inviting people to drink Coca-Cola, Knorn explains how they addressed the passers-by: "as a loving host, please drink… May your fast cleanse you…Ramadan Mubarak[110]" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). However, as people started sipping their Coca-Cola, black blood gushes out of the performers' clothing, staining the white Abayah [garment] (see figures 9.7, 9.8 and 9.9). People's reactions ranged from extreme horror to incredible entertainment, and – most importantly - "people were able to draw the connection between commodity consumption and a blackening stain on the soul. So to speak, capitalism is killing us" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). The artist also recounted people's diverse reactions, at times, urging others to "Stop drinking coke!" or shouting "They are dying, we are killing them!" Others preferred to keep drinking and said "Let's see what happens to them" (ibid).

Knorn further explains how the message "let us decolonise from hyper consumption during this holy month" was conveyed to people passing by as the performers started to approach people and ask if they could also paint their faces. People were then face-painted with the message: "Thank you for ridding us of capitalism and hyper consumption, now it's our turn to help you cleanse," which means "once they go home, they will wash out the face painting" (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015). After the performance, a friend of Knorn comments on the relevance of such performance:

[109] Squibs are little nylon bags of black ink taped on random parts of bodies. They are usually used to simulate bleeding by being punctured with a needle or attaching to it self-detonating fireworks to emulate getting shot.
[110] An official way of greeting those who fast during Ramadan.

> Corporations are really hijacking public spaces inside the city. They introduce products and brands that the masses do not need, they suck them into a vortex that is not relevant to their lifestyle. They distract them and make one live the fantasy that Palestine is free. That life is normal (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015).

Such allusions to the normality of life in Palestine that the city of Ramallah manifests, as the hub of the Palestinian Authority's power with a growing focus on the discourse on development, turns our attention toward Palestinian trajectory of statehood recognition (see Chapter 7). Being from Ramallah, Knorn elaborates on the particularity of the city whereby:

> unlike other West Bank cities [it] is extremely sheltered and full of business entrepreneurs, who have somehow found a way to make profit from the Israeli occupation in exchange of legitimizing settler colonialism and institutionalized racism, putting oppressive limitations on mobility both physical and class-related. Segregated in a classic 'divide and conquer' strategy, Ramallah has become a paradox –a La-La-Land that feeds and nurtures the Israeli occupation (Knorn, Gmail Exchange, 2015).

Knorn's employment of the Coca-Cola theme for a *national loneliness* performance calls for a questioning of those practices that normalizes Israeli colonialism, boosting individualism and accepting the fragmented reality following Oslo via the consolidation of the power of the PNA. Thus, Coca-Cola symbolizes the adoption of a modernising agenda aimed at normalising the post-Oslo reality and Israeli colonialism via consumerist practices, which are part of a larger capitalist discourse (see Chapter 7). Slavoj Zizek insights on the functioning of consumerism and capitalism become useful to comprehend further how such performance questions the politics of normalization perpetuating Israeli colonialism. Zizek argues that a parallel exists between the inherent characteristics of Coca-Cola and the ways capitalist consumptions works. As subjects enjoy a drink – Coca-Cola – that never fully quenches their thirst (Zizek in Polidori: np[111]), so capitalism triggers an endless circuit of hysterical consumption that never fully ends. However, there are political lessons to be drawn from this cycle of enjoyment that Knorn's performance. While people enjoy growing consumerism in Ramallah, or what Knorn describes as the fantasy of the 'La-La-Land,' they fail to acknowledge how such fantasy is structuring and perpetuating their colonial reality. Drinking and enjoying Coca-Cola, as a symbol of the modernization agenda in Ramallah, embraces the Oslo

[111] https://www2.units.it/etica/2000_1/zizek.htm (access date: 10 June 2017).

Accord and becomes a way to misrecognize how this same agenda allows Israeli colonialism to continue. People imagine and practice their lives within paradigms [of 'modernising'] of future sovereignty that reproduce rather than challenge the colonial order. The political relevance of drinking Coca-Cola lies in that endless cycle of enjoyment that seems to make life normal, yet it only does so through a misrecognition of how enjoyment re-instantiates colonialism.

Knorn's performance in the streets of Ramallah, next to the Coca-Cola billboard, uncovers the reality of 'coke' as that which is *killing us*. It confronts us with the horrors behind modernising [PA] agendas. The performance questions the failure of such 'sheltered life' illusion, urging people to 'stop drinking.' Showing Coca-Cola's fatal effect on the bodies, which intensifies as people 'drink more,' the performance stages dramatic moments of self-flagellation for the entertainment of others. Such acts of self-flagellation bring to mind the Hegelian master-slave dialectic, with the latter 'staging bodily performance' of 'masochistic nature' (Vighi and Feldher, 2007: 112). The slave's self-flagellation displays the secret fantasy of the master, whereby such staging of "the libidinal attachment to his master" actually alludes to "beating out that in me which attaches me to you" (ibid). It is my assertion that if, on the one hand, the artistic performance stages the secret fantasy of Israeli settler-colonialism, which is the bleeding of the Palestinians and ultimately their disappearance. On the other hand, the performance alludes to the need to combat and confront Palestinian enjoyment – meaning: the libidinal attachment - to Coca-Cola, since Coca-Cola stands for the embracement of a modernising agenda that only normalizes Israeli colonialism.

It is against the backdrop of such analyses that it is possible to capture how significant Knorn's comics and performance are in addressing the linkages between decolonisation and desire. *Wihdeh Watanyeh* performance makes visible the *misrecognition* symptomatic of what Sara Ahmed (2010) calls "the promise of happiness" at the heart of desiring Coca-Cola – a signifier of PA modernising agenda – in the 'La-La-Land' of Ramallah. To reveal Coca-Cola as that element that is 'killing us' is a call to recognise *wretchedness*[112] at the heart of the modernising vision of Palestinian sovereignty that only permits the colonial order to continue. Acts of self- flagellation demonstrate a "will to be stressed," as opposed to flowing happily (Ahmed, 2010: 169) in a world

[112] I recall Sara Ahmed's insights on native misrecognition as surging a false-consciousness, which the 'will to be stressed' can overcome (see Chapter 8 section 8.2.1) .

experienced as "easy." In such scenario, a resistance to the "distribution of the sensible" (Rancière, 2004: 7) is called for. If the "police order" (ibid, 1999: 29) of the PNA (see chapter 7) via colonial authority orders and distributes Palestinian sense of "flow" (Ahmed, 2010: 12), meaning happiness becomes associated to Coca-Cola consumption, Knorn's performance calls for a redistribution of such sense. It does so by allowing people to modify the aesthetic-politico field of possibility within the public space of the city. It asserts a will to cleanse and decolonise by interrupting the consumption of Coca-Cola. People's enjoyment and flow in the 'La-La-Land' of Ramallah is halted because the artistic performance pushes them to recognise how Coca-Cola and PA visions of statehood-futurity are murderous. The performance challenges this reality of misrecognition through a sensory [bodily visuals] experience that unveils the suicidal effect of those paradigms.

Knorn's art moves beyond practices that perpetuate Israeli colonialism by questioning mundane desires and actions, such as 'tanning your bottom' or 'drinking Coca-Cola'. Both comics and performance allude to the necessity of outlining the historical and political dimensions of Palestinians' desires in order to raise a decolonial, queer consciousness. In this vein, the cat 'pusspuss' functions as the voice of queer 'utopianism' in the face of 'the here and now' of 'pragmatic gay [liberal] agendas' (Munoz, 2009: 10). It re-directs attention towards an interruption of LGBTQ 'flow' within the spaces of the coloniser: Israeli beaches. The performance, instead, discloses the problematic aspects of a modernising agenda, whose fantasies of enjoyment fail to acknowledge the structural reality of colonialism. Having examined how Knorn's artistic works confronts this reality of 'misrecognition,' the following discussion explores how the work of fashion designer, Omarivs, troubles the fantasy of male- and state-making in Palestine.

9.3 Omarivs Ioseph Filivs Dinæ Ceremonial Uniform

The artist uses two pseudonyms (Omarivs Ioseph Filivs Dinæ and Omar Yousef Ibin Dina) to signify his work as fashion designer. I first met Omarivs at the house of alQaws friend and memeber in the summer of 2013. My encounter with Omarivs' work took place in the summer of the following year - July 2014 - when I visited 'The Ceremonial

Uniform' exhibition in Birzeit University Museum.[113] Walking into Omarivs *Zey al Tashrifat* or 'Ceremonial Uniform' exhibition, one is met at the entrance with a big poster describing his work and its emergence as:

> a response to Palestinian National Authority's statehood bid and frenzied campaign to acquire the status of full member in the United Nations. As a collection of garments, accessories, samples, techniques and texts, The Ceremonial Uniform is an imagined system of dress for male officials in this would-be Palestinian state (Ceremonial Uniform Poster, July 2014).

Next to this declaration was a stand where one could find small souvenir posters with images from the exhibition. Inside the 'Ceremonial Uniform,' it was possible to walk through each stage of the work by looking at the acrylic panels on the walls. Those provided the viewer with images, ethnographic material and other collected resources that all contributed to the development of the work. Accessing this material, as well as designers' initial sketches and ideas, helped the viewer to further engage with the manifold themes, which the exhibition revealed. The following explores the various sections of the exhibition in order to argue that Omarivs' 'Ceremonial Uniform' is a manifestation of fashion designed and presented to speak to its local contexts' ideals of male- and state-making. It reveals how Omarivs turns fashion into a tool to point out the connection between the heteronormative ideals of sexuality and the political project of state-making in Palestine, thus exposing the performativity (Butler, 1999) of gender and nation-state building.

[113] Birzeit University is located in the town of Birzeit, adjacent to Ramallah.

9.3.1 Talismans and Slogans: PLO Clogs and Talismanic Shirt

Figure 9.10, *Talismanic shirt* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

Figure 9.11, *Talismanic Shirt* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

What faces viewers, once they walk into Omarivs' exhibition, is an enormous square-shaped shirt hanging down the ceiling with two, ultra-large, rectangular sleeves (see Figure 9.10). The shirt is called 'The Talismanic Shirt.' It brings to mind the design of a Palestinian women's traditional dress known as *thobe*. However, if one looks closely at the shirt and examines carefully its imprints (see Figure 9.11), far from being a woman's thobe the shirt is a manifestation of a political reality. It includes the slogans, speeches, icons and emblems that have come to signify the Palestinian Authority and its political trajectory. Omarivs' sketchbook offers a glimpse to the inspiring material from which 'The Talismanic Shirt' was made. For instance, the acrylic panels on the wall contain a large paper with multiple copies of the PNA official emblem: an eagle. Adjacent to the PNA symbol lies a newspaper extract of the speech at the UN of the PNA President, Mahmoud Abbas. There also lies another Palestinian statehood-emblem - the flag - that is placed close to the UN symbol and the famous 194 resolution, which granted a non-member observer status to the PNA within the United Nations as a result of their long campaign.

An old copy of what the fashion designer identifies as the "Seven Solomonic[114] Talismans" (ceremonial Uniform, July 2014), is juxtaposed with the PNA repeated slogans and imagery of machine-guns. The explanation of such connection can be found under the "Talismans and Slogans" note, whose text clarifies how "The Talismanic Shirt" refers to those regular garments usually worn to "protect from harm and evil" (ceremonial Uniform, July 2014). The note explains how Omarivs' Talismanic Shirt departs from the common reliance on "sacred texts, numerology, symbolism and geometry to protect from evil" (Talismans and slogans note, Ceremonial Uniform, July 2014). Rather it comprises:

> symbols of the nation, logos, weapons, clichés and Yasser Arafat's declaration of state speech in 1988 and his United Nations address to the General Assembly in 1974, as well as Mahmoud Abbas' United Nations speech in 2011 and 2012 (ibid).

Omarivs transforms the PNA's repeated 'clichés' into mythic talismans in order to trouble what Omarivs describes as the "Palestinian political establishment and what it stands for" (Omarivs, Interview, August 2014). Omarivs explains that what constitutes

[114] King's Solomon's seal/signatories in Kabalah Jewish tradition, which is believed to provide protection eternity and well-being. See: https://www.kabalatalisman.com/king-solomon (Accessed 24 June 2016).

the symbolic power of talismans, thus making them "legitimate," is their repetitive investment:

> Letters, mantras, symbols and hollow rituals are repeated to create something […] an identity, which nobody knows what it means. Repetition is important and clever because it goes numb after a while. It is powerful like magic, you see it in the way the talismans are folded and written (Omarivs, Interview, August.2014).

The Talismanic Shirt lays out the repetitive dimension upon which the "Palestinian political establishment" relies to legitimize its statehood project. The work of Omarivs offers an understanding of the concept of repetition vis-à-vis power, which resembles Judith Butler's performativity. As Butler argues, repetition is required to re-enact a set of meanings that are reliant upon "mundane and ritualised form of their legitimation" (1999: 178). The work of Omarivs shows precisely the relevance of performativity, since those symbols of the nation, logos, weapons, and clichés function in the same manner. It is their "numb" and emptied repetition that establishes the legitimacy and dominance of the nation-state project of the Palestinian political establishment. At the same time, this repetition allows one to reveal the contingent foundations of these symbols of the nation and their tenuous premise.

In the Talismanic and Slogans section of the exhibition, one can also find the "PLO clogs." The clogs, similar to 'The Talismanic Shirt,' possess a talismanic character, since letters and mottos from the Palestine Liberation Organisation's cover them, such as National Unity (Wihda Wataniya), National Mobilisation (Ta'bi'a Qawmiya) and Freedom (Hurriya) (PLO clogs, Ceremonial Uniform, July 2014). However, the clogs (see Figures 9.12-13) refer more directly to the colonial Israeli regime, as "concrete slabs," which were collected from the Israeli apartheid wall to decorate the stilts, lean over them (ibid).

Figure 9.12, *PLO Clogs* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

Figure 9.13, *PLO Clogs* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

The acrylic panels adjacent to the clogs explain the processes of their creation. Images of the PLO motto juxtaposed with an image of the apartheid wall demonstrate to the viewer how the combination of both inspires the creation of the clogs (PLO clogs, July 2014). Discussing the PLO clogs and what message they try to express in relation to the ordering of space within a colonial structure, Omarivs indicates how the PLO's "need to survive" (Omarivs interview, August 2014) metamorphosed the organisation into another colonial authority:

> You can wear the clogs, but you cannot walk on them. According to the idea of such institution [PLO], we need to have a state to be free, we need to be part of the UN, we need to have uniform in order to have an identity. It is all groundless rubbish […] we need to rethink the structure rather than being obsessed with creating and owning it. Palestine, as a concept, is far stronger and far more progressive than what these politician [sic] trying to do (ibid).

Omarivs makes those clogs "un-walkable" in order to reveal their *groundlessness*. Butler's theory of performativity critiques the "ground" upon which gendered identities stand, allowing us to see the "groundlessness" of "this ground" (179). She explains, "if the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the spatial metaphor of the ground will be displaced and revealed as a stylised configuration" (179). The PLO clogs reveal an obsession with solidifying an identity whose possibilities are conditioned by the very *grounds* upon which this identity stands. Both PLO clogs and The Talismanic Shirt, are artistic works for the to-be [male]-state officials of Palestine. They reveal the construction of those masculine agents through the PNA's "deadening clichés" and how the strive for nation-statism reproduces - rather than challenges - the colonial power paradigms in Palestine, re-instantiating hetero-colonialism (see Chapter 7). What Omarivs does in the section Talismans and Slogans resonates with Butler's explication of gender and its "sedimentation" within the power paradigms, "grids of heterosexuality" (1999:172), limiting other [gendered] possibilities. Indeed, the Ceremonial Uniform refers directly to the heteronormative constituents of gender and sexuality through the presentation of Omarivs' designed 'armour' in the section "Sexuality and Talismans."

9.3.2 Sexuality and Talismans: The ‘Suspended’ Armour

Figure 9.14, *a mannequin* By Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

Opposite the PLO clogs, a mannequin with broken arms and leg hangs from the ceiling, wearing what the acrylic panels define as 'the armour' (see Figure 9.14). The note "Sexuality and Talismans" explains Omarivs' initial idea of designing an armour that was "suspended" and removed from the final outfit, since it "did not fit aesthetically" (Sexuality and Talismans note, ceremonial uniform, July 2014). Despite the removal of the armour, we learn that Omarivs still wants to share with the viewer the material and the local resources used for the design, which are exhibited on the faceless broken mannequin (Figure 9.14). Omarivs shares pictures and references to pottery-making in Palestine as they wanted "to make use of local craft traditions in the making of the outfit" (Sexuality and Talismans note, Ceremonial Uniform, 2014). It is possible to observe a picture of two women, Sarah Shibly and her daughter Najwa, "who made and decorated pottery jars for storing water and oil" (ibid). The picture explains how Sarah and Najwa "were well-known for the craft and women used to come to them from the entire area to have their pottery decorated" (ibid). Underneath this information, Omarivs also reflects on the relationship between the processes of pottery and identity making:

> the nature and process of pottery is metaphorical in that it changes from the malleable clay to the unrelenting and fragile ceramic upon exposure to extreme conditions (heat) used to create armour. The metaphor is taken further by comparing identity to protection. Protective as it is, it remains fragile as well as unrelenting. When challenged, it repels or breaks. The protected thus becomes undermined, in peril or independent of protection (ibid).

This artistic design relies on the use of pottery in order to create an object – the armour – that is presumed to reinforce a 'masculine' identity. It is nonetheless important to note that pottery is both "unrelenting" and "fragile." Its essence exposes those contradictions, as well as the *breakability* of what is perceive as fixed and eternal. This is how Omarivs troubles the creation of masculine identity. As the work of Judith Butler demonstrates, gender identity is constructed in a similar manner. Exposing the means that the masculine-self deploys to 'armour' itself unveils the "various acts" (Butler, 1999:173) needed to constitute the masculine as 'real' and 'true.' Such acts are part of a societal order, whose regulation of sexuality within the obligatory frame of reproductive heterosexuality creates the illusion of an interior and organizing gender core (ibid).

In addition to the ceramics, the 'suspended armour' also uses coins in its design, which allude further to such *breakability*. As a note on the acrylic panels reads:

> In addition to the ceramics the designer wanted to use the coins because they were usually used in rituals and ceremonies, like marriage for girls and circumcision for boys. Both rituals are rite of passage that transform the child into adult by the irreversible change in their genitals through the spilling of the blood (Sexuality and Talismans note, Ceremonial uniform, July 2014).

The association of coins with those rituals marking the passage from childhood to adultness via "irreversible" sexual changes is fundamental. It shows how the coins become a marker of bodily signification in accordance to a presupposed, irreversible identity that fits the contours of the heterosexual domain. It is my assertion that the repetitive usage of coins throughout those rituals, whose significance lies in the creation of a gendered identity following "the spilling of the blood," signifies the very performativity of gender. It stresses the rituality, the repetitive manner used to re-enact an already established identity. However, to expose the performative character of this identity, to unveil how such "naturalness" is constructed, opens up "a possibility of failure to repeat, a deformity" (Butler, 1999: 179). The viewer sees a broken, faceless mannequin, "suspended" in the air with a ceramic and coin-made armour that the designer can do without in the end. At the same time, the broken mannequin also alludes to the many Palestinian bodies that have been broken by the Israeli colonial violence. It evokes the inherent *breakability* of the Palestinian body, demonstrating at its essence its queered positionality in relation to the heteronormative colonial regime (see Chapter 4). As the design exposes those means and rituals used to form masculine identities, so it unveils how empty those categories are and leaves the viewer facing a broken mannequin that captures the queerness of the Palestinian body.

9.3.3 'The Real and The Imaginary': Garments and Portraits

In the last section of the exhibition, entitled 'The Real and The Imaginary,' we see a collection of hanging Palestinian traditional garments (see figure 9.15). We can also read on the acrylic panels that *real* garments, which Palestinians have worn in the last hundred years, obtained from the museum and family of the designer, are merged with *imaginary* ones designed as part of the Real and Imaginary (Ceremonial Uniform, July 2014). These garments constitute the final outfits worn in the portraits of 'Abu Saleh and Abu Zuhair' (see Figures 9.15-9.16).

Figure 9.15, *The real and the imaginary* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

Figure 9.16, *The portraits* by Omarivs

Source: Author camera.

The merging of the 'real and imaginary' garments that the designer exhibits in the final section of the Ceremonial Uniform throws the viewer into a crisis, as those lines distinguishing what is 'real' from what is 'imaginary' are completely blurred. This same process also empowers the viewers, since it forces them to question the very terrains of *what we take to be 'real.'* Omarivs' project puts into crisis the 'reality' of Palestinian nation-state making and forces the viewer to imagine a different 'reality,' an otherwise. During our conversation, Omarivs refers to "a history of Palestinian visual art, which builds on a national legacy's iconizing the woman in her peasant dress to imagine and define Palestine politically and culturally" (ibid). This process was also analysed in Chapter 7, which we traced how the production of art replicated those imaginings of Palestine vis-à-vis gendered origin stories by representing the woman-land in her peasant dress. Questioning such artistic representations and their political implications lies at the core of Omarivs' project.

Looking at the portraits on the wall, we can see two figures, identified as Abu Saleh and Abu Zuhair, dressed in their 'ceremonial uniform' and sitting in a very official manner, similar to Ottoman Sultans. In the acrylic panels, Omarivs' is depicting the portraits as "Western portraiture." The usage of this word is intentional because it functions as "a statement of mockery and derision of the inept Palestinian political establishment and its obsession with European modes of government and nation building" (The official portrait note, ceremonial uniform, July 2014). Both this statement and the usage of portraits remind us of a long history of portrait-production in late period of the Ottoman Empire, alluding further to such "European obsession." This period also witnessed the launch of numerous reforms – called 'Tanzimat' – whose aim was to trigger a civilizational turn, warding-off foreign and domestic perceptions of Arab East 'backwardness' (Sheehi, 2016: 15).

Figure 9.17

Source: Omarivs Tumblr page; http://omarivs.tumblr.com/page/11 (accessed 23 June 2017).

Figure 9.18

Omarivs Tumblr page; http://omarivs.tumblr.com/page/11
(accessed 23 June 2017).

Whilst the portraits and, in particular, the posture of the two figures invoke state-making qua Europe, there are other elements that strike the viewer (Figure 9.17). Both figures wear colourful heels, and their costumes are very coloured and overly accessorised, like the background against which they are sitting. Such explicit emphasis on decoration and colourfulness echoes the designer's desire to deconstruct dress and its role in recreating the female body within the contours of patriarchy. As Omarivs comments:

> Why do women wear skirts and men trousers? Why is there so much colouring and embroidery in their [women] dresses, and practically none in men's dress? (Omarivs, Interview, August 2014).

Such reflection also brings to mind Shelagh Weir' examination of Palestinian women's clothing pre-1948, which was "far more diverse and richly ornamented than men's" (19889: 74). Weir locates the reason of such differentiation in how the design of women's dresses was used to indicate the different stages of womanhood, including their sexual marital status and displaying family's and village's status (ibid).

The 'Ceremonial Uniform' engages with and re-imagines a history of dress making in Palestine not only through the use of bright colours, but also through the striking incorporation of the heels. Far from being an act of supposed "emasculation," Omarivs explains that the heels "state what the other fabricated garments do not say. Masculinity has obsession with the body and how to control it, similar to all social-political practices based on patriarchy" (The heels note, Ceremonial Uniform, 2014). Such an act, demonstrating masculinity's obsession to control the body, reveals the contingency within the structure of dress and male-making. The heels, therefore, reveal "*dis*continuity" (Butler, 179) in the picture, which identifies two males. The names: Abu Saleh and Abu Zuhair, where 'Abu' in Arabic is particularly used to denote "father of," resonate with what we identified in chapter 7 as the privileged role of the masculine in passing Palestinian identity from 'father to son.' By revealing disunity in the picture of the identified 'males,' the heels *dramatize* the fabrication at work in the 'reality' of dress, male and state inscription.

The fashion designer reveals the fantasy at the heart of dress in order to trouble processes of male- and state- making. Omarivs' Ceremonial Uniform not only destabilises naturalised knowledge, invested in a myth of 'realness' and originality of

the dress, the male and/or the state. It also lays out the possibility for configuring dress in other ways, and thus re-imagining its constitution of gender and nation. Omarivs' designs dare to see and imagine what "the police order" (Rancière, 1999: 37) [PA authority] does not enable. In this regard, people's reaction to the exhibition attests further to how such work destabilizes the police order. In our conversation, Omarivs stressed how Hasan Al Batal, a journalist from al Ayyam who is "old school PLO and Fatah apologist, wrote a critical piece to say that I should limit my work to art and not go into politics" (Omarivs, Interview, August. 2014). Omarivs also recounted how some PNA affiliates felt offended by the designs as they made them "look stupid, like Gaddafi[115]" (ibid) commenting:

> It's funny how they do not see the resemblance to Gaddafi, he had his African stuff and looked like an idiot. These men put their suits on and look like idiots. In fact, they think my uniform is a joke. I think the uniform is far more serious than what these men are doing because every stitch has a conscious decision and knowledge of its origin. Whereas these men dress up because this is the way they are. This is power, so you want a dress there you are, it is - in a way - a joke but far more serious (ibid).

Omarivs "serious joke" underlies a significant connection between the satirical and the political. The presumed 'emasculation of Palestinian politicians' seen at the heart of Ceremonial uniform should not be dismissed as a joke for Omar. Rather we need to engage seriously with how Omarivs' designs gesture towards other possible futures for Palestine by revealing the talismanic character at the heart of present male- and state-making 'reality.' Such a critique of the present and the future takes place via a simultaneous questioning of the past, which is figured through the lens of heteropatriarchal romanticising of the image of the woman/land in her peasant-ornamented dress (see Chapter 7). By dismantling the 'myth of originality' in past-designed dresses, Omarivs shakes 'the story of origin' (Butler, 1999:46) upon which current validation of heteropatriarchy stands. Most importantly, the dresses provide possibilities to imagine other *fabric*ations, because the Ceremonial Uniform re-imagines the past in order to "critique the present and help us [re]envision the future" (Muñoz, 1999: 34). Omarivs' fashion design brings together past, present and future, invoking what Muñoz describes as 'temporal unity' (2009: 25), in order to reveal time

[115] Libyan former president.

in its becoming-ness. It is here that we can trace a "time of queerness" (ibid: 25), defined as the capacity for 'a greater openness to other possibilities.

9.4 Conclusion

The chapter explores the role queer stories, satirical-images, performance art, as well as, fashion design plays in 'imagining otherwise.' The aesthetics explored in this chapter gain meaning in relation to hetero-colonialsim and paradigms of its reproduction in Palestine, demonstrating simultaneous interactions with Palestine and/or queerness (see chapter 7). Departing from the phantom figure of *Ghanni A'an Taa'rif*'s promotional videos, and what it signifies in relation to a haunting of queerness and Palestinian identiy, this chapter analyses, in particular, the role of alQaws' queer *hikaya* in order to reveal the mesh of hopes, emotions and desires striving to be seen, heard and felt the affective rhythms of a queer [native] directionality. Moving into Knorn's art, the chapter explores satirical-images and their role in provoking a political message, which is grounded in decolonising sexuality. It also maps a call towards a decolonial consciousness via Knorn's performance-art engaging passers-by in active confrontation with 'La La Land.' Finally, the chapter shows Omarivs fashion-design exhibition, 'The Ceremonial Uniform,' troubles the present reality of male- and state-making.

The navigation through queer *hikaya*, Knorn's art, and Omarivs' fashion-design grounds the comprehension of 'imagining an otherwise' at the conjunction of aesthetics with queer and Palestine decoloniality. Thus, it serves to identify the role played by the aesthetic regime towards 'a reconfiguration of the sensible' (Rancière, 2004: 36). These artistic works modify the 'aesthetico- politico field of possibility,' opening unpredicted possibilities of queer/decolonial directionalities. These aesthetics make a case for imagining Palestine otherwise.

10. Conclusion: Decolonial Queer Beginnings

This study examines the question of Palestinian queerness through the frame of decolonisation and an engagement with grounded knowledge in Palestinian native queerness. Interweaving queer and decolonisation it argues for the significance of queer politics to Palestine and sheds light on how possibilities for decolonisation emerge through addressing hetero-colonialism and its reproduction within decolonial imaginings of sovereignty. To achieve its overarching purpose, the research relied on the voices, experiences and analytical reflections of Palestinian activists and artists, whom I met and engaged with via the queer grass-movement *alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society*. The case of alQaws and the aesthetic productions encountered within its spaces present a rich ground for comprehending how Palestinian queer politics, and their manifestation in the aesthetic realm, are fundamental to address the question of hetero-colonialism and the need for imagining Palestine otherwise.

This chapter evaluates the findings and their implications across the fields of queer and decolonisation studies. The first section summarises the findings in light of the aims and main question outlined in the introductory chapter while the second section examines the implications of the findings in relation to the significance of grounding queer in Palestine. It simultaneously engages how queering matters to theorising decolonisation, and vice versa. The final section reviews the possibilities for future enquires across queer and decolonial fields. The overall goal of this chapter is not simply to conclude but also to pave the way for beginnings *to come*. The examination of the politics and aesthetics of decolonial queering is a small contribution within the wider community of activists, artists, and scholars who are committed to imagining decolonial queer possibilities and their meanings.

10.1 Research Findings

In raising the question of how decolonisation dialogically informs the question of queering in Palestine, this study navigates the work and praxis of the group *alQaws* and the various aesthetic productions (drawing and photography images, performance and video art, narratives and fashion design) encountered via its spaces of activism. Close

examination of alQaws' emergence as 'queer,' utilising the Arabic 'queeryat' [from queer] approach is an act of decolonial political resistance. In practise, alQaws' emergence 'for Sexual and Gender Diversity in *Palestinian* Society' emanates from activists' experiences as native Palestinians in colonised Palestine. As such, their native Palestinian positionality influences their continued exploration of 'who we are as Palestinian and queer.' This interaction, which reveals the relevance of queer to Palestine, elucidates our contextual understanding of the Zionist colonial project in Palestine within the lens of hetero-colonialism. Such *queerstorical* [contra *his*torical] reading unmasks the processes of othering as enfolding processes of gendering and sexualising that lie at the core of settler-colonialism and its web of spatio-temporalising mechanisms. In such a situation, where settler-colonialism pursues conquest of land and elimination of the native-Other through gendering and sexualising processes, alQaws posits queeryat as a space for decolonial critique of colonial heteronormativity. This research shows that alQaws' anti-pinkwashing work has an impact on challenging the Israeli narratives of 'gay progress versus Palestinian homophobia. Anti-pinkwashing work discloses the significance of 'gazing back,' from a queered native position, at colonising discourses of modern sexuality, which are part of the liberal gay(ze)'s conquest. Pink-watcher agency underpins Palestinian queer aspirations for decolonial modes of being, engaging with the relevance of being politically and relationally invested.

Through an exploration of alQaws' spaces of activism from within, the research demonstrates the crucial contribution of aesthetics to queer Palestinian work. Examples from Award's video art, along with Abu Asad photography and Knorn's performance art, demonstrate the significance of the aesthetic lens in complementing anti-pinkwashing work and analyses. Palestinian artistic production, like activists' queer politics, emerges from queered native positionality. Palestinian artists locate themselves within the paradigms of denied Palestinian-hood. Their artistic works [cinematic and photographic lens] and/or performances unsettle the colonial gaze and the [pinkwashing] frames of its constitution. They question the dominant hierarchies of power, through a redistribution of sensibilities.

The continued investigation of alQaws' work and the artistic examples also permit a comprehension of the simultaneous interactions between queer and decolonisation and why it matters. In particular, examples from alQaws' modus operandi address the

significance of ‘decolonisation from within’ in queer activist work. Analyses of ‘internalised pinkwashing,’ and efforts by both activists and artists to ‘imagine otherwise,’ are found at the juncture of exploring other ways for imagining Palestine. Such analyses not only offer a possibility to imagine Palestine otherwise, but also reflect on how present imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty re-instantiate hetero-colonialism. Examining activists’ work vis-à-vis internalised pinkwashing also means capturing the complex layers of victimhood and Palestinian/Palestinian fragmentation. It shows how these layers are symptomatic of a broader process, where subjects re-instantiate colonial hierarchies through their practices and ideas of happiness/freedom. The desire for happiness and freedom in [gay] Israel, which many Palestinians reproduce and circulate, enforces, rather than challenges, the colonial order with its inscription in gendered and/or geopolitical hierarchies.

Against this backdrop, this study presents the significance of those efforts from Palestinian queer activists’ pondering ‘whether we can imagine otherwise?’ and the necessity to counter ‘internalised pinkwashing’ via decolonial queer-work. alQaws’ work on decolonising desire and building communities shows concrete mechanisms for challenging aspirations for ‘Israeli freedom,’ which underpin a victimhood mentality. Moreover, alQaws’ work across historic Palestine, which brings Palestinians from different parts of Palestine together, crucially demonstrates the significance of alQaws’ spaces of homing. They counter the mentality of divisions and the internal re-production of the hierarchical and colonial classifications that the colonising power has imposed. In addition, alQaws’ homing spaces reveal the necessity of queer identifications to Palestine. To circulate queer ‘glimpses’ across Palestine means bringing forward gendered and sexual identifications that fail to subscribe to the Palestinian national constitution via hetero-patriarchal definitions. These insights on alQaws’ capacity to create spaces for ‘imagining otherwise’ ultimately reveal the necessary interaction between queer and decolonisation, which critics such as Massad and Mazzawi have failed to grasp. On the one hand, Massad’s perception of alQaws stems from a critique of the group’s presumed complicity with Western and/or Israeli colonial models of LGBT politics. Mazzawi’s critique, on the other hand, sees the group as failing to address the local reality of Palestinian homophobia because they focus too much on fighting the occupation and western models of LGBT politics. Massad and

Mazzawi both argue from the same place, which fails to see the relevance of the interaction between decolonial and queer that alQaws' work brings forward.

alQaws' musical project 'Singing Sexuality' is an example of relevance of the aesthetic dimension to queer decolonial work that challenges hetero-colonialism and imagines Palestine otherwise. Research findings from the various songs/prose generated via artists/activists' work necessarily focus on the role of queer [native] narrations. Such analyses grasps the significance of this work for expressing feelings and sensory experiences that imagine beyond hetero-colonialism and its reproduction in imaginings of Palestinian sovereignty. The work of other artists, encountered via alQaws' spaces and networks, also discloses the importance of satirical images, performance art and fashion-deign to queer decolonial work. Such artistic productions engage critiques of 'internalised pinkwashing,' 'la-la-land' capitalist-colonial reality, as well as the political project of male- and state-making. Through navigating the varied queer aesthetics it is possible to identify how stories, images, bodily-performance and designs present new sensory and emotive possibilities. They re-orient the sensory experience and challenge those hierarchies of power that hetero-colonialism and the agendas maintaining its reproduction entail.

The discussion of Palestinian decolonial queering (activism and art combined) point to the significance of centring the contexts of localised experiences and privileging the voices of the activists/artists. This reveals the complexity of what Palestinian grounded queerness means and that is captured in the way queer emerges to challenge identity terms such as 'milthlyoon' and 'gay', in order to work against the colonising [local and International] forces of 'LGBT.' At the same time, queer reflects the plight of gendered and/or sexual identifications that the activism/aesthetics circulates, demonstrating their significance to decolonise Palestine. Does this mean then that the 'queer' identifications that alQaws promotes and works with succumb to what were mapped in the introductory chapter via Massad, as Western geographies of homo versus hetero? Or does this prove that the promotion of these identities, which is taking place via an identification with the nation called 'Palestine,' inevitably fit what Puar has termed *homonationalist*? This research argues that these geographies fit neither Massad's conclusion with regard to westernised identities that 'queer' promotes, nor Puar's frame of identifying the dangers in queer collusion with 'the nation.' The following maps out

why these geographies matter on both theoretical and practical fronts, and their intertwinement.

10.2 Why Queering [in] Palestine Matters

By examining the local, grounded case of alQaws in Palestine, this study has shown how alQaws is a site for the production of critical theories on the politics of queer Palestinians. The work of Judith Butler, Jose Muñoz, Sara Ahmed, Jacques Rancière, as well as Jasbir Puar and Joseph Massad is brought into critical dialogue with alQaws' work, taking into account the history, socio-culture location/s, and political impact of their activism. The voices and experiences of activists and artists, as well as the researcher's positionality as Palestinian, shed light on how Palestinian queerness could be approached differently. In particular, the methodological ground of the study provides significant insights for other researchers who want to embark on such topic, revealing the necessity of an "ethnographic test for theory" (Berlant and Povinelli, 2014: np). The study reveals the significance of grounding the experiences and voices of *Palestinian* queerness, thereby decolonising colonial approaches to sexuality in Palestine. In practical terms, it reveals how *not* to use 'conflict frames' where 'Palestinians and Israelis' are studied collaboratively, from a place that enforces colonising presumptions about sexuality in Palestine. Palestinian queer critiques of 'pinkwashing,' should inevitably reflect on researchers' approach to 'studying' sexuality in Palestine within frames that reproduce Palestinian queer constitution *in comparative frame* to 'Israeli LGBT' identities.

Research findings from grounded knowledge in Palestinian queer activism point to the fact that decolonisation is an important site for engaging queerness. The interaction between decolonisation and sexuality prove useful for questioning approaches to Palestine and/or queer that do not pose such interaction as the starting point of their analysis. The findings on the work of alQaws offer a critique of reductive approaches, which relegate queer to those working for the West (Massad, 2007) and thus depart from a decolonisation frame. At the same time, approaches to queer emerging from other contexts (Puar, 2010) and/or subject positions are held in tension with Palestine, interpreted through the analytics and practices of Palestinian decolonial queerness.

Critiques that fail to ground the context of Palestine within the voices and experiences of Palestinian queerness do not capture fully the complexities of the politics and aesthetics of Palestinian queerness.

Queering in its constant quest for 'other imaginings' (Ahmed, 2006), as a call for 'trouble' (Butler, 1999) and a necessary dis-identification with the 'here and now' (Muñoz, 1999) of the 'police regime' (Rancière, 1999), proves crucial for thinking power and resistance in processes of colonisation and decolonisation. Queer proves an important site for not only thinking about the structural reality of an ongoing Palestinian *Nakba* at the hands of Israel settler-colonial power, but also serves to assess critically the Palestinian movement for liberation. The current moment of PNA hegemony, within structures maintaining Israeli colonial order, is yet to be comprehended via the lens of 'internalised pinkwashing' that alQaws' analysis and work brings forward. Crucially, the contributions of the activist/artist reveal grounds for contesting the premise of statehood-building that have come to cement the outcome of Palestinian liberation within the very structures [gendered and geopolitical] that orchestrated its subjugation.

In a practical sense, the study disseminates the value of queer politics within Palestine and its findings contribute to ending the marginalisation of sexuality politics among local actors/thinkers within Palestine by firstly disclosing the centrality of queer in bringing forth the mesh of bodily-desires, emotions and erotic that is largely ignored when thinking liberation in 'collective' abstract terms. Secondly, they point to the significance of solidarity work with Palestine, which should emanate from a place of decolonising rather than the hegemonic force of 'the International.' These hegemonic forces have a tendency to enforce mainstream single-issue approaches to sexuality organising, which prove problematic for Palestinian queer activism. This issue reflects, in particular, the role of funding and the approach used by funding organizations emphasising sexuality in Palestine as a single-issue. Such approach imposes top-down 'solutions' that are not relevant for Palestinian queer work (Field notes, Dec. 2015). The study, therefore, makes an important call for international actors to listen to the grounded experiences of Palestinian queer activists, allowing instead bottom-up [grassroots] mechanisms to take place. The findings show the value of grounding anti-pinkwashing solidarity work and activism in the decolonising frame that Palestinian queerness articulates. As such, it is important to re-emphasise the points that Maikey

and Darwich make regarding how anti-pinkwashing should centre Palestine decolonisation:

> Palestine is not a cool pin on our backpacks. Anti-pinkwashing and Palestine solidarity is not isolated from the larger colonial Zionist project and we cannot fight pinkwashing without challenging its hidden notion of mainstream gay politics and reframing it as a struggle against colonialism and Zionism (Maikey and Darwich, 2014: 284).

This reflection points out how solidarity activists can grasp the heteronormative functioning of Israeli colonialism through the localised experience of queerness in Palestine. It calls on activists not to succumb to sheer reactionary movement that wants to show how 'cool' 'Palestine' is versus 'Israel.' Rather Palestinian queer activism emanates from a place that, in its efforts to gaze back [pinkwatch] at Israeli narratives of modern sexuality, foregrounds the legitimacy of anti-colonial struggle. This frame is crucial because it moves away from 'conflict' and/or 'two-side' approaches to the case of 'Palestine/Israel.' At the same time, such a call underpins the necessity of not making anti-pinkwashing work a platform for international solidarity activists to find out about 'life for LGBTQ Palestinians' and the level of their 'freedom/oppression.'

The findings on queer Palestinian activism and aesthetics also contribute at the theoretical and cross-disciplinary level. This study advances, for instance, intersectionalities of geography and queer. Geographers had a tendency to analyse those geographies of the gay ghetto (Bell and Valentine, 1995) focusing on "fixed territorialisations in the form of gay bars and other businesses as well as (gentrified) residential clusters'' (Browne et al 2009: 6). Their encounter with queer theorisations led to an important conceptual shift, a move towards 'queer space,' borrowing from Butler's notion of performativity when thinking of heteronormative selves and spaces. However, much more queer "stirring" is still needed within the discipline (Binnie, 1997: 232).

This queer 'stirring,' as this thesis pursues, builds on Kath Browne (2006) and Natalie Oswin's (2008) approach to critical queer geographies, situating sexuality within multifaceted "constellations of power'' (ibid: 91). To examine sexuality's deployments in concert with racialized, classed and gendered processes (ibid: 100) not only emanates from a critical geographical approach to queer as it entails "(re)mappings that could (re)make bodies, spaces and geographies'' (Browne, 2006: 888); but also correlates

with feminist post-colonial project of re-mapping the discipline (Rose and Blunt, 1994). Blunt and Rose (ibid: 8) see the necessity of intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class in representations of other contexts in order to start addressing the discipline's imperialist history. At the same time, there remains a need to further *queer* geography's [post-colonial] feminist and/or queer geographies by theorising from beyond the standpoint of 'white'[116] feminist and/or queer.

In centring the voices of Palestinian queerness, this thesis explores why decolonial queering matters for Geography. It does so by emphasising native queerness as a site of theoretical and epistemic angles that could otherwise fail to emerge within Euro-American frames of [colonial] geographies of knowledge- albeit post-colonial-production. This call to 'mainstream geography's decolonial imperative' remains crucial both in challenging the discipline's hegemonic infrastructure and pushing against the canonisation of a post-colonial geography that "risks its prescriptive stultification as theoretical orthodoxy" (Jazeel, 2017: np). As such, the continuous emphasis on decolonising geography correlates with the objective of this study in its effort to imagine a [decolonial] geography *to-come*; grounded in the ability to reach out and beyond the 'here and now' (Munoz, 2009: 96) of the discipline's Anglophone centrality.

The study's contributions to a decolonial queering of geography stands at the intersection of engaging and expanding indigenous accounts within the decolonial canon. While the study of Palestinian queerness stems from within their own context, their [queer] stories converge in significant and productive ways with other strands of decolonial scholarships. Palestinian queerness converges with Driskell *et al* (2011) project of thinking queer from the positionality of native struggles with decolonisation in North America. They emphasise the importance of thinking queer in relation to the subject position, context and history of those who remain directly under the thumb of settler-colonial violence. Similarly, this study contributes to the advancement of theorising from the standpoint of indigeneity. It also converges a project of Latin American decoloniality in its aim to centre southern and indigenous forms of knowledge and being in the world (Asher, 2013). To theorise from the standpoint of

[116] For example In *Writing Women and Space* Blunt and Rose state: "As Two white feminists in a discipline which is just beginning to address its imperialist history we see necessity of intersections of race, gender, sexuality and class in representations of other contexts" (1994: 8).

Palestinian queerness means to emphasise those ultimate connections with other decolonial [queer] subjects and critiques. For example, similar to Driskell *et al* project, Palestinian queer politics and aesthetics prove necessary because it calls for 'imagin[ing] future potentials' (Driskell *et al*, 2011: 22) in native decolonial queer analytics and praxis. Queer decolonial work pushes the colonised to question fantasies of the 'good life' and/or 'freedom' that the program for 'self-sovereignty' came to consolidate, revealing their inscription in the reproduction of hetero-colonialism it critiques. Viewed from the lens of queer politics, decolonisation is a complex process, which is not simply about a struggle for lands, but also for liberation as enfolding minds (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), discourses (Quijano 2007), desires (Rifkin, 2011), practices and thus ways of being and becoming.

Also, the findings on Palestinian decolonial queerness allows us to deepen the analysis of these forces at work that constitute the colonial and neo-imperial matrix of power. Therefore, they contribute to think and engage in that process of 'delinking,' as foregrounded in Latin American decoloniality frame (Mignolo, 2012: np), by illuminating the structural, ideological and historical conditions that have shaped the rise of Israeli settler-colonialism. This study contributes to that debate aiming to trace those similar modalities of violence and dispossession characterising the various forms of epistemological and political hegemony of US and Europe. In doing so, it also provides the opportunity to build theoretical and intellectual solidarities that can envision new forms of comparative analysis, thus thinking decolonization across multiple geographies and spaces, from Palestine to the Americas (Tabar and Desai, 2017).

10.3 Only the Beginning

Queering in Palestine offers a base from which to build and expand future enquiries across the fields of decolonisation and sexuality. Palestine and alQaws constitute a crucial site for thinking the complexity of the processes of decolonising sexualities, which is a terrain that has not been adequately studied in the context of Palestine, in particular, and the Middle-East in general. Whilst this study has focused on the work of alQaws, and activists I met within its spaces, there remains a need to engage with

other groups within Palestine, such as 'Aswat for Gay Palestinian women' and Palestinian Sexuality Forum [Muntada al Jinsanyia]. A more comprehensive and comparative reading between the approaches and practices of these groups, highlighting how they function and interact with one-another, is needed. This also applies to the work of other regional groups with a particular focus in the Levant [Lebanon, Jordan and Syria], which is the closest geographical region to Palestine. Building on this research, it is possible to inquire further how the question of Palestine in general and the work of alQaws, in particular, impacts on the work of other grassroots movements in the region.

Furthermore, an engagement with queer organising remains a necessary task for Arab gender-oriented scholars. During the period of my PhD work participated in a project for Arab gender scholars who want to carry out gender-oriented research that is engaging and transformative of their localities. It was then that I learnt of the poor engagement and even unfamiliarity of the existence of groups like alQaws amongst other young 'gender transformative' researchers, who came from Palestine and beyond. Thus, there remains the need to future engagement with queer organising and sexuality politics within circles whose concern is to address gender issues in the region. This also implies the need for research on how queer organising is perceived and/ or engaged with amongst wider societal segments, including non-members of a group like alQaws, but also amongst 'gender' researchers/actors.

Finally, this study is a mere gesture towards future beginnings in relation to how we theorise decolonial queering and engage in decolonial queer politics and practices elsewhere. It is only a small corner in a larger web of activists/academics/artists who are committed to imagining the value of deoclonial queering within transnational settler-colonial and/or post-colonial contexts. In their introduction to *Decolonizing Sexualities: Transnational Perspectives Critical interventions* Sandeerp Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj and Silvia Posoco (2016, 1) elaborate on the value of decolonial queer theorising and praxis:

> Decolonial queerness entails querying the workings of neo-colonial epistemic categories, systems of classification and taxonomies that classify people. Queering coloniality and the epistemic categories that classify people according to their body configurations – skin colour and biological molecular composition for the regeneration of the species – means to disobey and delink from coloniality of knowledge and of being. At this

> intersection decolonial queerness is necessary not only to resist coloniality but, above all, to re-exist and re-emerge decolonially.

As the above illustrates, to re-emerge decolonially brings the collective of transnational interventions, of activists/scholars whose aim –in bringing queerness and decoloniality –is to unsettle 'entrenched hierarchies of our times' (ibid: 2). These hierarchies are found both in the realm of knowledge production, which assumes a 'European origin,' and extend to current [post]colonial formations of racialized, orientalised and queered others. To bring queerness, thus, in conversation with decolonisation remains a necessary task as well as a challenge from which the past, present and future can be re-imagined differently.

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