

Emerging Voices

In ‘ishnā lan nansā wa-lan nusāmiḥ: Transitioning from a Necropolitical Today to a Decolonial Tomorrow

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Prolegomenon

This paper analyzes the temporal, spatial, and epistemological dimensions of Israel’s current war on Gaza and argues its continuity with Israel’s occupation of Palestinian land and genocide of Palestinian people in the *longue durée*, at least since 1948. I aim to utilize the words of Yousra Abu Sharekh, a former Fulbright scholar, who is currently displaced in Gaza, *In ‘ishnā lan nansā wa-lan nusāmiḥ* (“If we live, we will not forget, and we will not forgive”),¹ to draw a triptych, using each of the phrases, to project the potential afterlife of Palestinian existence in the wake of a genocidal war. I ask how Yousra’s gesture to the precarity of Palestinian life invites us to read Israel’s ongoing aggression on Gaza since October 7th, 2023 as a continuing traumatic moment; how the remembrance on which she insists represents Palestinians’ prior knowledge of themselves e.g., memory, despite the colonizer’s distortion of their time and space; and how the death of forgiveness she projects is a paradoxical survival of memory. Destabilizing Israel’s imperial epistemologies is, however, the exigent objective in this decolonial agenda. It is the task of foremost import for our global moment. For it is one of the main pillars on which imperialist violence, terror, displacement, and ongoing genocide stand.

Epistemologies/Zionism

Imperialism, as an ideology, seeks to put colonialism, as a practice, in effect. Israel is, in fact, one of the few remaining truly settler-colonial powers—that is, occupying large swaths of land through sheer force—in the world. By that I do not mean to suggest that imperialism is an antiquated practice. Indeed, non-colonial forms of imperial rule continue to dominate international and intra-state relations. Imperialism, nonetheless, does not manifest as monolithic thought and discourse. It knows manifold regional and religious varieties. Of ‘old-style’ colonialism Robert J.C. Young (2016) states,

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Colonialism functioned as an activity on the periphery, economically driven; from the home government's perspective, it was at times hard to control. Imperialism on the other hand, operated from the centre as a policy of state, driven by the grandiose projects of power. (17)

The current asymmetrical relationship between the Israeli settler colony and the people of Palestine, however, is demonstrably different in its innovative fusion of colonial-imperial technics of mass suffering from preceding and more easily classifiable models of dominance and death. These include but are not limited to manufactured famine, the killing of aid workers and members of the press, elaborate borderization, the removal of olive trees, the destruction of schools, and more broadly, correlating an ethnoreligious identity with either citizenship and its negation with exclusion and immobility. Israel's imperialist ideology, Zionism, then, may be local in flavor but it circulates as a murderous episteme globally.

Political activist Harsha Walia (2021) connects white nationalism in the U.S. and Europe to Hindutva in India and Zionism among Israel and its allies. She states,

White nationalism in the US is vehemently anti-Semitic and racist, so the far-right embrace of Zionist Israel and Hindutva India may seem contradictory. Synagogues and temples are frequent sites of racist attacks, and anti-Semitic conspiracies are a theoretical linchpin of white nationalism. [... Yet] Ethnonationalist states such as Israel, founded on violent dispossession and separation, serve as models for white power organizations. Further, the Zionist idealization of an exclusive Jewish state is not contradictory to and is, in fact, buoyed by the anti-Semitic ideology of white Christian fanaticism calling for the expulsion and containment of Jews elsewhere. (Walia 173)

On the matter of dispossession and its inextricable history from settler-colonies, Glen Coulthard (2014) argues:

that dispossession continues to inform the dominant modes of Indigenous resistance and critique that this relationship has provoked. Stated bluntly, the theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around the question of land— a struggle not only for land in the material sense, but also deeply informed by what the land as system of

reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms—and less around our emergent status as “rightless proletarians. (13)

Dispossession, thus, plays an historically different role in settler-colonies than it did in their counterparts geared primarily towards ‘exploitation.’ Colonizers in the exploitation colonies sought and maintained different relationships, then, with the land through imperial systems such as indirect rule. The glue that, nonetheless, binds such conflictive ideologies together is equal parts, economic and religious.

This section reveals the vulgarization of religion of which both gave birth to the state of Israel and is the motive force behind its current regime. Zionism and Judaism are not necessary and sufficient for one another. The former is injurious to the international social body, rather, *because* of its antisemitism. Muhannad Ayyash (2023) argues, for instance, that Palestinian histories and perspectives have been ‘toxified’ due to Zionism’s identification with antiracism and antisemitism. He states “Exemplary of this toxification is the effort to institutionalize definitions of antisemitism that equate the Palestinian critique with racism and hatred” (954). Ayyash (2024b) elsewhere states,

It may be misleading to assign solely to Zionism the same set of goals and motivations that guided the British empire for example in their colonial and imperial endeavours, ventures, and projects, which is the generation of wealth for the metropole. But all settler colonial projects are distinct from colonial projects in that regard, and most critically, it is misleading to separate Zionism (or any settler colonial project) from the imperial project altogether (Ajl 2023 271–273). As previously discussed, Israel comes into existence only because of British imperial support and the critical role the settler colony of Israel plays in supporting British and now US imperialism in the region and indeed beyond. Israeli settler colonialism is about generating wealth for imperial centers that in turn enable its existence as a settler colony (Dana 2024; Ajl 2023). (205)

Zionism, therefore, erects a justificatory apparatus around the Israeli state’s mass displacement and murder of Palestinians. In a monotheistic context, when something is seen as god’s will, the means justify the ends, *tout court*, but Zionism is weaponized disinformation i.e., the willful misinterpretation of religious text(s) and telos. In his foray into Orientalism, for example, Israeli historian Nissim Rejwan (2006) describes Shmuel Katz, the information

advisor to Menahem Begin, the sixth Prime Minister of Israel and former leader of Irgun (a paramilitary, Zionist, terrorist organization)² in the following:

For the sad fact is that Shmuel Katz is quite ignorant of the subject he presumes to deal with— i.e., relations between Judaism and Islam and the feasibility of a fruitful dialogue between them [...] The trouble with the kind of bland, off the-cuff generalizations about history and culture which polemicists like Mr. Katz are in the habit of tossing about is that they can take volumes to disentangle and refute. (Rejwan 204)

How then do we not only refute but disentangle these overlapping and intersecting racist frameworks?

Zionism, as the state of Israel's official historiography, adopts a Janusian temporal focus—simultaneously oriented towards the past and the future. It seeks to monopolize both record-keeping and the arrangement of events as distinct from formal historical constructions. According to Hayden White's formula in *Metahistory* (1973), the construction of official histories, particularly those with a Eurocentric bias, involves three essential and interrelated elements: chronicle, narrative, and ideology. Zionism, as stated, is just one of many religious variants to imperialist ideologies. Zionism, nonetheless, both pre- and overdetermines the collation of events which comprise a chronicle and the style of narration that explains both the concatenation and progression of its events, but more importantly, it claims to be the sole historical explanation. As intimated, the state's desired monopoly on violence is not limited to the economic and/or public spheres but also encompasses the epistemic. This is what Walter Mignolo in *Local Histories/Global Designs* (2000) calls a "monotopic locus of enunciation" (120). That is, Zionism disallows the existence of other knowledges, historical accounts, and relations to truth, especially those that are either secular or based in facts produced beyond the Israeli state's ambitious reach. Zionism is thus an ideology which masquerades as knowledge. How do we then repudiate its hegemonic claims? We must, first, recognize "Israel's settler colonial project [... both as] a manifestation of colonial modernity's production of race and racialization [and] as 'a project of colonial distinction and discriminatory practices' (Lentin, 2020: 7) that serve White supremacy on a global scale" (Ayyash 2023, 955). Israel's monotopic locus of enunciation lays bare a robust continuity regarding the 'universals' of Eurocentric colonial modernity, especially those that are sometimes mistakenly thought to have evaporated upon nominal independence. Next, however, we need to institutionalize alternate loci of enunciation. This could be achieved through establishing

Palestinian studies programs, departments, and centers, in addition to pumping funds, resources, and faculty into already existing Arab or MENA departments. This is not a solution, of course, but a necessary start because the current regimes of knowledge production wholly endorse Israel's monotopic reign.

Binghamton University, for example, as one of the principal campuses in the sprawling State Universities of New York (SUNY) system yokes the apartheidist state of Israel to Judaism by offering students the option to minor in Israel studies through its Judaic Studies Department. In contradistinction, Binghamton University students may choose the Arabic Studies track within the Middle Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Studies Department. However, neither institutional counterpart nor equivalent exists for students interested in Palestine and its multiply diverse people. Further, the ongoing genocide has become a black-and-white issue where Druze, Assyrian, Bedouin, and Kurdish peoples are once more overlooked. In the true spirit of pluritopic loci, these, too, should enjoy institutional recognition, not through performative acts of acknowledgment but instead on departmental levels. Binghamton University, to be fair, does have a Center for Middle East and North Africa Studies, but centers and institutes enjoy less institutional security than do departments and so an absence of parity persists, in voice, volume, and vigor.

The synchronized choreography between U.S. imperialism, Zionism, and their transnational systems of knowledge production is in step with how Atousa Kaviani elaborates the interplay between the Iranian state and its mediation of religion in educational settings through a national-hegemonic rendition of Islam (2024). Even a cursory look, furthermore, into the faculty foci in the Middle Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Studies Department at Binghamton confirms its titular commitment to antiquity. This betrays one of the modes by which universities preclude the possibility of challenging Zionism's monotopic reign. Binghamton University refuses, therefore, to consider more than one perspective at the departmental level. Alternatives to Israel's epistemic hegemony, then, must actualize on the level of curricula which both individualizes responses to a structure and leaves faculty vulnerable to sham accusations of antisemitism.

A temporary measure would be to pressure colleges and universities to create pluritopic loci of enunciation. These are, again, merely beginner steps of epistemic triage yet requisite. As Walter Mignolo (1995) states,

What a pluritopic approach emphasizes is not cultural relativity or multiculturalism, but the social and human interests in the act of telling a story as political intervention. [...] For a pluritopic understanding implies that while the understanding subject has to assume the truth of what is known and understood, he or she also

has to assume the existence of alternative politics of location with equal rights to claim the truth. (15)

A monotopic locus of enunciation invariably produces what Mignolo calls the “omphalos syndrome” (1995, 227). Mignolo uses “omphalos,” which is Greek for ‘navel,’ as a metaphor for when a culture or society constructs an ideological apparatus to position itself as both the spatial and cosmic center of gravity. The presumed centrality of imperialist cultures thus does not appear ex nihilo. Cartography and cosmogony, rather, bolster one another. The byproduct is a cadastral configuration which maps the colonizer onto both the cosmographic and historical foregrounds.

How do we then humble imperialist historiographers and resituate either a multireligious or secular Palestinian state? Here, as elsewhere, theories conflict. To begin, however, since its inception, the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (1948) has been remarkably feckless. Misprision not only attends its birth and adjoins its enunciative lifespan, but also assures that its aims and ability for enforcement are both powerless and partial. Its promulgation, furthermore, in December of 1948 not merely coincides but trails the Nakba or “catastrophe” which severed the Palestinian body politic in the colonial strategy characteristic of the British imperial ethos i.e., divide and conquer. The formation of the United Nations’ “Partition Plan for Palestine” (1947) the year prior exposes the phony nature of this appeal to an all-inclusive human community. Such strategies have roots, nonetheless, in a wealth of colonial documentation. The “Skyles-Picot Agreement” (1916), for instance, sought to split the Ottoman Empire between the British and French while the First World War was still being fought (Osiac 2010, 38). The “Balfour Declaration” (1917) and the “Mandate for Palestine” (1920) then stipulated a Jewish national homeland in British controlled Palestine. “The Churchill Memorandum” (1922), moreover, was a continuation of the *Balfour Declaration* (Osiac 2010, 39). We should view the nearly coetaneous appearance of the UN’s *Universal Declaration* and its “Partition Plan for Palestine” as belonging not only to this same historical-legal vector but also to the imperial tradition of narrowly defining the category of the human.

As the architects of this ‘universal’ declaration were drafting this specious article, therefore, they were also devising large-scale displacement and envisioning expanded ethnic cleansing. The livestreamed slaughter of Palestinians – shown almost nonstop on social media, depending on your algorithm, since October 7th, 2023 – can thus occur in a global political arena that denies this truth and morally sponsors as well as materially supports its continuity. The near synchronicity between the UN’s *Declaration* and the Nakba which accompanied perforce the original carnage of Israel’s statecraft not only demonstrates the discursive and eternal eviction of Palestinians from

the exclusive human category, but also explains how the liberal emphasis on inclusion always leaves an excluded. Hannah Arendt, thus, states “Man, it turns out, can lose all so-called Rights of Man without losing his essential quality as man, his human dignity. Only the loss of polity itself expels him from humanity” (quoted in Mignolo, 2021, 143). Is pocide not the intent of the state of Israel? Complete obliteration is the *coup de grâce* given Gaza.

Human rights, additionally, are both circulated and conferred by states and supranational entities, the UN being just one example. The state, as a political formation, however, has been wrested from Palestinians. Ajay Parasram, however, complicates this latter assumption by nuancing the “uni-versal” concepts of *sovereignty* and *statehood* by suggesting the existence of not only “pluriversal sovereignty” but also the use of “sovereignty-like practices” (2023, 358). “By sovereignty-like” Parasram states, “I do not mean to suggest that we only concern ourselves with movements seeking to attain state sovereignty, like Palestine or Tamil Eelam, because to some important extent movements of this nature require official state sovereignty in the conventional sense” (358). Notional human rights can then flow around and between stateless Palestinians. Statehood, moreover, is the criterion par excellence for admission into the UN. Palestine currently suffers a non-member status which, again, lays bare the contradictions baked into the UN’s *Universal Declaration*. Winona La Duke raised the same issue almost thirty years ago:

Members of indigenous peoples are not represented at the United Nations. Most decisions are made by the 180 or so member states. Those states, by and large, have been in existence for only 200 years or less, while most indigenous nations, with few exceptions, have been in existence for thousands of years. Ironically, there would be little argument in this room, that most decisions made in the world today are actually made by some 47 transnational corporations and their international financiers whose annual income is larger than the gross national product for many countries in the world. (1995, 471)

In this regard, the architects of critical diversity literacy offer ‘a decolonial perspective on citizenship’ stating that “[t]he city, and by extension, the nation-state, [... founded on] western ideas of citizenship originated in the Athenian city-state [...], can be recognized as a colonial site where occidental assumptions of citizenship, oppressive of difference, still endure ‘in the production and reproduction of material existence and its cultural expression’” (Steyn and Vanyoro 2023). It is apropos that Althusser, then, saw the predominant Ideological State Apparatus as the educational system and its often unconscious yet joint venture with the nuclear family. As Walter

Mignolo suggests, we should begin to shift our rhetorical and discursive, in addition to institutional investment, from *human social rights* to *communal living rights* (2021, 254). Following Anibal Quijano, Mignolo identifies the ‘coloniality of power’ as a proper target for political, practical, and epistemic decolonial action. “By ‘coloniality of power,’” states Mignolo, “I mean the energy driving the beliefs, attitudes, and desires of actors that built an apparatus of management as well as the colonial matrix of power (CMP) sustaining them. Coloniality of power is the *technics* of domination and CMP the instrument” (2021, 7). Disestablishing the colonial matrix of power is thus the sine qua non of decoloniality.

Space/Place/Borderization

The grafting of an additional, foreign, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic (ethno)state onto already colonial territory, resulted in the creation of a grotesque political field. Sovereignty functions, in the modern era, as the supreme power of a domain defined spatially through slicing border technologies. Wendy Brown (2017) states,

Sovereignty is a peculiar border concept, not only demarking the boundaries of an entity, but through this demarcation setting terms and organizing the space both inside and outside the entity. [...] Within the space that is its jurisdiction, sovereignty signifies supremacy of power or authority [...]. Yet turned outward, or in the space beyond its jurisdiction, sovereignty conveys self-rule and the capacity for independence in action. Inside, sovereignty expresses power beyond accountability. (64)

When the state of Israel was superimposed onto colonial-imperial Palestine in 1948, sovereignty was not vampirically leached from a Palestinian national body into an Israeli ethnonationalist state which was at once adjacent and atop it though it may appear that way. The transfer of sovereign power, rather, was instantaneous; the potential of a Palestinian state’s political lifeforce was rerouted, evacuating most of its efficacy within its historically and not religiously justified territorial claims. “The 1952 Nationality Law in Israel, for example,” states Harsha Walia “mobilized citizenship as a key pillar of colonization to produce Palestinian statelessness by granting citizenship to any Jewish immigrant but depriving many Palestinians the right to acquire citizenship in Israel” (194). One consequence is a coarsely textured, and asymmetrically arranged social palimpsest containing “coextensive territories,” as Mignolo passingly calls such wanton colonial processes (1995, 246).

In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre states,

We are confronted not by one social space but by many – indeed, by an unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as ‘social space.’ No space disappears in the course of growth and development: *the worldwide does not abolish the local*. This is not a consequence of the law of uneven development, but a law in its own right. (86)

The unique set of conditions currently confronting Palestine require that we amend such a theory. The implication is that spaces endure eternally, while places change. Not only is the movement of this processual transformation dialectical, but we can turn to Lefebvre’s theories to demonstrate that spaces, in a way, do undergo profound structural alterations over time.

Let us take the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia as our starting point here. It set the ground rules for European modernity’s international relations while it contrived another set of rules to govern elsewhere. Regarding the Westphalian Treaty, Siba Grovogui (1996), for example, states “There is less accord, however, on the extent of the application of the principle of sovereignty outside of Europe. In particular, theorists have disagreed about whether European powers did, or were bound to, recognize their non-European partners as sovereigns in the course of their interactions” (43). Nonetheless, it is largely due to the terms of its conditions that we employ the hyphenation: nation-state. These cultural and governmental formations had erstwhile progressed in a historically detached relationship. The profound consequences of this treaty transitioned the European political geography from a plate thoroughly peppered with relatively puny principalities into an assemblage more recognizable to the contemporary observer. The colonies of what became the most powerful of these European national-states, however, took shape before the mid-twentieth-century national liberation movements with little regard to the ethnic, cultural, religious, or linguistic fidelities of their inhabitants. National identifications were, notwithstanding, unintentionally forged. It is in this context that the Palestinian national identity came into being. We can think of this national space, therefore, as being isotopic yet inconstant in nature.

The Nakba and its coeval creation of Israel bifurcated this Palestinian national isotopy, much like the relatively simultaneous independence and Partition of British India gave birth to other geographical absurdities, such as the severed state of West and East Pakistan. To have a national-state cleft in two, like East and West Pakistan, was absurd not merely due its lack of contiguity, but also because it was largely religion which was meant to unify it despite linguistic, historical, cultural, and exploited ethnic differences.

Similarly, today, what binds Israel, and therefore severs the Palestinian body, is also religion, however, in an extreme form. Division, then, rearranges spatial structures, shattering shared social fields into innumerable heterotopia. I use ‘heterotopia,’ here, in the sense that Michel Foucault uses it, that is, to mean an *other* place (1994, xviii). This is, thus, the spatial configuration in which we find Palestine split between Gaza and the West Bank of the River Jordan. Palestine has been forcibly transmogrified into a heterotopia insofar as Israel not only exercises unipolarity but flaunts impunity. I must add that Israel deploys colonial strategies, such as dehumanizing rhetoric, intensifying borderization, continued settlements, blocking aid, the denial of rights; the list could be expanded ad infinitum, as *temporary* techniques of subjugation despite objective and protracted colonial processes occurring throughout the occupied Palestinian territories. Its end goal is the complete expulsion of the Palestinian people from their land (Ayyash 2024a, at 1:38), and the erasure of the crime from our shared global consciousness. Somdeep Sen argues that Palestine exhibits a simultaneity of anticolonial political energies and postcolonial historical conditions with Hamas “oscillat[ing] between the images of the postcolonial state and an anticolonial movement (2020, 3). Here, Sen thinks through spatial reconfiguration:

Sari Hanafi further termed this spatial settler colonial tact ‘spacio-cide’—a juridical-political means of spatially dislocating and displacing Palestinians. He deems this process not unlike the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians in 1948, as it, by way of the systematic destruction of Palestinian living spaces, ensures that the displacement of the indigenous is all but inevitable. (2020, 27)

The state of Israel, nevertheless, attempts to realize this unconscionable goal by modifying space in two very different ways.

First, since October 7th, 2023, Israel seems to seek to obliterate and then annex Gaza. This involves the razing of both structure and infrastructure in a dense urban environment. This mode levels habitation, so that land earmarked by Israeli and international urban planners and real estate developers can actualize blueprints for regional Dubaization.³ Yasser Elsheshtawy claims that the Dubai model of urbanism has become the primary mode of urbanization in the Middle East (2010, 262). There is reason to believe, then, that Israel wishes to adopt this model, too. The West Bank, on the other hand, suffers “domicide,” as well. Ammar Azzouz states “Through changing street names, removing revolutionary symbols, flags and graffiti, and building new memorials, statues and monuments, the ‘winners’ of wars narrate their own, one-sided version of history” (2023, 5).⁴ Martin Coward, in his investigation into Israel’s destruction of the Palestinian built environment, or what he calls

urbicide, states “Israel has pursued a strict planning policy with regard to Palestinian homes. Whilst appropriating land in East Jerusalem and the West Bank for Israeli settlements, the Israeli authorities have made it exceptionally difficult for Palestinians to obtain planning permission to build homes” (2009, 10). Israel’s overwhelming of land and people redirects communal energies towards a defensive riposte. Education, furthermore, as a field of great importance in the decolonial struggle, cannot occur institutionally for not only reasons of self-preservation, but also because Israel has wrested such opportunities for learning away through systematic campaigns of “scholasticide” (Scholars Against the War). Israel’s approach to such spaces — the suffocation and replacement of Palestinians in the West Bank, and the flattening of Gaza — therefore, differs widely though the end goals appear to dovetail.

Action/Practice/Revolution

As Lokangaka Losambe used to tell me, Fanonian disalienation is *the* postcolonial moment, and would emphasize that a postcolonial constellation exists within the imperial order. Fanon develops this concept in *Black Skin, White Masks* which fastens the subjective psychic experience of the colonized to their objective material conditions. Fanon states clearly, “Genuine disalienation will have been achieved only when things, in the most material sense, have resumed their rightful place” (2008, xv). I argue, then, as do Sen and Parasram, that because Palestine is at once in a condition of postcoloniality and engaged in an anticolonial struggle, disalienation is already manifest despite continued material disarray and unequal resource distribution. If disalienation has been achieved, —for, how could one remain enchanted amid both brazen bombardment and synthetic supply shortages—then the seizure of collective freedom is the next step.

Fanon, in the opening sentence of *The Wretched of the Earth*, is emphatic on the matter: National liberation, national reawakening, restoration of the nation to the people or Commonwealth, whatever the name used, whatever the latest expression, *decolonization is always a violent event*” (my emphasis, 1). Decolonizing the Palestinian nation involves not only the manumission of political and social space but also the liberation of discursive and representational space. The need for such freedom is not confined to Palestine alone i.e., the disenfranchisement of emancipatory politics is occurring globally. The impoverishment of political action available to the people takes place through the double homicide liberal democracies committed against the twin freedoms of speech and consumer practices. On the one hand, in the U.S., *Citizens United v. FEC* (2010) set a hideous and antidemocratic precedent by coupling these latter two fields of action. The ruling allowed for campaign contribution — that is legalized bribery — to be protected under the freedom

of speech. It not only deregulates much of campaign finance laws, but also “threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the” United States” (Greenhouse 547). On the other hand, the neoliberalization of speech has emptied language of its historical graphic and verbal capacities and left capital in its stead. The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, nonetheless, has been attacked as antisemitic despite adopting yet inverting the consumerist logic which undergirds neoliberal free speech. Irrational criticisms, such as these, require the bending of definitional parameters. A primary example of this conflation is the International Holocaust Remembrance Association’s (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. The IHRA concedes “criticism of Israel similar to that leveled against any other country cannot be regarded as antisemitic.”⁵ They go on to denote, however, that it is antisemitic to deny “the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor” (IHRA). Under the racist imperialism of international capital, then, any criticism of Israel receives the now vacuous censure of antisemitism. It is this double movement of Zionism — conflating Judaism and Israel and disallowing democratic accountability protocols such as actual free speech — that is, again, antisemitic. Israel neither represents nor speaks for all Jews. Such dangerous rhetorical moves associate questioning the Zionist narrative of Israel’s twentieth century creation, which has and continues to engage in anti-Arab racism, with a very real form of anti-Jewish racism. What, lastly, about any other group’s right to self-determination?

In a neoliberal world order, which limits speech to the agency of capital, the freedom of consumer choice and the ability to withhold patronage must persist. It is no coincidence, then, that under a neoliberalist regime of limited rights, consumer practices not only imitate but replicate linguistic resistance from previous moments of traditional colonial-imperialism. The authors of *The Empire Writes Back*, for example, name the dual tactics of linguistic ‘appropriation’ and ‘abrogation’ as symptomatic of anticolonial resistance. The former “seize[s] the language of the centre,” whereas the latter “replace[s] it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonized place” (Ashcroft et al. 2004, 37). This pair of processes needs not be confined solely to verbal utterance and can take form anywhere semiotic systems devolve into consumer practices. On the issue of decolonizing representational space, and its relation to social space, I now turn to what I call decolonial poetics.

Poet Andrea Abi-Karam describes themselves as “an arab-american genderqueer punk poet-performer cyborg” (“About”). It is important to hover on this singular positionality for a moment. They maintain a hyphenated ethnic-national identity, while eschewing the category of the human. Further, they jettison, too, gender binarism. There is a profundity in the paradox i.e., retaining an ethnic/cultural category that plays a primary circulatory role in

the global economy of difference production yet relinquishing the overarching human category in which this difference is consumed. Further still, in a global culture comprised of regionally dovetailing iterations of Arabo-Islamophobia (Both Biden and Trump, Modi, and Netanyahu for starters), the maintenance of an Arab identity combined with the strategic shedding of other more widely accepted identity categories aggrandizes the identity under attack. “Trump, Netanyahu, and Modi,” confirms Harsha Walia “all peddle their poison—white nationalism, Zionism, and Hindutva—congealed in anti-Muslim racism” (172). Returning to Fanon, then, Abi-Karam’s first poem in *Extratransmission*, “Kill Bro / Kill Cop” centers the necessity of upwardly directed resistance from below.

“Kill Bro / Kill Cop,” in its very title, recognizes the interlocking power structures of patriarchy and state power. These are not merely related domains but two sides of the same coin though this metaphor runs the risk of imprecision in its flatness. Rather a many-sided die would better capture the multifaceted nature of the colonial matrix of power. The poem, nonetheless, begins with the speaker telling an anecdote of how they quit their position at a “memory lab” that conducted testing on rats: “A MODEL FOR HUMANS / A MODEL FOR ‘CURING ALZHEIMER’S / A MODEL FOR NAVIGATION / A MODEL FOR HUMANLESS NAVIGATION / A MODEL FOR DRONES” (5). It continues, “I QUIT SHORTLY AFTER THE LAB GOT FUNDING FROM THE US DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE” (6). Tiers of complicity permeate U.S. society, from the ordinary taxpayer and the privileges of political quietism let alone agnosticism, to the pillars of education and religion, to industries implicated in the military industrial complex, to political/cultural pundits and warmongers. We commend, therefore, those of us fortunate enough and willing to delink ourselves economically from the system’s upper echelons and opt for a lower tier of involvement. Such action might suffice to quell the stirrings of a morally healthy conscious, but the murderous political-economic system, nevertheless, remains intact. Systemic destruction and replacement are requisite goals of any thorough and earnest decolonial agenda. To this end “Kill Bro / Kill Cop” states,

Next on CNN: a poetry of directness:

kill all the noise bros who move to Brooklyn & tell everyone
desperately that the noise they’re making is the only thing they
believe in. kill all the bro poets. actually you know what, kill all
the bros. kill all the power dynamics in the room. kill all the power
dynamics in the white room. kill all the power dynamics in all the
rooms. pull them down by their greasy cables. get yr hands dirty.

kill all the hierarchies of power [...] & kill the sociality that makes queers feel excluded & that makes the orgy dangerous for our bodies & that makes you select who to make eye contact with & who to ignore on alternating nights & which beer to schedule on which day & which bar to go to after which reading. & kill the system that was designed to alienate everyone from each other & that caused this desperate sociality to emerge & kill the system of gendered power that makes it so hard to inhabit every moment in my own skin to know how to detect each buzz like counting the number of trains that pass at night. & kill the language of avoidance that made it so hard for me to write this. (8–9)

The need for a broad and uncompromising upward volley is misconstrued by liberals and conservatives alike, as violence simply for the sake of violence. To them, the status quo is neither violent to the many who tremble under its tyranny nor substantively mutable. For the global majority and all who live in abject poverty and oppression, it is axiomatic that such a maneuver is defensive in nature. Only defenders of the genocidal status quo could claim affront from the protective posture of a cornered victim. The name “Kill Bro / Kill Cop” might appear as though the target is merely twofold. What this block quote elucidates, nevertheless, is that because downwardly inflicted violence is polyvalent, so too must our series of counter thrusts.

Contemporary power is diffuse in its operations: *capillary* as Foucault would have it. Abi-Karam, refreshingly, then, minces no words with where they believe defensive rage should be targeted, neither does Fanon: “In the colonies, the official, legitimate agent, the spokesperson for the colonizer and the regime of oppression, is the police officer or the soldier” (2004, 3). Nor does either thinker muddle their identification of the oppressive source. Fanon inculcates the totality of imperial capital, and its subsequent and expansive field of operations stating, “The singularity of the colonial context lies in the fact that economic reality, inequality, and enormous disparities in lifestyles never manage to mask human reality” (2004, 5). Whereas Abi-Karam succinctly locates the origins “on the assembly line to American nationalism” (15). The capitalist origins, again, leave us only a few prefab models of resistance. Mature neoliberalism has, however, hollowed out democratic possibilities from our arena of political action. For example, liberals suffer interminably from the delusion that either voting or peaceful protesting will suffice. Doubtless, however, we have reached what Fanon calls in the decolonial “armed struggle [...] the point of no return” (2004, 47). Further, the moment of arrival has come for the “ironic twist of fate” in where “it is now the colonized who state that it is the colonizer who only understands the language of force” (2004, 42). If we would like to realize revolutionary hope

and planetary decolonization, then we must take our destinies into our own hands by wresting it away from the vicious imperialists. Doing so is indispensable if we are to reappropriate and redistribute harmony on a planetary scale.

Time/Memory/Futurity

In *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Walter D. Mignolo expands upon the imperial act of temporal relegation coined by Johannes Fabian known as the ‘denial of coevalness.’ Mignolo states,

towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, spatial boundaries were transformed into chronological ones. In the early modern/colonial period (sixteenth century), a transformation took place between geographical and human boundaries; at the end of the nineteenth century, savages and cannibals in space were converted into primitives and exotic Orientals in time. (283)

These relegations occur largely within discursive fields, and thus, on conceptual terrain. Traditionalist means of temporal displacement characterized by the denial of coevalness are still expressly manifest in Israel’s rhetoric regarding Palestine and its people. Examples are encapsulated in Zionist phrases and desires such as ‘to make the desert bloom,’ which revive the etymological underpinnings of not only *colonize* but *culture*. This, in turn, connects to *cultivate* and implies the ‘proper’ use of land as the sole and arbitrary prerogative of the colonizer. Mass displacement and murder are physical iterations of this very same denial; it is the concurrent and permanent ejection out of both shared time and space.

The colonial mission to “make the desert bloom” not only banishes Palestinians from the broader human community but from taxonomical distinctions of biota *in toto*. “Xenophobia in all prior historical systems had one primary behavioral consequence,” states Immanuel Wallerstein, and that is “the ejection of the ‘barbarian’ from the physical locus of community” (1991, 33). These *prior historical systems* are, nonetheless, still relevant today in that they prevail in the Palestinian social fabric through Israel’s instrumentalization of old-style colonialism and state-of-the-art killing technologies. Identical to the way in which bygone colonizers historically destroy the civilizational criteria they encounter in other cultures—from agronomical knowledge to educational systems—to rationalize their ensuing domination, the state of Israel destroys culture and can therefore deny transhistorical life. Erecting violent and zigzagging walls, razing schools, the aerial bombardment of communities, establishing humiliating checkpoints, these permit post factum claims to Palestinian barbarism. Colonizing space

and time are, thus, concomitant endeavors although not coterminous in reach; only through their conjuncture can we comprehend the full scope of the Zionist project.

Achille Mbembe not only states, “The most accomplished form of necropower is the contemporary colonial occupation of Palestine” (80), but also, and here he still speaks of Israel, “the colonial state derives its fundamental claim of sovereignty and legitimacy from the authority of its own particular narrative of history and identity. The narrative is itself underpinned by the idea that the state has a divine right to exist” (80). What, however, is to be done? In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1999), Gloria Anzaldúa offers a theory of *la mestiza*. Along with Anzaldúa, let us think, then, beyond culture and ancestry within the inherent mixture of *la mestiza* to encompass history and politics too:

The work of mestiza consciousness is to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her a prisoner and to show in the flesh and through the images in her work how duality is transcended. The answer to the problem between the white race and the colored, between males and females, lies in healing the split that originates in the very foundation of our lives, our culture, our languages, our thoughts. A massive uprooting of dualistic thinking in the individual and collective consciousness is the beginning of a long struggle, but one that could, in our best hopes, bring us to the end of rape, of violence, of war. (102)

Decolonization and decoloniality are and must remain, then, ongoing projects and aspirations. In *Local Histories/Global Designs*, Walter D. Mignolo proffers a program which he calls ‘border thinking.’ Mignolo develops this out of Anzaldúa’s concept of *la facultad* which she defines as “the capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities, to see the deep structure below the surface. [...]The one possessing this sensitivity is excruciatingly alive to the world” (60). Building on Anzaldúa, Mignolo states “Border thinking is unthinkable without understanding the colonial difference” (2000, 6). Implementation and maintenance of the colonial difference in Israel can be summarized succinctly here by Edward Said: “Inside Israel the Arab has traditionally been regarded as somebody to be prevented from ever acquiring a national consciousness” (1992, 127). The colonial difference insists, essentially, that Israel is and shall be sophisticated and modern, while Palestine is and shall be crude and unformed. Border thinking not only destabilizes Israel’s bulwark of racism, that is Zionism, in demonstrating it to be a closed and inconsistent system of thought, but also reveals this

nationalist-imperialist discourse to be shot through with cracks and weaknesses.

Mignolo states, “Let me explain my notion of border thinking by introducing ‘gnosis’ as a term that would take us away from the confrontation—in Western epistemology, between epistemology and hermeneutics, between nomothetic and ideographic ‘sciences’—and open up the notion of ‘knowledge’ beyond cultures of scholarship” (2000, 9). Israel claims epistemological hegemony both within and beyond the territorial confines of its apartheidist state. Because of both this and its scholasticidal campaign, I propose then that the development of a counter-hegemonic system of border thought must be founded, principally, on the care and custody of Palestinian memory. Here, old and nominal distinctions between thought and action disappear. The stewardship of Palestinian memory invalidates Israel’s insidious and inaccurate claims to possessing historical rights and ties to the land. The conditional: if memory, then land, may be simple but not easy. Colonialism, even in our terrifying era of nuclear armament and stratospheric occupations, is always about the land. Echoing Fanon’s *ironic twist of fate* from earlier, today, colonial maps from pre-1948 lay bare the political usurpation and colonial theft that occurred during the British and Israeli changing of the guards. Memory, moreover, as a component of psychic life, has a structure and a logic of its own. Memory actively opposes the colonial sciences e.g., rhetoric and philosophy, which not only subjugate cultural alterity but also subalternize the form and content of other knowledges.

Peroration

This returns us to Yousra’s words: *In ‘ishnā lan nansā wa-lan nusāmiḥ*. Indeed, continued domination and genocide seem to preclude forgiveness. The axial webs of power limit defiance’s range of motion to survival. Survival, then, necessitates resistance, and in turn a diverse array of tactics which encompass both armed struggle and calculated consumer practices. Resistance is not confined, furthermore, to a single social, mental, or representational space. Delinking from imperialist epistemes, as well as sabotaging colonial matrices of power entail, rather, a thorough interrogation of the perceived order of things. This order gains currency through the regimes of knowledge production that confer a sense of legitimacy and objectivity on political information. To delink from such a global order does not merely involve a powerful desire to turn social hierarchies on their heads. We must correct, too, the educational asymmetries that are the institutional lifeforce of Zionism in its manifold forms and which operate as a justificatory edifice both within and without the loci of colonial violence. We must immediately demand, concretize, and nourish pluritopic loci of enunciation — that is, spaces which can contradict Zionism from within the regimes of knowledge production and

their larger centers of geopolitical power — to transform the fundamental nature and process of information dissemination. Because far more suffer under hierarchies of power than those who derive benefit, this could drown out the voices of imperialist and genocidal apologists. The production of epistemological parity, in the form of enunciative pluritopia, is not akin to the liberal celebration of difference insofar as we prevent its various codifications from being so. Networks of resistance, moreover, must combat the military and security industrial complexes that borderize and rend lands globally. Spaces and nations should be open and porous to more than solely the flow of commerce, capital, and the vast minority who claim their control and possession. As does Andrea Abi-Karam, we, too, must eschew identity categories that are injurious to expansive and coalitional solidarity. In so doing, we engage in border thinking which exposes the fissures intrinsic to the structure of racial and economic exploitation. With concerted prodding we can issue an eviction notice to the arbiters of power. Only once they have vacated the premises can we, then, erect an egalitarian formation in its stead. Memory not only is material but also can and will likely be the communal building blocks through which we can construct a better future. The past, in such a way, contains the future. In the words, then, of Immanuel Wallerstein,

Pastness is a mode by which persons are persuaded to act in the present in ways they might not otherwise act. Pastness is a tool persons use against each other. Pastness is a central element in the socialization of individuals, in the maintenance of group solidarity, in the establishment of or challenge to social legitimation. Pastness therefore is preeminently a moral phenomenon, therefore a political phenomenon, always a contemporary phenomenon. (78)

Notes

1. Yousra and I share a mutual friend. This quote is from a personal conversation between them.
2. Irgun's status as a terrorist organization is well-documented. For example, see: J. Bowyer Bell (1996), or Eli Tavin and Yonah Alexander's edited volume (1982).
3. Please see, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/edge-gaza-israeli-settlers-applaud-thud-artillery-fire>
4. On July 3, 2024, Israel exercised its largest land grab in Palestine's West Bank in over thirty years i.e., since the 1993 Oslo Accords which not only violates international law, but also contradicts the ordinary logic of its own piecemeal yet criminal encroachments into this region of occupied Palestine.
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/7/3/israeli-seizures-of-west-bank-land-for-settlers-peaking->

watchdogsays#:~:text=The%20move%20raises%20the%20total,land%20seizures%2C%20the%20watchdog%20said.

5. <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

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