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Walaa Alqaisiya

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# Palestine and the Will to Theorise Decolonial Queering

WALAA ALQAI SIYA

London School of Economics, UK

*ABSTRACT* This article posits a theorisation of decolonisation in relation to queer as it emerges from the settler-colonial context of Palestine, what I call decolonial queering. The first part provides a new reading of Zionist settler-colonialism, which I define as hetero-conquest. Its novelty lies in refocusing the question of colonialism in native grounded knowledge of queering, while showing the limitations of those existing studies whose frames emanate mainly from American and/or global north contexts of racism and homo-nationalism. By tracing the contemporary continuity of hetero-conquest in Palestine, the second part unpacks the need for a radical theory of liberation that weaves decolonization into queer. Bringing Sara Ahmed and Frantz Fanon into dialogue, such a theory emanates from the amalgam of histories, geographies and bodies, whose restoration beyond the strictures of hetero-conquest opens the way for a radical multi-scalar politics of liberation.

**KEY WORDS:** *Decolonial queering; decolonization; hetero-conquest; Palestine; settler-colonialism; Zionism*

This article takes the case of Zionist hetero-conquest and the forces maintaining it in colonised Palestine in order to posit the value of theorising queer in relation to decolonisation. Frames of homonationalism,<sup>1</sup> homonormativity<sup>2</sup> and critiques of queer liberalism<sup>3</sup> often have been applied to explore the question of queer in Palestine from within LGBTQ appraisals with regard to race, class, gender and nation. Such frames have been useful in extending critiques of Israeli LGBTQ normalisations with the Israeli state, mainly via the pinkwashing logic, which promotes Israel as ‘gay friendly’ as opposed to ‘homophobic’ and ‘barbaric’ Palestine.<sup>4</sup> Those approaches, however, fail to offer in-depth analyses based on empirical and theoretical interventions from within

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*Correspondence Address:* Walaa Alqaisiya, Department of Gender Studies, London School of Economics and Political Science, Houghton Street London WC2A 2AE, UK. Email: [w.alqaisiya@lse.ac.uk](mailto:w.alqaisiya@lse.ac.uk)

<sup>1</sup> See Jasbir K. Puar (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

<sup>2</sup> See Lisa Duggan (2003) *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press).

<sup>3</sup> See David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam & Jose E. Munoz (eds.) (2003) What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?, *Social Text*, 23(3–4), pp. 84–85 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

<sup>4</sup> See Jasbir K. Puar (2010) Israel’s gay propaganda war, *The Guardian*, July 1; available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/jul/01/israels-gay-propaganda-war>, accessed March 19, 2019.

the situated context, history and internal practices of Palestinian queering subjectivity and meanings of liberatory praxis. This article's aim is to gesture toward a theory of native-grounded-queering, - or what it terms as decolonial queering – in order to reveal the significance of weaving queer into native positionality and struggle for decolonisation and its meanings. Decolonial queering encapsulates meanings in relation to colonised-liberation that cannot be fathomed without a full historicisation of Zionist hetero-conquest and the forces maintaining it, including from within colonised imaginings of freedom and liberation. The theory of decolonial queering weaved through this article derives from the work of Palestinian feminist scholars<sup>5</sup> whose gendered critique of Israeli-settler-colonialism informs the ways in which Palestinian native critique must respond not only to Zionist colonialism but also to analytical absences in the Western academy and within the Western left. At the same time, this article extends the work of Palestinian feminists to include a queer lens whose significance to Palestine and to Palestinian liberation is yet to be fully explored.<sup>6</sup>

The article begins with situating decolonial queering in relation to predominant frames that have limited scholarly engagement with queering a la decolonisation and its meanings in Palestine. It proceeds to foreground decolonial queering through a mapping of Zionist hetero-conquest from 19<sup>th</sup> century politics of time, space and desire to its current continuity via the case of promoting Israel's 'Arab transgender queen.' Finally, it reveals what decolonial queering signifies in relation to a process of initiating decolonial subjectivities and praxis, inscribed in native willingness 'to be stressed'<sup>7</sup> by the forces maintaining hetero-conquest. Thus, it is a process of radical liberation that emanates from the initiation of native self-recognition and critique<sup>8</sup> beyond the politics of time, space and desire governing conquest and its reproduction in the mesh of intimate and geopolitical liberatory scales.

### Situating Decolonial Queering

Critical investigations of the question of queerness in 'Palestine/Israel' emerged in relation to the broader field of queer studies and its attempt to mobilise "a broad social

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<sup>5</sup> See for example: Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevorkian & Suhad Dahir-Nashef (2013) Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control, *Violence Against Women*, 19(3), pp. 295–315; Nada Elia (2017) Justice is Invisible: Palestine as a Feminist Issue, *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, 6(1), pp. 45–63; Rema Hammami (2019) Destabilizing mastery and the machine: Palestinian agency and gendered embodiment at Israeli military checkpoints, *Current Anthropology*, 60(19), pp. 87–97; Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Sarah Ihmod & Suhad Dahir-Nashef (2014) Sexual Violence, Women's Bodies, and Israeli Settler-Colonialism, *Jadaliyya*, online at: <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/31481/Sexual-Violence,-Women%E2%80%99s-Bodies,-and-Israeli-Settler-Colonialism>, accessed March 19, 2019; and Nadia Abu Awwad (2016) Gender and Settler Colonialism in Palestinian Agriculture: Structural Transformations, *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 38(3), pp. 540–561.

<sup>6</sup> Palestinians within Palestine and in the diaspora are beginning to take notice of this interaction between queer theories/ activism and Palestine. For example, see *Journal of Palestine Studies* (2018) special issue: "Queering Palestine," Spring; and the 2014 academic school 'Sexual Politics in the Colonial Context of Palestine' released in cooperation between alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian society and the electronic magazine *Mada* and the ezine *Jadaliyya* (both issues released in Arabic) there still remains the need to build on, contribute to and extend on such literature.

<sup>7</sup> Sarah Ahmad (2010) *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> Frantz Fanon's insights in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) and *Wretched of the Earth* (1986) help to ground decolonisation and the ways in which it signifies against systematic native (de)subjectification. I am also inspired by Glen S. Coulthard (2014) *Red Skin, White Masks*, where he explains Fanon's theory of decolonisation in relation to the idea of recognition.

critique of race, gender, class, nationality, religion as well as sexuality.”<sup>9</sup> 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,’ drawing on Lisa Duggan’s notion of ‘homonormativity.’<sup>10</sup> While Duggan charts how queer liberalism in many Western contexts promises the possibility of a “privatized, depoliticised gay culture,”<sup>11</sup> Jason Ritchie applies her insights to the Israeli context to trace how the rise of a visible gay-culture indicates a “privatised, depoliticised model of homosexuality.”<sup>12</sup> Building on Duggan’s concept, Jasbir Puar coins queer nationalism or ‘homonationalism’ and investigates the collusion of queerness with nationalist Israeli policies in the framework of ‘Israeli pinkwashing,’<sup>13</sup> which is a branding campaign Israel uses to promote itself as gay-friendly.<sup>14</sup> 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,”<sup>15</sup> 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.’<sup>16</sup>

Puar suggests that homonationalism sheds light on queer’s “complicity and contingency with dominant formations,”<sup>17</sup> thus moving away from queering as an ‘alternative’ or a form of ‘dissent[ing].’ In her introduction to the themed issue ‘*Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine/Israel*,’ Gil Hochberg and others<sup>18</sup> mobilise 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”<sup>19</sup> in ‘Palestine/Israel.’

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<sup>9</sup> David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam & Jose E. Munoz (eds.) (2005) What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?, *Social Text*, 23(3–4), pp. 84–85.

<sup>10</sup> Lisa Duggan (2003) *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism: Cultural politics and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press) p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Jason Ritchie (2010) How do you say come out of the closet in Arabic, *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(4), p. 560.

<sup>13</sup> Jasbir K. Puar (2011) Citation and Censorship: The Politics of Talking about the Sexual Politics of Israel, *Feminist Legal Studies*, 21(1), pp. 133–142.

<sup>14</sup> For more on pinkwashing, see [www.pinkwatchingIsrael.com](http://www.pinkwatchingIsrael.com), accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>15</sup> Rebecca L. Stein cited in Puar, ‘Citation and Censorship,’ p. 135.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, p. 136. See also Jasbir K. Puar (2007) *Terrorist Assemblages*.

<sup>17</sup> Jasbir Puar (2005) Queer Times, Queer Assemblages, *Social Text*, 23(3–4), pp. 121–122.

<sup>18</sup> Gill Hochberg (ed.) (2010) Special Issue: Queer Politics and the Question of Palestine/Israel, *A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(4).

<sup>19</sup> Gill Hochberg, (2010) Introduction: Israelis Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure, *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 16(4), p. 504.

The major contribution of those studies lies in how they scrutinize queer Israeli practices in a critical manner, identifying the growing impact of international movements against Israeli pinkwashing, as a form of homonationalism.<sup>20</sup> They nevertheless remain grounded in frames that do not fully account for Palestinian *native* queerness. Hence, they obscure the specificity of settler-colonialism in Palestine. One significant limitation entails the adoption of a comparative lens of ‘Israel/Palestine,’ which allows the juxtaposition of ‘queer Palestinians’ vis-à-vis ‘queer Israelis’ in the realm of an on-going conflict and/or homos for the nation.<sup>21</sup> Hochberg’s themed issue identifies queerness as premised on the promotion of a “politics of coexistence beyond ethnonational and religious borders.”<sup>22</sup> Her argument appears to stem from the idea of an on-going conflict between Israel/Palestine, which reduces the power relations in Palestine to the presence of two equally powerful parties with conflicting ‘ethno-nationalist/religious’ aspirations. This framing unfortunately betrays a lack of understanding of the settler-colonial history of Palestine, which manifests further in how Hochberg reflects on the use of the word Israel/Palestine in the introduction to the issue:

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.<sup>23</sup>

To put ‘Israel and Palestine’ in ‘motion’ beyond the ‘partitioned present reality’ conjures a sense of parity between two equal parties. It fails to take into account how a settler-colonial structure pursues the on-going elimination of Palestine, thus imposing its structural ‘un-viability.’ Furthermore, Hochberg’s themed issue 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.’<sup>24</sup> Her issue 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 and/or revealing native status of the Palestinian inhabitants.<sup>25</sup>

The same native Palestinian inhabitant would reject such a purported objective ‘surveying of conflicting narratives’ because it risks allowing all these narratives to lay the same truth claims to conflict. Thus, it equates a settler-colonial approach to any other discourse (i.e., the theological weight of the conflict). This approach not only reproduces the amnesia of colonialism for the native Palestinian, but also leads to problematic framings of queerness. For example, the emancipatory power of queerness is now identified in how Palestinian and Israelis should come together to rise above

<sup>20</sup> Sarah Schulman (2012) *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 132.

<sup>21</sup> See Hochberg, ‘Introduction,’ and the critical response by Jasbir Puar and Maya Mikdashi (2012) *Pinkwashing and Pinkwatching: Interpenetration and Its Discontents*, *Jadaliyya*, 9 August; online at: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/6774/pinkwashingand-pinkwashin>, accessed October 19, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> Hochberg, ‘Introduction,’ p. 500.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 501.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 501–502.

‘national divides.’<sup>26</sup> I argue that this analysis, on the one hand, fails to grasp the relevance of being *Palestinian* for Palestinian queers.<sup>27</sup> On the other hand, it does not capture the complex positionality of Palestinian queers vis-à-vis [the nation] Palestine. These aspirations for a queer Palestinian national movement,<sup>28</sup> at the same time, challenge the premise of homonationalism theorising and its enabling of critique that – albeit- directed at forms of Euro-American solidarity with Palestinian queer work– is nonetheless generative of a problematic juxtaposition-ally analytics of ‘homos for Palestine versus homos for Israel.’<sup>29</sup>

Palestine cannot and *should not* be understood within frames reproducing critiques of ‘binaries’ of national politics. The underlying identification of Palestinian native queerness, in fact, emerges from the day-to-day experiences with a hetero-conquest structure, whose maintenance of an Israeli colonial state is based on the denial of an Arab Palestinian nation and their belonging to a homeland (*watan*). Such denial captures the *already* queered positionality of the native’s sense of nation-ality by virtue of being inscribed within the conditions of forceful ‘*Ghurba*’ (exile) that Palestine and Palestinian’s have to endure both within the *watan* - due to systematic displacement mechanisms of Israeli settler-presence- and outside it as they desperately continue to wait for return.<sup>30</sup> Such dilemma of a perpetual exilic condition captures not only the irreducibility of a general national affiliative sense to the porblematique of ‘assimilationist politics,’ but it also helps to approach Palestinian sense of home and national affiliation as a space for “yearning, belonging and radical thinking and *becoming*.”<sup>31</sup>

Furthermore, critiques of Israeli queer liberalism anesthetize its connection to the history of settler-colonialism. They instead lay premise in the ‘contradictory’ nature of Israeli queer liberalism, being more interested in highlighting how Israeli liberal ideals contradict the on-going racist and oppressive representation of Palestinians.<sup>32</sup> I argue that *to begin* from decolonial queering means to proceed from a proper contextualisation of Zionist/Jewish history of settler colonialism. In so doing, one comes to realise how racist representations of Palestinians do not contradict liberal ideals, rather they lay at their core, re-instantiating their colonial premise. In other words, native grounded queering shows how Israeli liberalism and democracy are *already* built on

<sup>26</sup> See contributions from the same issue: Jason Ritchie (2010) How do you say come out of the closet in Arabic and: Amalia Ziv (2010) Performative politics in Israeli Queer anti-occupation activism, *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies*, 16(4) pp. 537–556.

<sup>27</sup> See Walaa Alqaisiya (2018) Decolonial Queering: The Politics of Being Queer in Palestine, *Journal for Palestine Studies*, 47(3), pp. 29–44.

<sup>28</sup> Haneen Maikey (2014) Queer/Anti-Colonial Struggle from the U.S. to Palestine, alQaws video 10:13, 2 December. Available online at: [http://alqaws.org/videos/QueerAnti-Colonial-Struggle-from-the-US-to-Palestine?category\\_id=0](http://alqaws.org/videos/QueerAnti-Colonial-Struggle-from-the-US-to-Palestine?category_id=0), accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> In reference to Puar & Mikdashi, ‘Pinkwatching and Pinwkashing’.

<sup>30</sup> This is seen in the abundance of Palestinian cultural productions on ‘ghorba’: capturing the ephemeral diasporic/exilic condition of Palestine and Palestinians.

<sup>31</sup> Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevrokian & Sarah Ihmoud (2014) Exiled at Home: writing return and the Palestinian home, *Biography* 37(2) p. 377. My emphasis.

<sup>32</sup> In this regard, Jason Ritchie 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.” See Ritchie, ‘How do you say come out of the closet in Arabic,’ p. 559. Similarly, Rebecca Stein identifies Israel’s gay decade in the 1990s as contradictory because recognition for gays came with further oppression toward the Palestinians. See Stein (2010) Explosive Scenes from Israel’s gay Occupation, *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16(4), p. 521.

both continued colonisation of Palestinian lands and denial of Palestinian existence and their right of return to their homelands. As such, it discloses the temporal inadequacy about accounting for settler colonial racism that sometimes is enabled within critical frames of queer liberalism. 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.<sup>33</sup> Without grounding Israel's liberal and democratic values into its settler-colonial history, critiques of queer liberalism offer a simplistic understanding of colonial racism toward Palestinians. By centring queer in the question of settler colonialism, it becomes possible to interrogate the temporal dimension of those analyses without obscuring how the creation of Israel was premised on racism toward Palestinians.

Similar problems emerge from homonormativity and homonationalism critiques and frameworks. Relying on Duggan's notion of homonormativity, Puar's homonationalism challenges queer-visibility in regard to oppression perpetuated against "minority communities within the nation-state."<sup>34</sup> Similarly, Hochberg's issue speaks of "tracing the ties that inevitably links the oppression of sexual minorities to the oppression of other social minorities."<sup>35</sup> 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 of a Jewish majority.<sup>36</sup> Sidestepping the native positionality, these studies fail short of accounting for settler colonialism, opposing to define Palestinian [queerness] as a social minority within the Jewish/Zionist entity. By contrast, there are studies positing 'settler colonialism' as the basis of the formation of modern queer national subjects, what Scott Lauria Morgensen calls settler homonationalism,<sup>37</sup> and compare queer Palestinians and Two Spirit (North American indigenous) people. Such analyses, however, do not capture, as I have discussed above and have demonstrated elsewhere,<sup>38</sup> how Palestinian native queering challenges some aspects of the theory of homonationalism.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, this approach mainly stems from the positionality of queer white settlers,<sup>40</sup> whereby the analytical and political investment appears to be in white –settler- responsibility to

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<sup>33</sup> Ritchie, 'How do you say come out of the closet in Arabic', p. 556.

<sup>34</sup> Jasbir Puar, 'Citation and Censorship', p. 135.

<sup>35</sup> Hochberg, 'Introduction', p. 495.

<sup>36</sup> See Omar Jabary Salamanca, Mezna Qato, Kareem Rabie and Sobhi Samour (2012) Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine, *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2(1), pp. 1–8; and Neve Gordon & Moriel Ram (2016) Ethnic Cleansing and the Formation of Settler Colonial Geographies, *Political Geography*, 35, p. 20–25.

<sup>37</sup> See Scott L. Morgensen (2010) Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities, *A Journal for Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16 (1–2), pp. 105–131; and Scott L. Morgensen (2013) Settler Colonialism and Alliance: Comparative Challenges to Pinkwashing and Homonationalism, *Jadaliyya*. Available online at: [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11016/settler-colonialism-and-alliance\\_comparative-chall](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/11016/settler-colonialism-and-alliance_comparative-chall), accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>38</sup> Alqaisiya, 'Decolonial Queering', p. 36.

<sup>39</sup> See also Heike Schotten & Haneen Maikey (2012) Queers Resisting Zionism: On Authority and Accountability beyond Homonationalism, *Jadaliyya*, 10 October. Available online at: <http://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/27195/On-Positionality-and-Not-Naming-Names-A-Rejoinder-to-the-Response-by-Maikey-and-Schotten>, accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>40</sup> See Scott L. Morgensen (2014) White Settlers and Indigenous Solidarity: Confronting White Supremacy, Answering Decolonial Alliances, *Decolonisation, Indigeneity Education and Society*. Available online at: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/05/26/white-settlers-and-indigenous-solidarity-confronting-white-supremacy-answering-decolonial-alliances/>, accessed March 19, 2019.

respond to projects of decolonisation as initiated by indigenous and racialised people. In reviewing frames of homonationalism, homonormativity and critiques of queer liberalism, my aim thus far has been to show their inadequacy when applied to the ongoing settler-colonial context of Palestine. My suggestion instead is to gesture toward a theory of native –decolonial-queering as emerging to reveal and work against the historical continuity of Zionist hetero-conquest. To identify a scope of native queering that is tantamount to decolonisation also means to challenge queer critiques’ investment in queer as liberal, nationalist, right-winger and/or settler. While the scope of these frames identifies and challenges queer theorising as it emerges in relation to dominant structures (homonationalist, liberal and/or settlers), the analytical scope of this article proposes the exact opposite. By preserving queering to native’s struggle to decolonise- from a gendered, sexed and racialised- positionality, it not only argues for the transgressive possibilities that queering enables, but also advocates for theoretical and methodological foregrounding of decolonial queering.

### Locating Hetero-Conquest: Time, Space and Desire in the Zionist Settler Colonial Project

The word *nakba*—Arabic for catastrophe—is not a specific moment in history (i.e., the year 1948) where Palestinian indigenous dispossession and their making into refugees, who are to this date dispersed all over the world and denied their basic right of return, to allow the establishment of ‘*eretz* Israel’ (Greater Israel). Rather Palestinian *nakba* is the structure that defines the fabric of the “new colonial society on the expropriated land base.”<sup>41</sup> The structural reality of *nakba* can be traced in Zionist carving of space in order to pursue the embodiment of a settler-colonial politics of Time. The creation of a Jewish state in Palestine was, from the standpoint of its founding father Theodore Herzl, a means to overcome Jewish *inherent* failure – following movements like *Haskalah*<sup>42</sup>- and to assimilate into ideals of modern Western society. Realising these difficulties for relating to Jewish transformation and assimilation within the boundaries of European enlightenment,<sup>43</sup> Herzl advocated for the need to leave Europe in order to

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<sup>41</sup> Patrick Wolfe (2006) Settler Colonialism and the elimination of the native, *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4), p. 388.

<sup>42</sup> Jewish Enlightenment is an example of an influential tide of Jewish intellectualism, spanning from the 1770s to the 1880s, and which sought to “assimilate into European society in dress, language, manners and loyalty to ruling power.” See Shira Schoenberg (2016) *Modern Jewish History: The Haskala, Jewish virtual library*. Available online at: <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/Haskalah.html>, accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>43</sup> 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 Jacque Kornberg (1993) *Theodor Herzl from Assimilation to Zionism* (Indiana: Indiana University Press); and Glenn Bowman (2011) *A Place for the Palestinians in the Altneuland: Herzl, Anti-Semitism, and the Jewish State*, Elia Zureik, David Lyon, & Yasmeen Abu-Laban (eds.) *Surveillance and Control in Israel/Palestine: Population, Territory and Power* (New York: Routledge), pp. 65–79. Like 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 (i.e., see Herzl in Ernst Pawel [1989] *Labyrinth of Exile*, p. 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 program called Zionism, which developed further his existing ideas for Jewish transformation outside Europe.



establish a Jewish state “where Jews can finally reveal themselves as Europeans.”<sup>44</sup> Herzilian Zionism is not only anti-Semitic at its core—assuming that anti-Semitism could be extinguished by eradicating those Jewish traits which were said to incite it, but also is revealed as an agent of Western Time; one that is enshrined in and reproductive of the colonial and racial dynamics of 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe. In Herzl’s words, a Jewish state in Palestine would stand as a “defence of Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism.”<sup>45</sup> Herzl relies on the evolutionary schema of 19<sup>th</sup> century temporalizing rhetoric<sup>46</sup> and reproduces the hierarchical classifications of Modern versus Backward, West versus East that helped legitimise colonial projects. 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,<sup>47</sup> Zionism becomes an act of mapping salvation for a ‘chosen people’ through a settler-colonial project. The Jew travels and settles in Palestine in order to meet the requisites of European temporal intelligibility. In doing so, the Jew comes to embody a movement across sacred time and its secularised variants. In other words, the establishment of a state in the East, in the very geography of the ‘Orient,’ permits the European Jew to occupy the position of ‘tabulating space’ according to an evolutionary scheme, measuring others through “a temporal slope, a stream of Time – some upstream, some downstream.”<sup>48</sup> Hence, to observe and contain the ‘barbarism’ of the ‘orient’ enables the Jew to unlock a temporal position in which they –European Jewry – were trapped within Europe and they finally reveal themselves as agents of *Western Time*.

The politics of Time that underpins the Zionist project provides a window for examining settler-colonial *presence over* Palestine, meaning forcible absentation<sup>49</sup> of Palestinians and the physical/geographical transformation of Palestine into Israel. In fact, Zionism carves up the very geography of historic Palestine as per the hierarchical taxonomies embedding its politics of Time. By adopting spatial mechanisms of *Wall[ing]* as fortification and separation, and *Tower[ing]* as gazing down, devouring and containing,<sup>50</sup> the newly revealed Jewish European self sits on higher chrono-geographical grounds from those it ‘literally’ deemed beneath it, that is being at the lower end of the temporal slope. Wall and Tower are fundamental elements to understand Zionist chrono-geographical conquest. The architectural characteristics of walling sits at the core of Zionist obsession with erecting enclosed spaces, such as 1948 military

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Herzl, cited in Paul Mendes-Flhor & Jehuda Reinharz (1995) *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 601.

<sup>46</sup> See Johannes Fabian (1983) *Time and Other: How Anthropology makes its objects* (New York: Columbia University Press). 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 in its unchallenged hierarchical form, by providing a genealogy of temporalizing discourses. Fabian’s insights bear resonance to those of Giordano Nani (2012) *The Colonisation of Time: Rituals, routine and resistance in the British Empire*, where he explains that Time was a crucial element for the 19<sup>th</sup> century British empire, which allowed for the construction of a Civilised western temporality and colonization of its other.

<sup>47</sup> Fabian, ‘Time and Other,’ p. ix.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> The infamous Zionist slogan: ‘a land without a people for a people without a land.’

<sup>50</sup> Sharon Rotbard (2003) Wall and Tower, Philipp Misselwitz, Tim Rieniets, Zvi Efrat, Rassem Khamaisi, Rami Nasrallah (eds.) *City of Collision* (Birkhäuser Basel: Springer).

rule, environmental planning of Tel Aviv, walls, checkpoints and permit systems in the OPT,<sup>51</sup> without mentioning the infamous blockade of Gaza. At the same time, towering is the epitome of Israeli colonies functioning as “panoptic fortresses.”<sup>52</sup> Being on top of mountains and hilltops, towering functions to gaze *over* surrounding landscapes and Arab towns to maintain and exercise power. The materiality of Israeli-configured space fuses the temporal modalities that generated it in the first place. The Israeli regime of gazing over Palestine/Palestinian enclaves manifests the structural reality of Palestinian *Nakba* within the regiments of Zionist-settler colonial presence, denoting Palestinian forcible absention from history. This act of gazing used to tame, observe and contain the ‘barbarism of the orient,’ as Herzl declared, also imbues gendered and sexualised performances that reveal the crucial role of desire within the Zionist project.

In ‘Land and Desire in Early Zionism,’<sup>53</sup> Boaz Neumann brings into focus what he calls an ‘existential’ aspect of the Zionist project in Palestine: The “pioneer’s desire for the land.”<sup>54</sup> Omitted from studies exploring settlement from political, socio-economic and ideological perspectives, this aspect is crucial to comprehend how conquest instructs Zionism. For Neumann, conquest does not entail violence, rather it is presented as an act of ‘creation, construction and redemption’ of “land without organs through creating its organs.”<sup>55</sup> His study focuses on what Hebrew defines as *halutzim* – pioneers, who were ‘the first’ to engage in activity in ‘the land of Israel.’<sup>56</sup> 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.<sup>57</sup> 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.”<sup>58</sup> For *halutzim*/pioneers, the Zionist narrative is a romantic endeavour; it is a “story of falling in love romantically and even sexually, with the land of Israel.”<sup>59</sup> By imagining and desiring an “always female, virgin beloved mother earth,” the *halutz* seeks to “pierce that virginity and cause their beloved to fall in love with, and even wed them.”<sup>60</sup> Those imaginings capture how the pioneers related to the land through love, sexual fantasies and desires. Neumann draws upon the cases of Zionist leaders, such as David Ben Gurion and Berl Katznelson, and describes their relationship with land as their ‘bride and betrothed,’ and their time with it as a honeymoon. Furthermore, he positions those Zionist leaders as the ‘groom’ who will deliver into the ‘mother-belly of the betrothed soil.’<sup>61</sup> *Halutzim*’s passion for the land also is described in relation to its wondrous beauty, which freed the pioneers being hypnotised by “the mysterious force inherent in the orient as a whole.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Occupied Palestinian Territories.

<sup>52</sup> Eyal Wizeman (2002) 5. Optical Urbanism, *Open Democracy*. Available online at: [https://www.opendemocracy.net/ecology-politics/verticality/article\\_804.jsp](https://www.opendemocracy.net/ecology-politics/verticality/article_804.jsp), accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>53</sup> Boaz Neumann (2011) *Land and Desire in Early Zionism*. Translated from Hebrew by H. Watzman (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press), p. 2.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 80–81.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 53.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

Drawing on Neumann's study, I aim to map out those performances of gender and sexuality that constitute Zionist conquest as a desiring project. His study shows how an "oppositional, binary gender system"<sup>63</sup> 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."<sup>64</sup> 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.<sup>65</sup> In other words, performances of femininity and masculinity that instruct pioneer desire for the land also underwrite the production of the settler-colonial power regime. Desiring is a marker for 'rebirth' of the new Jew, whose newly built nation should stand as "a defence of Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilisation against barbarism."<sup>66</sup> Desiring is a fundamental element to the reproduction of those European geotemporalities of conquest, whence desiring the oriental land permits the Jew to demonstrate its European-ness. Pioneer unification with, and desiring of, the land is said to regenerate the New Jewish body, figured 'without-organs,' signifying a living corpse and disunity,<sup>67</sup> due to exile and degeneracy. It also simultaneously redeems the 'sick,' 'desolate' state of the 'land-without-organs.'<sup>68</sup> The land, therefore, stands 'bare' and 'naked' awaiting and yearning for the 'pioneer-redeemer,'<sup>69</sup> 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.'"<sup>70</sup>

Pioneer conquest as 'creation' emerges within a discursive and fantastical imagining 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."<sup>71</sup> 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.*<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Judith Butler (1999) *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge), p. 30.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> Andrea Smith (2005) *Conquest: Sexual Violence and the American Indian Genocide* (New York: South End Press) p. 23.

<sup>66</sup> Mendes-Filhor & Reinhrz, 'The Jew in the Modern World,' p. 601.

<sup>67</sup> Neumann explains: "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. See Neumann, 'Land and Desire,' pp. 141–142.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 93.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84, author emphasis.

This passage captures desire as the origin story of Zionism, representing both the new Jew, who is desiring the land, and the land that is yearning to be desired by its Jewish conqueror. To trouble 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.'<sup>73</sup> Violent 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 native dispossession, enabling conquest as settler-colonialism to operate. Thus, conquest as 'moral' renders legitimate Zionist presence in Palestine, enabling the structural continuity of *Nakba*. The Zionist desiring project gains its legitimacy through a naturalised account of gendered relations, presenting figures of the penetrator (masculinised) pioneer and the penetrated (feminised) native-land, which also enables the marking of other bodies and desires as *illegitimate*. Pioneer penetration of the woman-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.”<sup>74</sup>

Those gendering and sexualising processes reify the temporal and spatial constituents of Zionist settler colonialism. 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.”<sup>75</sup> Pioneer desire, constructing legitimacy of a moral conquest [creation], derives from the Arabs unnecessary presence on the land, which renders them absent and/or containable within the gaze of the Israeli Zionist conqueror. 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 Zionist presence, constituting its reality in relation to conquest. Desiring the so-called virgin land creates a boundary between Israeli Zionist (settler) presence as potency and Palestinian (indigenous) absence as impotency. Moreover, his settler potency produces a Zionist geography (state of Israel) as Zionist pioneers boast of their ability to fertilise and birth the land of Israel by using expensive European ploughing techniques,<sup>76</sup> which primitive Arabs lacked. The latter's ploughing techniques merely give “pretence of penetrating the soil,”<sup>77</sup> rendering pioneer conquest of land “a human cultural enterprise of great value, a civilising enterprise.”<sup>78</sup> The very phrase ‘conquest of land’ resonates with the Hebrew phrase of *Avodah Ivrit*<sup>79</sup> [Hebrew Labour], capturing early

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<sup>73</sup> 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.” See Butler, ‘Gender Trouble,’ p. 46.

<sup>74</sup> Neumann, ‘Land and Desire,’ p. 85.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 84.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>79</sup> See definition in *The Encyclopaedia and Dictionary of Zionism and Israel (2005)* Avoda ivrit Definition. Available at: [http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Kibbush\\_Haavoda.htm](http://www.zionism-israel.com/dic/Kibbush_Haavoda.htm), Accessed March 19, 2019.

Zionist politics of Jewish exclusive labour dating back to the 1930s.<sup>80</sup> Sustained by the figure of the New Jew who is strong and works the land, this early conquest of labour played a fundamental role in clearing natives from the land and instituting zones of insulated Jewish only lands –*Kibbutzim*– that then became the base to “fashion their ethnocratic state –in waiting– in Mandate Palestine.”<sup>81</sup> This inevitable link between desire–as heteronormativising and productive of gendering processes–and the birthing of an exclusively Jewish state<sup>82</sup> is important to keep in mind when analysing settler colonial conquest in its violent and exclusionary form. The desire for the woman-land allows understanding not only the epistemological and ontological foundation of settler colonial conquest in Palestine, but it also unveils what can be termed as the hetero-conquest foundations of the Zionist project in Palestine. In such a frame, it is possible to understand how Israeli contemporary discourses of modern sexuality and branding Israel as a gay haven necessarily are located within the politics of time space and desiring enfolding the logic of hetero-conquest. Therefore, they should not be approached via those frames [homonationalism and queer liberalism] that examine how ‘queer’ normalises the nation-state. Their essential definition as Israeli/Jewish/Zionist encapsulates a continuum of structural reality of *Nakba* and its modalities of time, space and desire rather than an identifiable moment in Israeli queer liberal time. The following discussion demonstrates the continuity of Zionist hetero-conquest via an exploration of recent Zionist utilisation of Arab gendered, racialized and sexualised bodies to promote discourses and political mobilisation around LGBT liberty that is grounded in Zionist settler colonial presence over Palestine.

### The Arab Transgender Queen of Israel

In May 2016, Israel held its first ever beauty pageant for transgender people and the winner was Talleen Abu Hanna, an ‘Arab citizen of Israel,’ who became Israel’s transgender beauty queen.<sup>83</sup> Abu Hanna’s victory marked a significant historic moment, signalling the undeniable progressiveness of Israel as an LGBT haven.<sup>84</sup> The circulating facts about Israel as a beacon of LGBT emancipation, however, are part of a very carefully engineered array of narratives that aim to frame and sponsor the country as a liberal democracy via its record on gender and sexuality rights. In so doing, those narratives also are engrained into a chrono-geographical scheme that is reminiscent of what has been presented so far. Israel’s record of LGBT tolerance, in fact, is measured in relation to its Arab neighbours, who happen to lack such values. As *Time* comments,

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<sup>80</sup> Robert J. Brym (1988) The Transformation of Menial Labour in Israel, *Newsletter - Association for Israel Studies*, 3(2), pp. 12–15.

<sup>81</sup> Patrick Wolfe, 2012, ‘Purchase by Other Means: The Palestine *Nakba* and Zionism’s Conquest of Economics’ *Journal of Settler Colonial Studies*, 2(1), p. 133.

<sup>82</sup> The recent passing of Jewish national law, adopted officially in July 2018, known as the Nation-State Bill which declares Israel is a nation state of Jewish people is nothing new, as its roots are in the very foundation of the settler-colonial state as exclusively Jewish.

<sup>83</sup> See: Yardena Schwartz (2016) Meet the Arab Woman who has just Become the First Miss Trans Israel, *Time*. Available online at: <http://time.com/4352201/talleen-abu-hanna-first-miss-trans-israel/>, accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* Abu Hannah’s victory is referenced as exemplary of Israel’s progressive values and tolerance for LGBT struggles.

in most Middle East countries, homosexuality is, at best, not tolerated and, at worst, punishable by death. But, in Israel, the government acknowledges transgender women as their chosen gender and allows them the same benefits as the rest of the country's female population. And Tel Aviv, the second-most populous city, boasts a thriving gay community.<sup>85</sup>

In his 2011 speech to the Joint Session of US Congress, the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, emphasised the strong alliance that connects his country to America and stated that his country does not need democracy or nation-building, 'we got it.'<sup>86</sup> Israel's assumed ability to build democracy as per its Western allies in America and Europe is fathomed in relation to a 'lack' present in the rest of the region. As 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."<sup>87</sup> The victory of Abu Hanna effectively coheres with and validates Netanyahu's statement. Abu Hanna embodies a living testimony of the freedom that otherwise would have been denied to her had she not been born within the cradles of Israel's gender and sexual modernity.<sup>88</sup> This is why the various celebratory narratives reflecting and celebrating her victory highlight Abu Hanna's *Arabness*<sup>89</sup> because, as she herself declares, "she wouldn't be alive if [she] grew up in Palestine ... not as a gay man and definitely not as a transgender woman [...] I'm lucky to be an Israeli, being an Israeli means being truly free."<sup>90</sup>

The success story of Israel's Arab transgender queen is not simply a historic moment showcasing Israel's progress on transgender rights, but it sits within the discursive economies of Zionist rightful [settler-colonial] presence over Palestine by virtue of emancipating the 'oriental' 'woman-land.' Being a woman and Arab, in fact, are constituting elements in this victory, as they permit readers to zoom on the necessity of her 'triumph' over her Arab closed-minded background, which rejected her and did not accept her transitioning.<sup>91</sup> The kernel of this story lies in the seemingly possibilities for freedom, progress and emancipation that Abu Hanna, or any other Arab transgender people in their countries, can experience: "because here [I] got what I wouldn't

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<sup>85</sup> See Caroline Cakebread, Israel's first transgender beauty pageant, *Time*. Available online at: <https://theweek.com/captured/640856/israels-first-transgender-beauty-pageant>, accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>86</sup> Rep Joe Walsh (2011) Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu's Speech at the Joint Session of Congress, *YouTube* video 9:56, 24 May 2011. Available online at: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BaMLnb\\_KI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BaMLnb_KI), accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Giovanna Paz (2017) Arab Transgender Beauty Queen Says 'Israel Means Freedom', *Forward*. Available online at: <https://forward.com/fast-forward/374777/arab-transgender-beauty-queen-says-israel-means-freedom/>, accessed 19, March 2019.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> See Tallen Abu Hanna (2017) Transgender Christian Arab Modern Tallen Abu Hanna: 'I'm lucky to be an Israeli', *A Wider Bridge*. Available online at: <https://awiderbridge.org/transgender-christian-arab-model-talleen-abu-hanna-im-lucky-to-be-an-israeli/>, accessed 29, March 2019; Hen Mazzig (2018) Trans by Choice, Trans by Force, *The Jerusalem Post*. Available online at: <https://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Trans-by-choice-trans-by-force-559444>, accessed 19, March 2019.

<sup>91</sup> i24NEWS English (2018) The Triumph of Trans Arab Israeli model Abu Hanna, *YouTube* video, 6 June 2018. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V9T63-4fk9s>, Accessed 19, March 2019.

in any other place ... to be a *fulfilled* woman.”<sup>92</sup> Abu Hannah then declares how proud she is to be Israeli and representing Israel as a country of peace.

Abu Hannah's case and the narratives mobilised around her allows us to map the historical continuity of Zionist hetero-conquest. Similar to the oriental woman-land, whose emancipation awaited *halutz* desiring project -fusing Zionist spatio-temporal constitutive (modern ploughing techniques birthing a Zionist geography)- Abu Hanna's ability to transition successfully as a woman owes to Israel's presence as a place of modern sexual values. Read within the sphere of *Halutz* desiring logic, Abu Hanna is the perfect embodiment of a sexed and gendered other, whose racialised [oriental] essence makes it possible to demarcate the necessity of Zionist conquest, with its moral modern and civilizational attributes. Through Abu Hanna, Israel's unprecedented celebration of transgender rights can be fathomed only in relation to its antithesis: a Palestine to which Abu Hanna is grateful not to belong to. The latter lacks in cultural and moral values that Israel has – [Palestine] would have killed Abu Hanna- while Israel is the one that nurtures and permits the unfolding of her *True* sexed/gendered-self. With this triumph, Abu Hanna is not only said to reveal and fulfil her true gendered self, but is also caught within the discursive promotion of Israel: As a place of peace and a culture of sexual tolerance as opposed to Palestine and rest of the Arab region. The birthing of an Arab transgender queen of Israel, therefore, corresponds to a Zionist settler colonial teleology, generating - once again - the legitimizing grounds for de-legitimising Arabness/Palestine.

### **Desiring the Freedom That Re-Instantiates Hetero-Conquest**

Conceptual frames approaching queerness as a liberal critique would interpret the case of Israel's first Arab beauty queen as the emergence of (queer) homo-normative/nationalist subjectivity, thus serving a liberal/nationalist status quo that is nevertheless racist. Drawing on decolonial queering, however, I capture the historical continuity of hetero-conquest and the embedded violence on a native self from without and from within. This lens invites the reader to reflect on the case of Abu Hannah - and the narratives around her – as part and parcel of the history of Zionist conquest, whose constitutive gendering and racializing elements cohere with a structural settler-colonial politics of Time, Space and Desire. More importantly, decolonial queering situates queerness in relation to hetero-conquest generated from *within* Arab-native self-struggle and adopted taxonomies for emancipation. In other words, the story of the first Arab transgender queen in Israel is not simply a moment of queer liberal time, where 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.’ This would be a reductive analysis that divorces the event from a wider historical continuity of settler-colonial conquest and its generative production of the conquerable other. This triumph explains how those same dynamics of hetero-conquest – mapped above – perpetuate, whereby the colonising saviour self-legitimises its presence over the woman/land by virtue of extending those progressive values and tools the native is presumed to lack. What is important in Abu Hannah's case is that *she* as an *Arab* who

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<sup>92</sup> Miss trans Star International (2016) Miss Israel: Tallen Abu Hanna, *YouTube* video, 12 September 2016. Available online at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bFKvVsdCl4k>, Accessed 19, March 2019.

is said to reify this narrative of Israel's legitimate *presence* by virtue of promoting herself as Israeli and mobilising international support for Israel. She, therefore, confirms the Zionist colonial fantasy of having to endow conquest, as Neumann would perceive it in its moral liberating terms vis-à-vis the woman-native who is *yearning for her conqueror*.

From here, we can begin to see how a reading of Abu Hannah's victory within the lens of decolonial queering and mapping the historical continuity of hetero-conquest simultaneously would entail situating this triumph, and the self-endorsed-vision for liberation it promotes, in relation to the parameters of a wider Arab/native theologies for liberation. Decolonial queering invites us to situate the emancipatory narrative Abu Hannah's figure encapsulates within the taxonomies of liberation that Palestine underwent from the late 1970's until now. This liberation came to reproduce rather than challenge the outlined logics of hetero-conquest. I aim to show this by reviewing two major junctures in Palestinian political history, which had significant impact on moulding a liberation that, as I argue, re-instantiates hetero-conquest. First is the waging of the Intifada; and second, the rise of the Palestinian Authority via the Oslo peace process.

The Intifada—Arabic for uprising or sudden shaking—represents one of the most significant events in Palestinian political history and struggle for self-determination. It is also the window to understanding the consolidation of the Palestinian nationalist image for liberation that is gendered.<sup>93</sup> Through the Intifada, Palestinian liberation was perceived in masculinist terms of liberating the woman-land. Liberation via Intifada is an amalgamation of nationalist rhetoric around the raped-woman land, and the need for masculinised agents<sup>94</sup> to protect their honour— seen in relation to women bodies— while celebrating heterosexual consummation that is giving birth to the 'children of the revolution.'<sup>95</sup> As Zionism envisioned the land as a woman in need of 'pioneer insemination,' so Palestinians constructed a vision of self-determination that is linked to recuperating the honour<sup>96</sup> of the raped motherland. As such, Palestinian nationalist rhetoric around the rightfulness of anti-colonial struggle relied on the same hetero-modalities of emancipation introduced via conquest.

While the Palestinian Intifada served as a reminder to Israel of the threat that awaits it from a people who never will cease to fight to liberate their land,<sup>97</sup> this vision for liberation, however, matured into a new formula when its same masculinised agents signed the Oslo Accords in the early 1990's. PLO *recognition* of Israel within parameters of the Oslo Accords not only brought Fatah leaders to transition from founding-fathers of Intifada to occupying the role of Palestinian National Authority [PNA] figures who hold

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<sup>93</sup> See: Leila Khalili (2007) *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Joseph Massad (1995) Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism, *Middle East Journal*, 49(3), pp. 467–483; Tina Malhi-Sherwell (2001) Imagining Palestine as the Motherland, Tali Ben Zvi and Yael Lerer (eds.) *Self Portrait: Palestinian Women's Art* (Tel Aviv: Andalus), pp. 160–166.

<sup>94</sup> Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine'.

<sup>95</sup> Palestine National Council (1988) Political Communiqués, in Yehuda Lukacs (1992) *The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: A Documentary Record, 1967–1990* - 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 415.

<sup>96</sup> The famous Palestinian proverb '*al-ard heya al-ard*' ['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 Nadeera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2009) *Militarization and Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

<sup>97</sup> The Intifada was a reminder to Israelis of what their first Prime Minister David Ben Gurion once said: "A people which (sic) fights against the usurpation of its land will not tire so easily." See BBC News (2008) 1987: The Intifada. Available online at: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle\\_east/7381369.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/7381369.stm), accessed 19, March 2019.



semi-autonomy over stipulated enclaves, but it also witnessed the creation of a new era with Palestinian liberation succumbing to blatant recognition of and normalisation<sup>98</sup> with the colonising regime. It thus is not surprising to see current, *de facto*, PNA leader Mahmoud Abbas, explicitly announcing from his Ramallah-base his authority's un-doubtful recognition of the Israeli state and the legitimacy of its future. This recognition he declares is opposed to any 'ridiculous' claims that the PNA seeks to bring Palestinian refugees back or to act as a threat to the security of Israeli state.<sup>99</sup> In fact, the rise of the PNA to power on the back of a peace treaty with Israel signalled a remarkable transition from masculinised agents of the revolution to occupying the position of statesmen/capitalist elites<sup>100</sup> who uphold and promote a politics of liberation that embeds aspirations for a state-recognition. This new route of envisioning liberation via the parameters of state-making relies on the need for a recognition of legitimacy by the very power, and its international political allies, that subjugated Palestine in the first place.

This politics of blatant normalisation and recognition of Israel's legitimacy on behalf of the Palestinian leadership permits us to map out the continuity of hetero/conquest in Palestinian politics of emancipation à la the statist aspirations of its leaders. Oslo is the catalyst moment for an establishment of a PNA regime that relies on as well as maintains the colonial politics of Time and Space, which, as discussed above, are central to conquest. This maintenance and reproduction of a system that "buoys the powers of colonial governance"<sup>101</sup> can be captured via the agenda of securitisation that the new PNA regime represents through its official endorsement of the 'detering terrorism agenda,'<sup>102</sup> whose simultaneous support by both the United States and Israel indicates the institutionalisation of a protection regime for the Israeli state. At the same time, this securitising agenda comes hand-in-hand with a modernising outlook,

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<sup>98</sup> In reference to security coordination which PNA *de facto* leader Mahmoud Abbas described as "sacred" in one of his speeches, see Elhanan Miller (2014) Abbas Avows to Uphold 'Sacred' Security Coordination with Israel, *The Times of Israel*. Available online at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/abbas-vows-to-uphold-sacred-security-coordination-with-israel/>, accessed 19, March 2019. In the sphere of economic cooperation between Palestinian capitalists, with nascent ties to PNA, and Israel despite the global call for BDS. See Tariq Dana (2014) The Palestinian Capitalists That Have Gone Too Far, *Al-Shabaka The Palestinian Policy Network*. Available online at: <https://al-shabaka.org/briefs/palestinian-capitalists-have-gone-too-far/>, accessed 19, March 2019.

<sup>99</sup> See BBC News Arabic (2014) Abu Mazeen: We do not want to drown Israel with refugees. Available online at: [http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/02/140216\\_abbas\\_refugees\\_flood](http://www.bbc.com/arabic/middleeast/2014/02/140216_abbas_refugees_flood), accessed 19, March 2019.

<sup>100</sup> See Raja Khalidi & Sobhi Samour (2011) Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Programme and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 40(2), pp. 6–25.

<sup>101</sup> Qwo-Li Driskill, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley & Scott L. Morgensen (eds.) (2011) *Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics and Literature* (Arizona: Arizona University Press), p. 19.

<sup>102</sup> This is particularly captured in more recent reforms of PNA security apparatus, which took place after second Intifada to capture what US and Israel perceived as the need for dismantling any prospect for terror. Former PM Sharon advocated this at 2003 conference: "1. Dismantling all existing security bodies loyal to Arafat, which he 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; and 3. Immediate renewal of Palestinian-Israeli security cooperation." He stressed that "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." See Tariq Dana (2014) The Beginning of the End of Palestinian Security Coordination with Israel?, *Jadaliyya*. Available online at: [http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18379/the-beginning-of-the-end-of-palestinian-security-c?fb\\_comment\\_id=571970826245239\\_575963662512622](http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/18379/the-beginning-of-the-end-of-palestinian-security-c?fb_comment_id=571970826245239_575963662512622), accessed 19 March, 2019. See: <http://eupolcops.eu/>, accessed June 24, 2017.

which a segment of PNA- affiliated capitalist-elites<sup>103</sup> adopted in order to showcase Palestine's readiness for statehood recognition. Developmental initiatives, such as the building of the Palestinian modern city Al Rawabi,<sup>104</sup> not only foster the rise of an elitist strata, working blatantly to enforce cooperation and peaceful 'economic cooperation' with Israel,<sup>105</sup> but they also re-generate the very geo-temporalities of colonial conquest. These mechanisms of "gazing at space, fragmenting space, controlling the mountain tops and creating gated communities" epitomised in the architectural model of Al Rawabi<sup>106</sup> very much echo Zionist spatialities of conquest and capture a notion of temporal progress reinscribing the logics of settler-colonialism. In fact, central to such proliferation of the modernising agenda is the promotion of a new Palestinian self that is able to distance itself from 'a terrorist past,' and thereby qualifying for state-recognition. Rawabi's founder 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."<sup>107</sup> We can see here how this modernizing agenda conjoins the PNA securitising regime as it maintains a status quo of cooperation with the colonial state while marking a distance from a Palestinian –terrorist- self/Others seen as a threat to the maintenance of PNA rule<sup>108</sup> via the parameters of statist recognition.

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<sup>103</sup> Dana, 'The Palestinian Capitalist.'

<sup>104</sup> See online website of Rawabi Municipality, <https://www.rawabi.ps/>, accessed March 19, 2019.

<sup>105</sup> This is in reference to al Rawabi's founder the billionaire Bashar Al-Masri, who is the nephew of one of the richest Palestinians, Munib Al-Masri (also a former PA minister). Like his uncle, who is vocal on the need to pursue business as usual with Israel. See Elhanan Miller (2012) Former PA minister and billionaire slammed by Palestinian boycott group for discussing peace with supermarket mogul, *The Times of Israel*. Available online at: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/former-pa-minister-and-billionaire-slammed-by-palestinian-boycott-group-for-discussing-peace-with-supermarket-mogul/>, accessed 19, March 2019. Bashar boasts that he built Rawabi through economic cooperation with Israel. He advocates that "every construction project in Palestine must have components from Israel." See Dorota Kozaczuk (2015) The Hegemonic Ideal of Neoliberal Space of Peace. Rawabi, Palestine, a Case Study (Unpublished MSc Thesis: School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London), p. 32. See also BDS statement with regard to Al Masri: Ali Abunimah (2012) Boycott committee: Palestinian 'Rawabi' tycoon Bashar Masri 'must end all normalization activities with Israel,' *Electronic Intifada*. Available online at: <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/boycott-committee-palestinian-rawabi-tycoon-bashar-masri-must-end-all>, accessed 19 March 2019.

<sup>106</sup> Palestinian architect Yazid Anani comments on how al Rawabi is built in a manner that bears "striking similarities to Israeli settlements." See Yazid Anani (2011) Designing Civic Encounter, *Academia the Mirror*. Available online at: [http://www.artterritories.net/designingcivicencounter/?page\\_id=13](http://www.artterritories.net/designingcivicencounter/?page_id=13), accessed 19 March, 2019.

<sup>107</sup> Harriet Sherwood (2016) Story of cities #49: the long road to Rawabi, Palestine's first planned city, *The Guardian*. Available online at: <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/may/24/story-cities-rawabi-planned-city-palestine>, accessed 19 March, 2019.

<sup>108</sup> The case of the young Palestinian Basil Al Araj who was killed at the hands of Israeli military forces in the West Bank encapsulates those Others threatening PNA and occupation regimes. Before targeting him in a military operation, Basiil was detained and tortured in PNA prisons along with five of his friends (Basil was known as a young Palestinian intellectual and activist who believed in the need to resist the Israeli colonial regime; he was head of HIRAK Shababi Falastini- Palestinian Youth Movement, which emerged at the outset of the 2011 Arab revolutions as a spontaneous movement for Palestinian youth who call for resistance to occupation. Despite the fact the Harak adopted primarily non-violent means for resistance, it has been branded by Israel as a terrorist movement. See: *Aljazeera Arabic* (2017) Bassel Al Araj: The engaged intellectual martyr. Available online at: <https://www.aljazeera.net/encyclopedia/icons/2017/3/7/%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B3%D9%84-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A3%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%AC-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%AB%D9%82%D9%81-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85%D8%B4%D8%AA%D8%A8%D9%83-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D9%87%D9%8A%D8%AF> (source in Arabic), accessed 19 March 2019; an Budour Youssef Hassan (2017) Never Obey the Occupation: The Legacy of Bassel Al-Araj, *Electronic Intifada*. Available online at: <https://electronicintifada.net/content/never-obey-occupation-legacy-bassel-al-araj/19851>, accessed 19 March 2019.

### Why Decolonial Queering Matters?

In light of the above, we can begin to map the value of decolonial queering as it enables us to trace the historical continuity of hetero-conquest whereby colonial conquest dictates a violent process of racialized, gendered and sexualised classifications that infuse its politics of Time and Space. More importantly, decolonial queering enables us to engage colonised re-production of the logics of this hetero-conquest via the very theologies of emancipation it adopts. Both Abu Hannah and the Palestinian leadership articulate taxonomy of liberation that is reproductive of hetero-conquest classifications of a native-self/other. They further reflect native entrapment within strictures of recognition that is symptomatic of re-instantiating the logics of hetero-conquest. The triumph of 'Israel's transgender Arab queen' is symptomatic of a native politics of emancipation that, reliant on colonial classifications of gender, sexuality and race, succumbs to reproducing the spatio-temporal parameters of conquest. As such, decolonial queering poses the question on how to counter native internalisation of hetero-conquest within the frames of emancipation they come to uphold. In order to explain what this internalisation means, I engage with the insights of Sarah Ahmed and Frantz Fanon to explicate colonised orientations to coloniser's worldviews, desires, spaces and times.

In *The Promise of Happiness*, Sara Ahmed argues that happiness and discourses on the good-life operate within existing structures of power.<sup>109</sup> She demonstrates how subjects orient themselves toward happy objects because happiness is positioned as 'the right thing.'<sup>110</sup> In other words, to desire happiness also means that happiness is what you get in return for desiring well.<sup>111</sup> This is where the regulatory premise of happiness lies, since it includes a historic distribution of good/bad, happy/wretch that sustains the dominant power structure. 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,'<sup>112</sup> which is presumed to produce 'goodness' and/or 'happiness' for the colonised 'wretched' other. Ahmed's insights seek to link to Frantz Fanon's<sup>113</sup> book on the 'good habits' of the coloniser.<sup>114</sup> Fanon refers to the colonised's [black men] internalization<sup>115</sup> of the colonial order, as they seek 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 by the colonised toward the coloniser's spaces/temporalities is instructed by a need to distance oneself from the 'wretchedness of the colonised.'

Abu Hannah's quest for freedom and triumph of her rights as a transgender person enfold a desire for proximities to Israel as the space where such recognition can happen because of Israel's progressive values. This means marking a distance from the wretchedness of her native Palestine world where such emancipation always is seen as failing. Abu Hannah's figure encapsulates the fantasy of the 'emancipated Arab

<sup>109</sup> Sara Ahmed (2010) *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

<sup>110</sup> Ibid, p. 29.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.34.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 125.

<sup>113</sup> Frantz Fanon (1967) *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto Press).

<sup>114</sup> In her exploration of the 'mimic man' (2010: 129–130), Ahmad references Homi Bhabha. She also uses Fanon's insights in *Black Skin, White Mask* and *Wretched of the Earth* elsewhere in the book.

<sup>115</sup> He also calls it epidermalization of the inferiority dynamic. See Fanon, 'The Wretched of the Earth,' p. 13.

LGBT<sup>116</sup>, whose rights are being recognised by the humanist values of the coloniser. This recognition of Arab LGBT rights is based on the make-believe of bodily ‘flow’<sup>117</sup> into [coloniser] world by virtue of realising the freedom that is otherwise denied by ‘wretched [native] society’ (Palestine would have restrained Abu Hannah’s wish to become a woman and/or killed her as a gay man). In a similar vein, Palestinian leadership constructs a vision of liberation that enfolds the misrecognition granted through the mesh of colonial gendered and geopolitical orderings. Palestinian national rhetoric first imagines liberation through hetero-patriarchal orientations, echoing gendered performativities of conquest, and then via an endorsement of a politics of statist recognition that accommodates to colonial power configurations of Time and Space. Palestinian leadership upholds and promotes the fantasy of a futural self-determining Palestine by virtue of modernising and securitising – working against a wretched past that in turn should mark Palestine’s ‘flow’ (freedom) in the world.

Decolonial queering is a process of both revealing and challenging the subjective and objective<sup>118</sup> elements of hetero-conquest as charted above. It derives from a process of crafting a divergent mode of being and relating away from colonisers taxonomies. Thus, it allows the native Palestinian to reflect critically on how desire for emancipation and so recognition, interacting with dominant power structures, perpetuates rather than alleviates the causes of one’s suffering (native subjectivisation within the terms of hetero-conquest). This realisation works against the *misrecognition* or false consciousness, where flawed acceptance of the colonial order continues at the intimate (subjective) and geopolitical (objective) scales.<sup>119</sup> In other words, decolonial queering creates a space for critique<sup>120</sup> that combines both topological (concept of emancipation and recognition) and topographical (colonial spatio-temporalities) spaces.

Decolonial queering exposes the fantasy of recognition that Israel endows onto its Arab LGBT subjectivity by bringing to mind those Arab bodies, LGBT identified or otherwise, that the Zionist settler-colonial state subjects to structural and violent forms of erasure and dispossession from its inception to now. This denial does not only manifest itself in systematic killing and brutalising of Palestinian bodies but also in the very structure of economic and political subordination, including through systematic denial of the very health care-system<sup>121</sup> without which Abu Hannah would not be able to transition in the first place. In other words, decolonial queering ensues a ‘will to be

<sup>116</sup> Giovanna Paz (2017) Arab Transgender Beauty Queen Says ‘Israel Means Freedom’, *Forward*. Available online at: <https://forward.com/fast-forward/374777/arab-transgender-beauty-queen-says-israel-means-freedom/>, accessed 19, March 2019.

<sup>117</sup> In reference to Ahmed’s idea of happiness as entailing a flow in the world as opposed to being restrained. See Ahmed, ‘The Promise of Happiness’, p. 169.

<sup>118</sup> Fanon shows how colonialism operates not only on *objective* level, capturing structural and historical processes through which it functions, but also in the *subjective* realm that encapsulates human attitudes to these conditions. See Coulthard, ‘Skin White Masks’, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Once again, this derives from Fanon’s explication of colonization as it functions in ‘a double process,’ see Fanon, ‘Black Skin White Masks’, p. 13. This ‘double process’ for Glen Coulthard means the need not to absolve the focus on structural issues from the psycho-effective domain that Fanon so crucially identified, thus revealing the inter-relatedness of subjective with objective forms of colonialism, which means necessity as Fanon insisted to decolonize on both levels. See Coulthard, ‘Skin White Masks’, p. 8.

<sup>120</sup> Lauren Martin & Anna Secor (2014) Towards a post-mathematical topology, *Progress in Human Geography*, 38 (3), pp. 420–438.

<sup>121</sup> See Sarab Abu-Rabia Queder (2017) Insidious Cleansing: Settler Colonialism and the Biopolitics of Health in Occupied Palestine, *Current Sociology*, 67(1), pp. 141–158.

stressed' as opposed to *flowing happily*,<sup>122</sup> by the forces of conquest rendering conquerable<sup>123</sup> a native other. This ensuing of a revolutionary consciousness that is willed to be stressed<sup>124</sup> by the forces of hetero-conquest, which has determined native recognition *a priori* deniable, cannot be seen as separate from a wider- collective- capacity to imagine decolonisation beyond the parameters of colonial politics of Time and Space. In fact, both Abu Hannah and the Palestinian Leadership re-enact a politics enshrined in the *failure* of an emancipating Palestine. On the one hand, Abu Hannah's figure encapsulates the discursive effects of a Palestine that always will fail to accommodate her rights as an LGBT person, hence [LGBT] freedom only can be granted through Israeli/Zionist *presence*. PNA endorsement of a liberation politics of recognition, on the other hand, is symptomatic of the sedimentation of leadership's political failure to carve any alternative means for liberation, hence unavoidability of PNA inclusion within geopolitical structures of colonial governance. In both scales we reach the inevitability of accepting and normalising the logics of Zionist *presence* and so *hetero-conquest*.

Decolonial queering invests in the possibility to see beyond the compulsory paradigms consolidating colonised failure. Unlike Butler's conceptualising of queer a la the notion of failure,<sup>125</sup> decolonial queering invests in the will to fight the failure that is an inherent constitutive of colonised performative subjecthood. It is a process of crafting a revolutionary agency whose aspiration for change derives from the firm belief that "revolutionaries must dream; if their imagination dwells *on* the injustice of how things stay they do not simply dwell *in* what stays."<sup>126</sup> To emerge beyond failure is a political and ethical stance where native self-initiation takes place by turning inward and away from the coloniser's frames of "liberty and justice."<sup>127</sup> Thus, it is the process of making room for self-affirmation that is *consciously disorientated* from the other's colonising gaze by becoming, first and foremost, invested in *recognising oneself*. To begin to recognise oneself is a double process of affirmation and critique from which arises alternative modes of being and desiring beyond colonial-configurations of emancipation and recognition. Thus, it is a recognition that inscribes the will *not to be obedient*<sup>128</sup> in the face of dissolution and elimination of native life through systematic expropriation of the land on which the settler "erects a new colonial society."<sup>129</sup>

Instrumental to the foundation of this colonial society in Palestine has been Zionist production of native sub-identities and classifications (Druze, Muslim Christians) that enabled the ghettoization of Palestinians from one another and the simultaneous liquidation of their connection to any larger native unit (Arab/Palestinian). Abu Hannah and

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<sup>122</sup> Ahmed, 'The Promise of Happiness', p. 169.

<sup>123</sup> I refer here to Patrick Wolfe's understanding of settler colonialism as premised on elimination and conquering native peoples. See Wolfe, 'Purchase by Other Means', p. 135.

<sup>124</sup> Sarah Ahmed explains that revolutionary consciousness emerges to challenge 'false-consciousness' or native 'misrecognition.' See Ahmed, 'The Promise of Happiness', pp. 164-169.

<sup>125</sup> Judith Butler's theorisation of queer emerges in relation to a notion of "failure." 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." See Butler, 'Gender Trouble', p. 179.

<sup>126</sup> Ahmed, 'The Promise of Happiness', p. 196.

<sup>127</sup> Fanon, 'Black Skin White Masks', p. 221.

<sup>128</sup> In: Hassan, 'Never Obey the Occupation.'

<sup>129</sup> Patrick Wolfe (2006) Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8(4), p. 388.

the narratives mobilised around her ethnic identity, as an ‘Israeli/Arab’—also often identified as a ‘Christian Arab’, is symptomatic of the ways in which Israel establishes itself as a supremacist Jewish colony through internal re-ordering of remaining Palestinians along religious sects/minorities (Christian, Muslim, Druze), leaving them disconnected from each other and from affiliation to Palestine/Palestinian identification<sup>130</sup> whilst simultaneously confirming the infamous Zionist mantra of *a land without a people for a people without a land*. This ghettoization and fragmentation of a Palestinian polity has been happening both through systematic and violent regiments of dividing and enclaving of Palestinians<sup>131</sup> as well as through its absorption and reproduction among communities falling prey to the colonizer’s economies of recognition.<sup>132</sup> Thus, native dispossession occurs not only through the violence that directly kills native subjects but also through “destroy[ing] their sense of being a people.”<sup>133</sup> The spread of inter-communitarian violence<sup>134</sup> across the varied Palestinian designated enclaves is part and parcel of native reproduction of those sub-identities that the coloniser then instrumentalises for the continuation of structural conditions of *Nakba*. In fact, Palestine witnessed the solidification of this fragmentation when Palestinian imagination of futural state recognition ‘on territories captured in 1967’ served to re-instantiate a ‘Green line boundary,’<sup>135</sup> whose imposition of sub-identities and categories<sup>136</sup>—embedded in colonial power subjectivisation—takes for granted ‘Israeli’ *presence*. Palestinian inter-factional division, and the major rift and eruption of violence that happened in 2007 between Fatah and Hamas, served further to submerge Palestinians in geopolitical polarization<sup>137</sup> (West Bank/Gaza) whilst colonial Judaization<sup>138</sup> continues hand in hand with a systematic fractionalisation<sup>139</sup> of Palestine and Palestinians.

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<sup>130</sup> As Magid Shihada reveals, “While the Jews became categorised as such (religiously and ethnically nationally), the Palestinians were defined as ‘Israeli Arabs’ – a category that makes them belong fully to neither. It also defined them according to their religious affiliations and created new ones. Thus, as of 1948, they turned from being Palestinians, to become Christians, Muslims, and Druze”. Magid Shihada (2012) *Settler Colonialism and Conflict: the Israeli state and its Palestinian subjects*, *Settler Colonial Studies*, (2)1, p. 111.

<sup>131</sup> This is in reference to the military period that was most cruel on remaining Palestinians post 1948 as well as the means through which Israel established its policies of classifying and enclosing Palestinians within the various enclaves it allocates to them.

<sup>132</sup> In reference to the Druze community which Israel recognised as a distinct ethnic group in the 1950s, thus, leading to “their religious identity being ethicised, politicised and directed towards hostility against Arab and Palestinians.” See Shihada, *Settler Colonialism and Conflict*, p.111.

<sup>133</sup> Andrea Smith (2005) *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide* (New York: South End Press), p. 3.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p. 113.

<sup>135</sup> The official boundary separating the state of Israel from OPT.

<sup>136</sup> Centrality of West Bank and Gaza and disconnecting from 1948 Palestinians (inside Israel proper) and the refugees who are dispersed outside of Palestine.

<sup>137</sup> See Jamil Hilal (2010) The Polarization of the Palestinian Political Field, *Journal of Palestine Studies* 39(3), pp. 24-39.

<sup>138</sup> Another term for expropriation of land from natives by Jewish settlers What Israel is doing in the Negav against indigenous Bedouin population is a clear example of systematic Judaization (replacement of natives with Jewish settlers): Mansour Nasasra (2012) The Ongoing Judaisation of the Naqab and the Struggle for Recognising the Indigenous Rights of the Arab Bedouin People, *Settler Colonial Studies*, (2)1, pp. 81-107.

<sup>139</sup> Ghazi-Walid Falah (2005) The geopolitics of ‘Enclavisation’ and the demise of a two-state Solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, *Third World Quarterly*, 26(8), pp. 1341–1372.

Decolonial queering is a process of careful examination of the forces maintaining native entrapment within the system of colonial compartmentalisation. It underlines the will to disorientate from the “crushing objecthood”<sup>140</sup> sealing the native away from her own self, history and space. Such disorientation underlies a re-orientation that is invested in “opening a life”<sup>141</sup> and making room for a reconstructed sense of ‘We’ with the capacity to rupture the colonial order of Manichean compartmentalising.<sup>142</sup> Fanon spoke of the capacity to emerge as one “great body that refuses any mutilation.”<sup>143</sup> This capacity to build a unified self/nation is an important moment for the colonised to emerge in her recognition of their own bodies as they ‘make [her/him] question!’<sup>144</sup> To historicise and understand native bodies in their struggle against conquest is a means of carving a directionality toward the yet-to-be inhabited<sup>145</sup> consciousness. This openness to dialectic thinking that decolonial queering gestures toward is one that calls the native to remain vigilant in the face of reproducing/re-instantiating the brutality of thought inherent in the Manichean logics of hetero-conquest. Thus, native liberation is an embodied experience that is crucially embedded in conscientious disorientation from the forces that re-instantiate colonial logic of Manichean delirium<sup>146</sup> whence resurging as an anti-colonial unit that fixates meaning suppressing her *own* differences. This openness to “shades of meanings”<sup>147</sup> does not collapse to timeless humanism of colonial emancipation as Fanon warned.<sup>148</sup> Rather, it emerges to articulate and practice a difference that is rooted in the fight against the politics, of time space and desire maintaining native subjection on multiple scales.

### A Means toward Radical Liberatory Critique

This article argues for the necessity of contemplating a theory of decolonial queering as it weaves queering into decolonisation from within the forces maintaining Zionist settler-colonialism in Palestine. Theories of queer critiques emerging from global north contexts of racism and homonormativity fall short of accounting for settler-colonialism

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<sup>140</sup> Fanon, ‘Black Skin White Masks’, p. 109.

<sup>141</sup> Ahmed, ‘The Promise of Happiness’, p. 20.

<sup>142</sup> Palestinian feminists have a long history of pushing against the boundaries of who ‘we are’ including priorities of national struggle and what that means in relation to women’s issues and the violence that they have to endure at the hand of colonial machine and patriarchy instilled in our society. One recent example is the transnational feminist march that took place across different spaces and cities inside Palestine but also outside it (i.e. Beirut and Berlin). See Arab48 (2019) Marching out: Palestinian feminist protest beyond fragmentation, available online at: <https://www.arab48.com/%D8%B4%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D9%88%D9%85%D8%AC%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%B9/%D8%AA%D9%82%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%B1/2019/09/24/%D8%B7%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA-11-%D9%88%D9%82%D9%81%D8%A9-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%85%D9%8A%D8%B3-%D9%88%D8%AD%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%83-%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D9%8A-%D9%81%D9%84%D8%B3%D8%B7%D9%8A%D9%86%D9%8A-%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B0%D9%85%D8%A9->, accessed October 19, 2019.

<sup>143</sup> Frantz Fanon (1964) *Toward the African Revolution: Political Essays* (Boston: Grove Press), p. 192.

<sup>144</sup> In reference to Fanon’s final prayer in the end of *Black Skin, White Masks*: “O my body make of me always a man who questions,” p. 232.

<sup>145</sup> Sarah Ahmed (2006) *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), p. 12.

<sup>146</sup> Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, p. xxi.

<sup>147</sup> Nigel Gibson (1999) Beyond Manicheanism: Dialectics in the thought of Frantz Fanon, *Journal of Political Ideologies*, 4(3), pp. 356.

<sup>148</sup> Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 178–179.

as an amalgam of politics of space, time and desire –hetero-conquest- against which stands the value of decolonial queering, initiating a radical liberatory critique. Decolonial queering emerges from native’s positionality against the forces maintaining settler-colonial presence, including through a reproduction of coloniser’s frames of emancipation and recognition in intimate and geopolitical spheres. Decolonial queering, therefore, posits critical questions to native subjects with regard to the freedom that they envision and to which they relate, permitting them to see the restrictive strictures of freedom endowed via the misrecognition of one’s own history and true struggle.

Strands of Latin American and Native American studies have undertaken to examine decolonial epistemologies offered via queer indigeneity and/or borderland-Chicanas.<sup>149</sup> However, it remains a necessary task to *re-centre* Palestine and its geopolitical/geocolonial specificity within this debate, allowing a firm re-situation of the settler colonial framework on the agenda of queer(y)ing Palestine.<sup>150</sup> Decolonial queering from Palestine invests in mapping subjects whose capacity to instil a transformative praxis emerges from the will to see against the failure to imagine beyond the logic of “my father wants to kill me, Israel is a democracy.”<sup>151</sup> “Such will to become active agents in the day-to-day work for opening our society to its own bodily and gendered differences proceeds the will to recognise Palestinian-ness and Palestine Otherwise.”<sup>152</sup> To do so, means to start seeing beyond the failure of converting the openings created by mass mobilisations into moments of real change. Thus, rather than collapsing the Intifada into national rhetoric that reified hetero-conquest by carving a directionality toward Oslo, collapsing any possibilities of a genuine liberation that challenges the essence of hetero-conquest, decolonial queering calls for an imagination of Palestine to emerge within new radical semantics, geopolitics and intimate desiring. Decolonial queering, as such, seeks praxis for liberation that enables a restoration of Palestine beyond directionalities of conquest by inviting both Palestine and Palestinians to recognise and re-evaluate the value of her/their own [hi]stories, geographies and bodies.

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<sup>149</sup> See for example Emma Perez’s investigations of decolonial queering as a form of challenging white heteronormative bordering paradigms between Mexico and the US. Thus, a means of queering the border through a non-white, noncolonial and nonheteronormative eye (p. 128). Emma Perez (2003) Queering the Borderlands: The Challenges of Excavating the Invisible and Unheard, *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* (2/3), pp. 122–131.

<sup>150</sup> Salamanca calls for centring settler colonialism to Palestine studies can be further extended to queer approaches of Palestine. See Salamanca et al (2012) Past is Present: Settler Colonialism in Palestine, *Settler Colonial Studies*, 2(1), pp. 1–8.

<sup>151</sup> In reference to the political praxis of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestine, which, as I explored elsewhere, functions as a space revealing the value of decolonial queering as a politics that challenges the premise of LGBT identifications within the logic of Palestine as homophobic versus Israel as space of LGBT haven. See Alqaisiya, ‘Decolonial Queering’, p. 37.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.



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