“We Don’t Need the Key, We’ll Break In”: Learning about the Occupation through Aesthetic Encounters with Three Artists

Amber Noelle Merucci

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Abstract

This dissertation explores developing a pedagogy that is concerned with what might be learnt about the Occupation of Palestine from artists and their work. I consider the pedagogical significance of imagery in relation to loss by examining art as having a transformative potential. The dissertation draws on literature, artworks, and interviews that I conducted with three Palestinian contemporary artists: respectively, Ayed Arafah, Hamza Abu Ayyash, and Majd Abdel Hamid. I do so in order to explore how people find themselves caught in history and how these three post-Nakba artists nevertheless navigate and challenge the Occupation while calling for democratic and political freedom. Through my thinking with the artworks, I offer a new reading on how experiences with insurmountable loss are traversed and contested through art that resists. In particular, I seek to explore the pedagogical potential of political aesthetic practices in spaces of confinement: how art that resists can illuminate complex ideas and so unveil that which is hidden or muted, thus making room to reimagine alternative ways of thinking, doing, or being that are not limited to the confines of colonial logic.

Keywords: Aesthetics, Art, Decolonial, Israel, Occupation, Palestine, Pedagogy, Resistance, Resurgence

Dedication

Mama, you lit the fire.

Mom, you breathed air into it.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my nephews and nieces. I hope you live life like the adventure it is. I hope you stay curious and never stop learning. I hope you act with kindness, generosity, and gratitude. I hope you believe you are capable of doing what is important and meaningful for you. I hope you give yourself many opportunities to fail and to pick yourself back up and try again.

“But what will happen if I go?

“I don’t know. But it is written what will happen if you stay.”

- anonymous

(Thank you, Mr. Krisak)

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Introduction: Aesthetic Encounters and Imagining "Worlds Otherwise"

Hiraeth, Welsh in origin, is a word I have thought a lot about during my dissertation. I would like to say my Welsh ancestors taught me about this noun, a single word with a meaning that traverses time, and space. Instead, it was a word I came across by fluke and yet it is a word that would resurface in my thoughts time and time again. Representing feelings of loss, it needs several words to explain its pedagogical depths. Hiraeth is a yearning for a home that does not exist or never was. It is a nostalgia or longing for lost places of one's past. It is a homesickness for a home to which you cannot return. Hiraeth best reflects how my project began.

Hiraeth is a concept for which there are many different words in many other languages, all reflecting shared sentiments about displacement and longing. Palestinian exile Edward Said (2000), in "Reflections on Exile and Other Essays," wrote about his time living in New York City, stating, "The greatest single fact of the past three decades has been, I believe, the vast human migration attendant upon war, colonialism and decolonization, economic and political revolution, and such devastating occurrences as famine, ethnic cleansing, and great power machinations" (introduction). Said (2000) continues, speaking on the transformation he saw in New York City in response to vast human migration and how "all these things are reflected immediately in the changes that transform neighborhoods, professions, cultural production, and topography on an almost hour-by-hour basis" (introduction). Furthermore, "Exiles, émigrés, refugees, and

expatriates uprooted from their lands must make do in new surroundings" (introduction). Having to make do in new surroundings, Said (2000) refers to the creativity as well as the sadness that permeates the streets where those uprooted roam. Those uprooted, such as Said, must navigate and reconcile their own sense of hiraeth, their longing for a home to which they can possibly never return. Twenty-one years later, and I wonder how so many more displaced individuals and communities grapple with such overwhelming loss, grapple with the longing to return to a home that is no longer there or never was.

My Muse: Weaving Imagery and Hiraeth

Second to, "what kind of job will you get after you graduate?" the most common question I am asked in relation to my dissertation is why I chose to write on Occupied[1] Palestine. This question may be asked because of my Italian name, my inability to speak Arabic, or because I have yet to visit Palestine. My initial interest in writing on Palestine materialized from a flyer I saw posted in downtown Toronto. It advertised a memorial for the late Canadian photojournalist and activist Ali Mustafa. I attended and was struck by the images of war in Syria, Egypt, and Palestine, captured in photographs by Ali Mustafa. Images I began thinking and writing about for coursework and conferences. Fast-forward to a year later and my interest grew into a desire, not just to write about the Occupied territories but to unveil something unique, something peculiar, something that was

[1] Throughout my project I intentionally capitalize the term Occupation/Occupied, as a way to refer specifically to the Occupation of Palestine and to emphasize the profound significance of living under the Occupation. This profound significance is addressed throughout my project in terms of discussing dispossession, the economy of suffering, and "the sense of time" under the Occupation.

often missing in the literature around Palestinian resistance: an exploration on the pedagogical relationship between imagery, loss, resistance, and resurgence in Palestine. My desire to explore this limited area of research was peeked by a conversation I had with someone very dear to me.

"Syria" my partner began, "is the one place I feel at home, it is the place I always planned to return to, to live." With a gentle smile, he continued, "Damascus, is beautiful. The weather is nice – not too cold in the winter and not too hot in the summer," he paused. "There is a large hill, houses and neighborhoods are built on the sides of this hill. Coffee shops and shisha bars sit on top." As he excitedly spoke, I tried to imagine the place he described, ignoring the images of Damascus in ruins, images that I was becoming use to seeing.

Although he speaks of Syria in the present tense, he is referring to Syria in his memory before the war. For him, this *is* Syria. Yet, he also knows that this *was* Syria. He goes on to describe the men and women as dressing "modernly," and how the food is "cheap but delicious." He describes the people as "generous" and life as "relaxed." "People spend their days enjoying life, life is simple, I've only seen that kind of living in Damascus." Enthralled, I ask for more. "How safe was it?" I ask a typical Westerner question and speak in past tense. In present tense, he continues, "People aren't worried about war, suicide bombings or terrorist attacks. Women walk the streets at night alone. It's safe." He stops and finally corrects himself, "it was safe."

Finished with looking through his own pictures, he begins scrolling through an online database of images of Syria. Shortly after, he stops looking at pictures of Damascus and Aleppo, another city he also once loved. His face looks sad now. I did not know at the time, but I would

see that face again a couple of years later, when he would look online at recent pictures of his hometown, Mosul, Iraq, after the city was "liberated" from ISIS.

My partner fled Mosul as a refugee over twelve years ago because his life was at risk, just like the lives of so many other translators, many of whom had already been beheaded. He fled to Syria where he lived for a couple of years. This is when he fell in love with Syria. But Syria is no longer the place he once called home, and neither is Mosul. Hiraeth.

Mosul, a city previously known by many of its citizens as progressive, vibrant, and rich in history, is now represented through images and popular media as *only and always*[2] a city "backwards" in terms of civility, infrastructure, and culture. It is also *only and always* represented as a city destroyed by ISIS. Its very identity of a thriving metropolis disappeared, in what for many felt like an instant. Mosul was reduced to an event – a terrible moment in time that those native to Mosul wish to move beyond.

Watching my partner's face as he scrolled through image after image of Mosul in ruins, I thought, how does one move beyond the memory of one's homeland, which was once a thriving metropolis, now a city demolished with irreversible damage? Hiraeth. Culturally significant historical structures have been destroyed, families have been torn apart and displaced, innocent civilian lives have been lost, and the systems that supported the economy have also collapsed.

[22] See Adichie (2009), "The Danger of the Single Story."

Anyone that did not know Mosul before the 2014 ISIS infiltration and subsequent war would only ever know of Mosul as the base camp for ISIS and a city in ruins.

As a symbol of gratitude for the many ways my partner's stories have helped mold this project, I hope to one day come across an Iraqi artist who can reimagine Mosul as the bustling, vibrant city it once was.

Observing the impact that these before-and-after images had on someone so dear to me led me to view the images by Ali Mustafa differently. These images did not just capture pain and struggle, they also captured resistance and rebirth. Yet, as I sat looking at the generically populated images online of Damascus and later Mosul, I only saw destruction and devastation. Seeing the impact that an image can have on an individual moved me to commit to a pedagogical project that explores the juncture where imagery meets pedagogy. A project that suggests political aesthetic practices, and *art that resists*, can unveil that which is hidden or muted to make room to imagine alternative ways of thinking, doing, or being. A project that considers alternative epistemologies in Palestine and how they render the Occupation sensible. A project that argues adopting an aesthetic pedagogy can make ideas and experiences make sense. In turn, this is an educational project that explores learning through aesthetic experiences.

In Palestine experiences of trauma and profound loss are still everyday events. I posit that what art does is create such a space to redress historical trauma. Art allows us to imagine otherwise and gives us the pedagogical impetus to do so. Hence, I argue there is an urgency to explore a) art as resistance, b) art as affecting people and society, c) how art renders complex ideas and

experiences sensible, and d) art that makes space for imagining "worlds otherwise." Next, I describe the breakdown of my dissertation's Chapters to provide a map of the territory my project embarks on.

Territories of My Project

Chapter One outlines the literature, methodology, theory, and ideas that locate my project as one that illuminates the profound link between aesthetic encounters and learning. This Chapter suggests pedagogic aesthetic engagements can render complex ideas and experiences sensible, providing an analytical lens from which to consider art as affecting people and society. In turn, this Chapter explores how remembrance practices shape and are shaped by aesthetic encounters, and how this is significant in building and maintaining unifying threads within the Palestinian diaspora. These unifying threads strengthen the common goal of *the right of return* as well as the call for political and democratic freedom. I argue, adopting an aesthetic pedagogy, or else incorporating the aesthetic dimension into pedagogy, creates space for thinking differently in ways that are not confined to colonial logics. I explore thinking differently by mobilizing the Indigenous concept of imagining "worlds otherwise."

Lastly, I consider how I am implicated as both a researcher and an outsider, whose ancestors likely participated in the colonialization of Indigenous peoples in Canada. The positionality of the researcher is being theorized and conceive through the notion of the implicated subject, as proposed by Michael Rothberg (2019). Rothberg helps me understand positionality by considering how someone who is not a direct agent of harm is implicated through privilege. By

engaging in a (post)colonial[3] lens and by mobilizing Palestinian and Indigenous theorists, artists, and ideas, it is my hope that my research does not also contribute to the subjugation and fetishization of the people and communities I researched, interviewed, analyzed, and thought about in this project.

In Chapter Two, I analyze the respective artworks to illustrate tangible ways one might interpret political aesthetic practices such as "aesthetic disobedience" and "decolonial aesthetic" practices. This chapter specifically addresses these two concepts throughout my analysis of the artworks. In considering how *art that resists* can be made through employing political aesthetic practices, I see a significance in understanding artistic praxis that help me with interpreting art as resistance. This is not to suggest that all *art that resists* can be labeled within the political aesthetic practices category. On the contrary, art exists in the excesses as well, unable to be defined or confined. I explore how political aesthetic practices and *art that resists* have transformative potential through an Indigenous lens of imagining "worlds otherwise." I also provide reflective interpretations of three artworks.

[3] In *Duress* (2016), Ann Stoler identifies her use of the term "colonial studies" or "(post)colonial studies" rather than "postcolonialism" as a response to the temporal difficulties that problematize whether the use of "post" suggests colonialism has ended. Although some (post)colonial theorists insist that it does not refer to a time period but rather a critical stance, the term still conjures up notions of colonialism as inactive or over. Stoler (2016) speaks to this by highlighting how, in practice, "the term 'postcolonial' often references a critical perspective on a past colonial situation (too easily made distinct from our own) or on those who bear the costs of living in a space that was once colonial and is no more" (preface). I bracket "post" in "(post)colonial" to emphasize how colonial histories of the past remain present. I concur with Stoler's (2016) bracketing "post" in "(post)colonial" to convey an active colonial "presence" and to acknowledge "present" actors that employ colonial measures such as in the context of Israel's Occupation of Palestine.

In a similar format to Chapter Two, Chapter Three engages with the interviews and artworks by Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid, to interpret how each artist navigates dispossession. I mobilize Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou's concept of dispossession throughout. Furthermore, I consider why these two theorists prioritize and contextualize the linguistic significance of understanding Palestinians as a community and people "being made" dispossessed through violent settler colonialism. I also gesture towards the notion of Palestine as a community "de-developed"[4] to further strengthen Butler and Athanasiou's epistemological point.

Chapter Four explores the concept of suffering through my interpretation of the artworks and interviews I conducted with the artists. When interpreting the artworks, I use a reflective tone. I think about the banality of suffering, pain and suffering as (un)shareable, suffering as performative, and the relationship between suffering and cultural identity. I also interweave my thinking with imagining "worlds otherwise" throughout my interpretations of the artworks and my analysis of the interviews and literature.

In Chapter Five, I explore how the three artists traverse and disrupt "the sense of time" under the Occupation. I begin with a brief analysis of affect and embodiment, and the significance of alternative notions of time. These are connected because alternative notions of time can reflect and attend to affect and embodiment and affect and embodiment shape our relationship to time. Through my critical analysis, I interweave the artworks and the ideas that emerged from my

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[4] See Roy (1995; 1999), "The Gaza Strip: The political economy of de-development."

interviews with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid to consider how their interviews and artworks summon my own thinking about "homogenous empty time," "messianic" time, alternative notions of time, Indigenous relationships to time, children's time, refugee time, and inherited time.

Lastly, I provide a synopsis of my project and summarize ideas shared by artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid on being creatively inspired and tethered to *the right of return*. To end, I generate thoughtful responses to the questions: Can the subaltern speak?, How can one persevere under circumstances of dispossession? and, What does it mean to say existence is resistance? Finally, I incorporate the interviews I conducted and my perspective of their thoughts.

As a foundation for this work, I need to briefly describe the Occupation and my conceptual thoughts on Israel's Occupation of Palestine. For me, the Occupation of Palestine is grounded in iconic Palestinian poet Darwish's (1984) poem "When the martyrs go to sleep" and Gayatri Spivak's essay (1983): *Can the Subaltern Speak?* By intertwining Darwish's poem with the question at the heart of Spivak's essay, my contrapuntal reading offers a meaningful, unconventional analysis of how marginalized communities and groups are displaced to the margins of a society by an imperial colony. Furthermore, through this analysis Darwish's poem offers an answer to Spivak's profound question.

The Subaltern Speaks: The Case of Palestine

Renowned Palestinian poet, Darwish (2008), in his poem "When the martyrs go to sleep" writes,

When the martyrs go to sleep I wake up to guard them against
professional mourners.
I say to them: I hope you wake in a country with clouds and trees, mirage and water.
I congratulate them on their safety from the incredible event,
from the surplus value of the slaughter.
I steal time so they can snatch me from time. Are we all martyrs?
I whisper: friends, leave one wall for the laundry line. Leave a night for singing.
I will hang your names wherever you want, so sleep awhile, sleep
on the ladder of the sour vine tree
So I can guard your dreams against the daggers of your guards
and the plot of the Book against the prophets,
Be the song of those who have no songs when you go to sleep
tonight.
I say to you: I hope you wake in a country packed on a galloping
mare.
I whisper: friends, you'll never be like us, the robe of an
unknown gallows!
(p. 31)

Unthinkable experiences leading to the perpetual dispossession of Palestinian people are expressed here in Darwish's poem. "The incredible event" of line four of the first stanza, refers to the "Nakba" or catastrophic events of 1948.

In 1948, Israel declared rights over land that was home to generations of Arab Palestinians.[5] The birth of the Israeli State led to the expulsion of 700,000 Palestinian Arabs (Assmann, 2018, p. 293). The mission took six months, starting from March 10, 1948: "more than half of Palestine's native population, close to 800,000 people, had been uprooted, 531 villages had been destroyed, and eleven urban neighborhoods emptied of their inhabitants" (Pappè, 2006, p. xiii). Israel's

[5] Arab Palestinians refers to modern descendants of people who lived for centuries in Palestine and identify as both Palestinian and Arab (ethnonational heritage). This distinction is made because Palestinian Jews also lived in Palestine prior to the birth of the state of Israel. Going forward, when referring to Arab-Palestinians I will mostly use the term Palestinians because the distinction no longer needs to be made since Palestinians living in Palestine post 1948 are Arab.

violent removal of Palestinian owned land has almost entirely removed Palestinians from the map: "1948 saw the establishment of a settler-colonial Zionist state on 78 percent of Mandatory Palestine[6]" (Masalha, 2009, p. 37). Since 1948, the relationship between the state of Israel and the Palestinian territories can be described as volatile, at best.

The Nakba gave birth to Israel while simultaneously beginning the genocidal erasure of Palestinian culture, history, and settlement. Colonial rule instituted by the State of Israel led to irremediable loss of Palestinian culture and identity. Aleida Assmann (2018) writes: "The strategy adopted under these circumstances was not a new invention but an age-old political and cultural practice that can be referred to as 'creative destruction' applying as much to conquest and colonialization as to radical forms of modernization" (p. 290). Israel's colonial project was to occupy Palestine and eradicate Palestinian's right to exist.

Noam Chomsky (2012) has described Palestine as "the world's largest open-air prison." A similar sentiment is shared by scholar Yusuf al-Khatib. al-Khatib speaks to the tragic event (the "Nakba/ catastrophe") by writing on the dialectics of exile in Palestinian and Arabic poetry. When writing about the feelings that have developed amongst Palestinians since 1948, he proposes, "By the end of 1948, when the State of Israel was established, the earth took two forms in the eyes of the Palestinian Arabs: 'prison' and 'exile'. 'Prison' includes all the land which came under the Israeli flag, while 'exile' includes all the lands elsewhere" (Darwish, 2008, p. 31). The developed

[6] The word "mandatory" refers to the 1923 British Mandate for Palestine, issued by the League of Nations, who administrated the region's formerly Ottoman nations. Mandatory Palestine existed for over two decades (Mohammed, 2017).

sentiment amongst both activists and Palestinians is that if you live in Palestine, you live in prison. If you live elsewhere, you live in exile.

Palestine is yet to be recognized as a sovereign nation, and the Israeli government and military continue to be accused of various war crimes against the Arab-Palestinian community. It is estimated that: "[Today] there are more than five million Palestinian refugees in the Middle East and many more worldwide" (Masalha, 2009, p. 37). Israeli historian Ilan Pappé (2006) has described what has unfolded within the Occupation as a case of ethnic cleansing. The creation of the state of Israel is a contentious topic and is one of the "contemporary world's most egregious instance of settler colonialism"[7] (Mullen, 2013, p. 1).

Darwish's poem depicts the threat to one's life that resistance to Occupation poses. However, it also shows that even during times of war, devastation, and Occupation, the dispossessed speak. Spivak makes a similar depiction in her article, *Can the Subaltern Speak?* in her haunting depiction of a woman's suicide as a way to speak out against her misogynist oppression. In considering how the subaltern speaks in the midst of oppressive conditions, Darwish writes, "I say to them: I hope you wake in a country with clouds and trees, mirage and water." Here, Darwish indicates that one can still speak to loss and dispossession even if under eradication.

Darwish's poetic gesture to what is lost through the Occupation is profound when considering Palestinians living in the Occupied territories lack access to basic needs such as a clean

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[7] Settler colonialism refers to a form of colonialism that replaces indigenous peoples of the colonized territory with a new settler society. This is done through tactics of invasion, domination, and imperial authority.

and reliable water supply. In November 1967, the Israeli authorities issued Military Order 158, which stated that Palestinians could not construct any new water installation without first obtaining a permit from the Israeli army" (Amnesty International, 2017). Obtaining a permit is nearly impossible and to this day Palestinians suffer from the deadly consequences of Military Order 158. "They are unable to drill new water wells, install pumps or deepen existing water wells, in addition to being denied access to the Jordan River and fresh water springs. Israel even controls the collection of rain water throughout most of the West Bank" (Amnesty International, 2017).

Not only is access to clean drinking water inhumanely limited, but many Palestinians are also not permitted to access nearby bodies of water, such as the Mediterranean Sea. In conversation with artist Ayed Arafah, the sea emerged as a point of despair and inspiration. "Geographically," Arafah explains, "the distance between where I live and the sea is one hour in the car." Without pausing, Arafah continues, and I sense despair in his voice, "but politically, the distance is until I get permission" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Now, Arafah pauses. I am taken aback for a moment, surprised by the notion of an adult needing to seek permission to visit a sea that is within their own backyard, so-to-speak. A sea whose waves enveloped his ancestors, what now seems like so long ago. Thinking about the distance to the sea provokes me to think on Darwish's reference to the mirage.

When I envision Darwish's mirage, I see a highway or a dessert, landscapes where one moves almost freely within its borders. Yet, it is the inability to move freely within the borders of

Palestine that concerns Darwish. The checkpoints[8] that Palestinians are forced to encounter makes me think that the mirage Darwish is referring to symbolizes loss of movement within and outside of the territories.

Artist Abu Ayyash echoes Darwish's despair over movement. Sounding almost exhausted with the retelling of past memories, Abu Ayyash describes what it was like to reunite with his family: "The distance is only a forty-five-minute drive," although he is speaking on the years 2000-2004, his memory of travelling during that time is as if it were yesterday. Abu Ayyash continues, "but I could only visit every one or two months" he pauses, "it was like a warzone" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). I can still recollect thinking about what it would be like to be so close to loved ones and yet seemingly so far. To fear for your life every time you visit family - the thought itself is almost unbearable.

Although Abu Ayyash describes a sort of paralysis in terms of movement, his artworks, and the artworks of Abdel Hamid and Arafah suggests that the Occupation has not prevented Palestinians from speaking out against their aggressor. The stories shared above are a few of the inspirations for this section. Another source of inspiration can be found in this section's title.

In her seminal work *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Spivak explores the prospect of being heard for those who occupy the periphery. Shaira Vadasaria (2018) replies, "The question then, 'can the subaltern speak', is not a question concerning the subaltern's 'agency' or even 'consciousness' for

[8] See Malek & Hoke (2014), "Palestine Speaks: Narratives of Life Under Occupation."

that matter, but the discursive terrain through which such forms of speech are rendered audible within a European colonial imaginary" (p. 143). Yes, the subaltern can speak, there is no question in their ability, the question is whether the subaltern will be heard within a Euro-centric imaginary. Thinking on this in terms of education, consider if a student can put up their hand to speak but their hand is never addressed by the teacher or if, when it is, others speak over the student. In that scenario, the student's environment *silences* and *prevents* them from audibly speaking.

Returning to his poem, Darwish (2010) writes, "Be the song of those who have no songs when you go to sleep tonight" (p. 31). This excerpt poetically captures Spivak's (1998) question, "can the subaltern speak?" Yes, it can but as Spivak also indicates in a hung woman's body, perhaps not in ways that dominant and oppressive classes can hear. This is also Darwish's point. The subaltern holds a multitude of possibilities for conveying truth in many voices. The subaltern can be both the song and the songless. It is my hope that my project's interests in the audibility, intelligibility, and affect of the work of artist's Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid, is sufficiently conveyed.

I move now to the critical literature, theories, and ideas mobilizing my project, including my methodological approach and the pedagogical significance of the work of these three artists. I consider how people are affected by art, how people make up society, and thus, how society is, and can be, affected by art. To communicate, members of a society must have a common language. I argue, art is language thus, I explore the significance of the language of art and its imaginative paths.

Chapter One: The Literary, Theoretical, Methodological, and Imaginative Bones

I would have liked to tell you
The story of a nightingale that died.
I would have liked to tell you
The story…
Had they not slit my lips.
- Samih al-Qasim's, "Slit Lips"

In this Chapter, I explain the framework that guides my literature review, methodology, data collection, analysis, and my overall project. The purpose of my dissertation is that aesthetic experiences affect people which is key when considering the potential for curriculum and pedagogical practices. Because aesthetic experiences affect people and our society is made up of people, it is reasonable to conclude that 'society' is affected by aesthetic experiences. Through a pedagogic engagement with, and analysis of, interviews and artworks by three Palestinian artists I explore the affect of these aesthetic experiences.

In considering how aesthetic experiences affect people and society, I argue that political aesthetic practices, such as "aesthetic disobedience" and "decolonial aesthetics," can render complex ideas and experiences sensible, creating inventive paths for imagining "worlds otherwise" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. II). I understand political aesthetic practices to be rooted in notions

of resistance, thus, I posit that making *art that resists* [9] can be a form of engaging in political aesthetic practices, or can provoke ideas espoused in political aesthetic practices.

My project therefore analyzes visual art as resistance to understand the nuances and problematics of settler colonial violence, specifically, the Occupation of Palestine, and to illustrate the transformative potential of political aesthetic practices. It is important to note that I mobilize art as resistance as in "artists who produce *art that resists*." The pedagogy lies partly in discerning resistance in the art. Hence, the pedagogical work I do, through my analysis, is in part about distinguishing notions of resistance in the art.

The designation for the use of art as resistance in my project is that art can be read as resistance. This is of linguistic significance because it acknowledges that my project's mobilization of art as resistance is concerned specifically with "artists who produce art as resistance" rather than getting tangled up in the question of what is and isn't understood as "resistance art." This distinction allows me to clearly analyze art as resistance on its own terms, rather than comparing these types of art within a Eurocentric framework. Artist's resistance to the resistance category (a concept Abdel Hamid alludes to during our interview) should serve as a useful lesson in thinking about art and resistance through a decolonial lens.

[9] Throughout my project, when referring to *art that resists,* I am referring to art that invokes notions of disobedience, resurgence, art that resists and opposes powerholders, and institutions and systems (often colonial) that oppress and subjugate.

When referring to political aesthetic practices, I am referring to intertwining politics with aesthetics. Barrett (2011) tells us "Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy, along with ethics, that deals with moral issues; ontology, which concerns the nature of things; epistemology, which is thought about knowledge and truth; and philosophies of particular areas of study such as science, history, and so forth" (p. 7). Politics handles moral issues through the implementation of laws, policies, norms, and moral codes. Aesthetics bridge the relationship between morals, politics, and art by providing concrete, tangible objects that illuminate complex political ideas. In turn, one can then give meaning to these ideas based on morals and values. Once an idea or experience is made sensible, it is possible to then derive meaning from, and give meaning to that idea or experience.

The existing literature on art and visual culture as produced within, and representations of, social, economic, and political conditions has allowed me to locate my project as one that suggests there is transformative potential in engaging artworks as pedagogy. In considering how art and visual culture take on political and social dimensions, the art itself becomes a force of political and social change. "Art enables a way of thinking about issues that other inquiry-based approaches do not allow" (Miner, 2013, p. 2). This is due to the intrinsic emmeshed relationship between art and language. For Boullata (2019), "language and art are profoundly entangled, not only metaphorically or even through analogy […] but also in the capacity of language to structure the very possibilities of artistic perception and production" (p.14). Language can inform and inspire artistic expression, but it also might not. The pedagogical value of working with art is getting at multiple affects that can be representations of oral expression and yet also cannot be adequately explained by language.

Hence, my thesis is not suggesting that *all* art education is socially transformative and challenges hegemonic power. What I am arguing for is how art *can* be a point of inquiry that ruptures conventional thought by challenging power and the ways power is used to produce and sustain repressive conditions.

There is an urgency in considering the transformative potential of art: an urgency in considering how transformative moments can emerge through pedagogic aesthetic encounters. I suggest this urgency is, in large part, due to the overwhelming number of individuals and communities experiencing unrelenting suffering, trapped in geopolitical and civil wars,[10] confined like pawns to a chess board. Although, due to the scope of my project, I am speaking only on experiences that emerge during times of war, there are many experiences not confined to conditions of war[11] that could be made sense of by learning through aesthetic encounters. This is because "it is through the teaching of art that new spaces of critical inquiry and social potential may be established" (Miner, 2013, p.2). "Critical inquiry" and "social potential" represent potential for transformative moments.

[10] For example, consider the refugee crisis that emerged from the 2011 Syrian civil war, rendering more than 6.8 million Syrians displaced (World Vision, n.d., para. 1 & 2); consider the 2014 infiltration of Mosul, Iraq by ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) and the United States military wherein, within two years, half a million people fled what was once a bustling city (World Vision, n.d., para. 5); consider that as of 2019, more than 5.7 million Palestinians were registered with UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency) as refugees (UNRWA, n.d.).
[11] For example, mental health issues, homelessness, addictions, abuse, poverty, systemic racism, misogyny, and homophobia.

The notion of transcendence represents the pedagogical implications of art as resistance and the profound relationship between artists and society. In his book, *artists in times of war*, Howard Zinn (2003) writes,

> When I think of the relationship between artists and society—and for me the question is always what it could be, rather than what it is—I think of the word *transcendent*… By transcendent, I mean that the artist transcends the immediate. Transcends the here and now. Transcends the madness of the world. Transcends terrorism and war. (p. 7)

In other words, what I understand Zinn (2003) to be saying is that art does not reflect reality rather, it is an engagement with or a response to said conditions. This engagement or response transcends the immediate, and individuals are affected by this engagement. Herein lies the transformative potential of pedagogically engaging with *art that resists*. Once one has engaged with ideas that emerge from this pedagogical encounter, they are confronted by what remains; confronted by what lingers from this encounter, affected to some degree, implicated through the process of discovery. I suggest imagining "worlds otherwise" is also about discovery.

In sum, I seek to reaffirm the dynamic relationship between pedagogy, politics, and art by reflecting what a pedagogy of reading eliciting an aesthetics of response could look like. In other words, what might a pedagogic aesthetic encounter look like? I employ the interviews and artworks of three post-Nakba artists in Palestine to illustrate how this type of reading emerges from looking with art as political objects through a (post)colonial lens. What is meant by *looking with art as political objects* is the idea of thinking about an artistic object while considering the historical,

cultural, economic, and political contexts that can influence the creation and perception of an artwork.

In the following section, I begin by looking at historical and contemporary examples of art as resistance, globally. I consider South African, Indigenous, the Arab Spring, and Palestinian art as resistance.

Having illustrated how art has been used as resistance in modern day and historically, I move to explore art as a remembrance practice. This distinction is made because a community's shared commitment to forge unity can be pursued through the production of objects that form a community's "collective memory," which is essential for remembrance practices. It is my understanding that political aesthetic practices produce objects that make up a community's collective memory and reinforce remembrance practices. This suggests that political aesthetic practices, through the formation of collective memory, render ideas and experiences sensible, including ideas and experiences indirectly encountered, passed down through generations, since the Nakba.

Having established the theories and ideas that guide my project, I consider gaps in literature. Afterwards, I provide a summary of my methodological approach. Lastly, I consider my position as both researcher and outsider and what that means as an implicated subject.

Art as/and Resistance

Let's think with the existing research on art as/and resistance in relation to South African, Indigenous, the Arab Spring, and Palestinian art as resistance and consider how art serves as modes of resistance in specific times and places.

Art as Resistance in South Africa

One of the most recognized uses of art as resistance in contemporary times emerged in the context of the South African Apartheid. The brutality of South African Apartheid was countered by movements of liberation from racial segregation and political and economic discriminatory legislation against black South Africans. The case of South Africa has been used to draw comparisons to the dehumanization and racist treatment of Palestinians by the Israeli government. During the South African Apartheid, the dehumanizing treatment of black people included restrictions from using the same water fountains, toilets, and schools, as their white European colonizers. Being treated as a second-class citizen meant black South Africans lost voting rights, encountered limitations on weapons ownership, and experienced the balkanization[12] of South Africa. Black South Africans faced restrictions on marriage, housing, and property ownership, and were confined by a lack of freedom of movement and association (Sarid, 2014). Interesting to note,

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[12] Balkanization refers to when a government and/or military fragments a larger region into smaller regions, dividing a multinational state into ethnically homogenous entities, often resulting emerging hostilities and ethnic conflict within multiethnic states (Neuberger, 1976). Today, Palestine has been fragmented into various regions/realms, wherein Palestinians either live in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, West Jerusalem (although very few Palestinians live here) the Gaza Strip, Israel, or as diaspora.

the Israeli government and military enforce all these same limitations and restrictions on Palestinians, today.

During the South African Apartheid, resistance manifested itself in a variety of artistic forms – literature, music,[13] dance, visual art. One of the most well-known leading resistance visual art artists was Thamsanga Mnyele. Living northeast of Johannesburg, he was known for having a very critical view of society. His views came to life in his illustrations of disfigured, naked, armed figures. Mnyele clearly asserted his position on the importance of art as resistance, stating, "For me as craftsman, the act of creating art should complement the act of creating shelter for my family or liberating the country for me people. This is culture" (Thamsanqa "Thami" Mnyele, n.d.). Mnyele drives this point home further in his unpublished autobiography, stating,

> What is a good artist in relation to a freedom fighter?... I had managed to pick up most of the skills I needed which would enable me to be of service back home. To be of service is to integrate. The musicians of the fifties had not integrated into the community, they were the community itself. The community produced songs about the sudden ban of the African brew by the government; the community performed at a child baptismal ceremony and the community still performs at the funeral of a deceased member. Wouldn't it be good if I designed posters for these activities, painted banners, made postcards, Christmas cards, and taught these skills to those who need them? (Thamsanqa "Thami" Mnyele, n.d.)

[13] Interestingly, even the iconic album *The Wall* by the progressive/classic rock band *Pink Floyd* was banned in South Africa during Apartheid times because, for many, it was deemed a protest album. The song "Another Brick in the Wall" became popular among black South African school children with lyrics such as "we don't need no education" and "we don't need no thought control" (Clegg & Drewett, 2006). Although a physical separation wall wasn't constructed in South Africa like in Palestine, for black South Africans this album represented a resistance which beat against *the walls of apartheid* (Clegg & Drewett, 2006, emphasis added). Roger Waters, the cofounder of *Pink Floyd*, is a strong advocate against apartheid and actively condemns the Occupation of Palestine by Israel.

For Mnyele, the saxophone and the paintbrush wield a unifying power so much so that these art forms are not *a part* of the community but rather *are* the community. By which I mean, art forms become expressions of a community's soul. Art forms become expressions of a community's hiraeth. A renowned artist for the oppressed black residents of South Africa, Mnyele was killed in 1985 by the Apartheid state's commandos.

The works of artists Dikobe Martins and Norman Catherine also fall under the category of creating art that resists the Apartheid. Martins (1982) attended art classes with Mnyele and also drew a connection between art and politics, asserting,

> As politics must teach people the ways and give them the means to take control over their own lives, art must teach people, in the most vivid and imaginative ways possible, to take control over their own experiences and observations, how to link these with the struggle for liberation and a just society free of race, class and exploitation. (para. 10)

Here, Martins describes the relationship between politics and art as mutually beneficial. Politics is meant to give people the means to take control over their lives whereas art is meant to respond to the politics of the time, exposing and contextualizing its corrupting forces. What artists making *art that resists* do is untangle the relationship between what *is* and what *can be* by condemning the very politics that shackles instead of liberates. Artists making *art that resists* ask the participant to rethink what they perceive "inevitable;" to understand how oppressive conditions are humanmade and strategic.

Catherine describes his own artwork produced in the 70s, 80s and 90s as political and is recognized as an artist at the forefront of South African contemporary art. His use of dark cynicism

and exuberant humor critically exposed the dehumanizing violence that emerged from the Apartheid. Catherine's art represents collective observations and experiences during that time: "I think it's the subconscious, the collective unconscious that I express" (Catherine, 2015, para. 4).

During the height of the overt resistance to Apartheid, marked by the uprisings of 1976, art as resistance became more than a tool to illustrate and expose racial inequality. Not only were the events of the Apartheid unveiled through various artistic mediums, what also grew from this movement was "the ideas that art is not necessarily an elitist activity, and that popular cultural resistance has a vital role to play in the life of the community and the struggle for freedom" (Williamson, 1990, p. 8). In fact, "before 1976, a trip around South African art galleries would have given very little clue to the socio-political problems of the country" (Williamson, 1990, p. 8). Before 1976, hanging on the wall of galleries were images bizarrely divorced from the reality of Apartheid, images that obscured the horrific experiences of non-white South Africans living under slavery and segregation.

Notably, art as resistance in South Africa took on various art forms including that of music. Prominent South African musicians who protested the Apartheid include singer Zenzile Miriam Makeba (nicknamed Mama Africa) and trumpeter, flugelhornist, cornetist, singer, and composer Hugh Ramapolo Masekela (described as "the father of South African jazz"). Forced into exile, these artists had a significant impact on Western popular culture by contributing to the "moral outrage" over Apartheid (Schumann, 2008, p. 17-20).

Anti-Apartheid oral expression not only impacted Western popular culture, oral forms of protest were also highly effective within oppressed black communities. In fact, "oral traditions, due simply to their means of transmission, offer a kind of seclusion, control, and even anonymity that make them ideal vehicles for cultural resistance" (Scott, 1990, p. 160). Furthermore, Schumann (2008) writes, "oral communication also has been much more accessible to a large part of the South African population than the printed press due to lack of literacy and economic means (for which the Apartheid system was of course partly responsible)" (p. 18). Considering how the state relied on government-run SABC (South African Broadcasting Corporation) radio service to censor and disseminate pro-Apartheid propaganda (Schumann, 2008), it is plausible to conclude that oral expression has transformative potential. As Plato said, "any musical innovation is full of danger to the whole State, and ought to be prohibited; when modes of music change, the fundamental laws of the State always change with them" (Plato, 2012, p. 93).

The work of visual artists must be understood as one dimension of a dense convergence of various forms of expressive culture incited by the conditions of apartheid. This notion of 'convergence' was part of the inspiration for my interweaving of poetry and visual art in my dissertation because many Palestinian activists and poets use their art to condemn the Occupation (e.g., Mahmoud Darwish and Samih al-Qasim). The importance of convergence and relationality in reflecting specifically upon the lives and work of visual artists and the pedagogy of art is fundamental to the work of making complex ideas and experiences sensible and tangible.

Having considered the mobilization of anti-Apartheid art as resistance in South Africa, I briefly explore historical and contemporary Indigenous art. The Indigenous communities'

struggles over land ownership and fragmentation, and colonial settler violence in its various other forms, resonate with the Palestinian experience under the Occupation.

Art as Resistance and Indigeneity

Given a long history of colonial oppression, art and oral expression are forms of resistance in Indigenous communities. Martineau & Ritskes (2014) suggest "Indigenous art is inherently political" (p. I). This leaves me wondering if inherently political is always resistance – is art that is inherently political also always *art that resists*? According to Anishinaabe curator Wanda Nanibush, "Our art forms are never separate from our political forms" (as cited in Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. I). Interestingly, despite the experience of different histories, this sentiment was shared by the three artists I interviewed. In a 'universal' sense, art that resists is immersed in the historical and political contexts of its making.

First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities have faced mass atrocities at the hands of white colonial settlers who stole, polluted, and renamed their land and territory. "Indigenous art thus occupies a unique space within settler colonialism: both as a site for articulating Indigenous resistance and resurgence, and also as a creative praxis that often reinscribes indigeneity within aesthetic and commodity forms that circulate in the capitalist art market" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. I). Although the profound link between capitalism and Indigenous art is not within the scope of my project, it is a growing and meaningful area of research.

Decolonial art forms such as storytelling, drawings, paintings, literature, and film have become fundamental to reshaping the ways in which Indigeneity is perceived by Indigenous and

non-Indigenous communities alike. “Against colonial erasure, Indigenous art marks space of a returned and enduring presence,” a presence complicated by its entanglement in colonial systems of power (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. I). Not only is Indigenous art meaningful in re-establishing Indigenous roots, research methods and academic writing also help in re-establishing Indigenous traditions and culture. For example,

> A number of Indigenous studies have found that storytelling as an emerging research method is timely, accurate, appropriate, and culturally relevant for many Indigenous communities (Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Cajete, 1994; Dei, 2011). Indigenous scholar Cajete (1994) argues that story is a basic foundation of all human learning and teaching. Consequently, storytelling is a central focus of Indigenous epistemologies and research approaches (Iseke, 2013). Through traditional storytelling, Indigenous peoples are empowered, and research becomes “ours” rather than “theirs” for the “our own communities and reflects Indigenous knowledges and empowers ourselves.” (Datta, 2018, p. 35)

Thinking about the rearticulation of Indigenous pasts, presents, and futures through allegories and research further echoes ideas around the significance of resurgence practices within Indigenous communities.

Summoning the notion of “resurgence” here reflects an enduring presence and a form of “engaged resistance.” I am compelled to draw on Dean Rader and his reference to “engaged resistance” as a lens to think with Indigenous art. For Rader (2011),

> [this book] takes as its controlling metaphor the notion of engaged resistance, which I see as a fundamentally indigenous form of aesthetic discourse that engages both Native and American cultural contexts as a mode of resistance against the ubiquitous colonial tendencies of assimilation and erasure. American Indian writers, filmmakers, and artists participate in engaged

> resistance through creative work and cultural production as a means of defiance but also as a source of connection to tribal ways of telling stories, representing images, and animating the world. (p. 1)

The cultural production of dissidence generated by decolonial art that resists reflects Indigenous communities' active and agentic reshaping of history towards steering Indigenous futurity. For example, notable Indigenous artist Albert Namatjira's use of Western style watercolors introduced white artists to Aboriginal art for the first time. Mixing media, Namatjira "was demonstrating to the rest of the world the living title held by his people to the lands they had been on for thousands of years" (Yunupingu, 1989, p. 14). Namatjira created illustrations of a pre-contact history, a time before the encounter with white settlers. His artworks stir up notions of resurgence by reflecting on the freedom and beauty Indigenous communities enjoyed pre-white settler contact.

Notably, even the materials used to create Indigenous art often involve natural elements of the Earth. Based on location, these materials could include timbers, grass, palms, plants, seashells, corals, leather hides, beads, and even hair. "Indigenous art reflects environment and continues to be a response to the land, plants and animals, to family history and to present circumstances" (Robertson & Farrell Racette, 2009, p. 9-10). Indigenous artists commit to this response by combining the commonplace with the spiritual. "For example, a moss bag functions to protect and swaddle a baby; at the same time, it serves a spiritual purpose inherent in its design and in the stories told and songs sung as the moss bag is created" (p. 10). Blurring the lines between a functional item and an artist's canvas does not conform to standard Western aesthetic notions, "however, within an Indigenous aesthetic frame, the interconnectedness of its practical and spiritual roles makes perfect sense" (Robertson & Farrell Racette, 2009, p.10). *Art that resists*

colonial enclosures can illuminate notions of resurgence, bound in their interconnectedness between the practical and spiritual.

Next, I consider art as resistance within the context of the Arab Spring. Interestingly, similarly to art produced during the South African Apartheid and throughout Indigenous communities to this day, historically, many Arab communities highly regard oral expression as a form of *art that resists*. I briefly consider the significance of oral expression by drawing on the work of Boullata before moving on to consider art as resistance in connection to the Arab Spring.

Art as Resistance and the Arab Spring

Traditionally, many Arab cultures are known for valuing oral expression, which has dominated any other forms of expression. "The Arabic language having played a predominant role in the formation of the Arab's interpretation of life" (Boullata, 2019, p. 153). Poetry and music have contributed greatly to the oral arts within Arab communities. "Words have effectively penetrated almost every field of Arab creativity, politics, social behavior, and the arts" (Boullata, 2019, p. 153). For Boullata (2019), "as a consequence of this linguistic predominance, visual art produced throughout the twentieth century, inside or outside the Arab world, by Arabs and non-Arabs alike, continued to be generally regarded with blind indifference" (p. 28). In fact, the phenomenon of studio art in the Arab world is quite young, not even a hundred years old (Boullata, 2019). Art produced by Arab artists continues to be pushed into the margins, in part due to its youthfulness. "To understand contemporary Arab visual art one has to understand his indirect influence of language that presupposes the Arab's choice of interpretation of his visual experiences" (Boullata,

2019, p. 154). Hence, traditionally in the Arab artworld, language is the foundation of the visual interpretation or else, visual expression is an interpretation of oral expression.

Although oral expression in its various forms is used in the Arab artworld, street art and specifically graffiti is increasingly coming to the forefront of *art that resists* within Arab communities. Pro-democracy activists during the 2010-2012 Arab Spring used street art to convey anti-authoritarian ideas. From naming stones,[14] to graffiti, street art exploded in places like Egypt and Libya during the Arab Spring as a pedagogical force against authoritarian governments. In fact, the Arab American National Museum in Dearborn, Michigan curated an exhibit "Creative Dissent," a compilation of street art that emerged from the Arab Spring protests.

When curator Christiane Gruber described the inspiration for "Creative Dissent" she explained the exhibits dynamic display of various artistic mediums used to condemn authoritarian regimes which included graffiti, murals, photography, cartoons, songs, chants, blog postings, and puppetry was a tribute to the diverse expressive art encountered in the streets and online over the course of the Arab Spring (Headlee, 2013). Egyptian street artist Nazeer who also interviewed highlighted the significant presence of street art in Egypt that emerged around the same time.

Libyan artist Ibrahim Hamid is another artist creating *art that resists* whose work is displayed in the exhibition. He painted images in Benghazi mocking late president Muammar Gaddafi. During the uprising there were many visual artists, rappers, and musicians killed, and

[14] For his piece, "Stone from Tahrir Square," artist Ashraf Foda's "collected stones discarded by protestors and asked various important figures to sign them, dealing with issues around political activism and memory" (Jay, n.d., p. 1).

even instances of cartoonists whose hands were broken (Headlee, 2013). Late renowned Libyan political cartoonist Kais al-Hilali was gunned down and killed by pro-regime militia due to his political artwork against Muammar Gaddafi (Headlee, 2013). When the uprising began, al-Hilali started drawing caricatures and distributing them at demonstrations and hanging them on walls as a form of protest. While the production of street art was incredibly dangerous, it was the only way to publicly show dissent (Headlee, 2013).

These are merely a few examples of how art as resistance is taken up within various Arab communities. However, interestingly there are also many Arab artists producing art as resistance who were born and/or are living abroad including Iraqi-British rapper *Lowkey*, Iraqi-Canadian rapper *Narcy*, British-Palestinian rapper Shadia Mansour, and Syrian-American rapper Omar Offendum.

These movements bring me to consider art as resistance in Palestine. Due to the hostile living conditions Palestinians face daily, street art has also exploded in Palestine to confront the Occupation and to convey the nuances of navigating a life in exile, a life under siege.

Art as Resistance in Palestine

Boullata's (2019) essays tie together aesthetics, history, and politics, to provide an in-depth understanding of modern Arab art, interweaving the experience of exile and an insistence for resistance. Boullata's abstract artwork uses geometrical patterns and integrates Arabic words and calligraphy to tell the story of separation from one's homeland. Boullata's essays and artworks

inform my project by providing insight into the pedagogical relationship between imagery and loss, accentuating the idea of art as transformative. Boullata (2019) writes,

> The choice of theme in Palestinian painting since 1948 reflected a social concern common to all beginners. Later, among the painters who had the opportunity to study professionally in the West, one can find an alienation from social themes to which they only returned after 1967. The major preoccupation of most Palestinian artists was to express an "idea." As all ideas are words, allegory was not only traditional in their culture, but an essential element in the formation of their work. (p. 158)

Boullata (2019) describes the significance of words, poetry, and allegories within the Palestinian artworld, emphasizing that "traditionally, the most popular form of the communicating arts in the Arab world was the oral form – the Arabic language having played a predominant role in the formation of the Arab's interpretation of life" (p. 153). For Boullata, the visual component of Palestinian art is very much influenced by a pedagogical element, meaning Arab artists used the visual to express an idea. For many Arab artists, art expressed their interpretation of life. Hence, visual art became a vessel for making ideas sensible and tangible.

Boullata's paintings are one example of the growing diversity of the Arab artworld. Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe (2014) note several prominent Palestinian artists that emerged from the time of the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO, 1964), stating,

> both Palestinian resistance and its cultural production have a long history, Maha Nassar notes in this special issue of the journal. Yet, with the establishment of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in 1964, much Palestinian art became more systematically a platform for the nationalist resistance movement. The PLO's revolutionary 1960s and 1970s period saw the birth of what many now consider highlights of "classical"

> Palestinian art forms, such as Ghassan Kanafani's literature, Mahmoud Darwish's poems, and Suleiman Mansour's paintings. (p. 9)

In the wake of the 1948 Nakba, the walls and roadsides in Palestine became visibly flooded with art and messaging resisting the state of Israel, their occupier. Graffiti is one of the most revered and accessible political aesthetics forms used in the Occupied territories. Graffiti continues to be a tool used by those oppressed to speak out publicly against their aggressor.

Work on Palestinian art as resistance (or resurgence) includes Israeli art historian Gannit Ankori (2006), who writes on the turmoil and violence that has defined the lives of Palestinians since the Nakba. Ankori (2006) suggests that amidst the chaos, artists live and thrive, illustrating powerful responses to the Occupation through their artwork, work that often goes unseen due to the dominance of Western art and artists within the mainstream artworld. Referencing and echoing Boullata, Ankori (2006) explores Palestinian identity through Palestinian art, noting, "The first English-language text devoted to Palestinian art was published in 1970 by the artist and writer Kamal Boullata… First and foremost, he views it [Palestinian art] as part of contemporary Arab culture, emphasizing its verbal orientation and literary sources" (p. 16).

Revered poet Samih al-Qasim, labelled by many as a "resistance poet," is known mostly throughout the Arab-speaking world because only one of his works titled "Sadder than Water," was translated into English. When asked about being label a "resistance poet," al-Qasim stated, "It was put upon me but I am proud of it. I am a resistance poet, and not only Arab and Palestinian resistance. I am a poet of international resistance" (Brown, 2015, para. 7). The "resistance poets" were a group of Palestinian poets that also included Darwish and Tawiq Zayyad (Brown, 2015,

para. 7). Zayyad's "poetry was widely celebrated as part of the Palestinian national movement" (Brown, 2015, para. 7).

As identified in the paragraph above, my research around Palestinian art as resistance would be incomplete without the renowned work of "resistance poets." In the interest of my project's inspiration to unite imagery with loss and resistance, I converge the poetry of Darwish with literature and visual art. I chose to focus on Darwish's poetry because I understand his work as pushing the boundaries of Palestinian identity by challenging colonial and conventional ideas around identity and what "returning" to the homeland might look like. As well, I found Darwish's work more accessible in terms of available translations than that of the work of al-Qasim and Zayyad.

In considering Palestinian art as resistance, I am drawn to consider the messages conveyed. Yet, art as resistance is not only about conveying a message but also, in part, about remembrance. "The old will die and the young will forget" (Nabulsi, 2006, para. 2). This is how David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister and the architect of Israel, responded to his 1948 command for the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians (Boullata, 2019, p. 130). It seems Ben-Gurion forgot his own ancestor's promise to "never forget" the atrocities of the Holocaust. If he had reflected on this promise, he may have rendered two matters plausible. First, that people oppressed find ways to resist their oppressors. Second, that resistance shapes remembrance practices. In other words, the oppressed elders will ensure, through remembrance practices, that the young never forget and continue to resist, long before their last breath. I believe Ben-Gurion underestimated the Palestinian people's commitment to the *right of return*. One way that Palestinians commit to

remembering the Nakba and their displacement is through the cultural production of art expressed through oral, written, and visual forms. By encountering visual and oral artistic forms of expression, Palestinians are confronted with/by the Occupation.

The nuances and particularities of Palestinian art as resistance is woven throughout my project as I pedagogically engage artworks. Next, I consider art as a remembrance practice, introducing Roger Simon's work into my project, because this is a vital concept in understanding the conditions that make up collective memory and in considering the significance of remembrance practices that shape, and are shaped by, Palestinian art. By understanding the relationship between art and remembrance, it is reasonable to conclude that when we think with art, we can learn from art. Furthermore, in the context of Palestine, the production of art is one type of remembrance practice that can help render the complications of the past tangible and help to unify a geographically displaced community.

Art as Resistance, Art as Remembrance

"I imagine people's collective memory is tied to physical manifestations," my partner turns to me and says. "So, what happens to a group's 'collective memory' when these physical places are bombed and no longer exist?" He pauses the video podcast "Useful Idiots." Just moments before, we had been talking about the Syrian civil war. I am a little taken aback that he used the term "collective memory" and am wondering whether he has been listening to me when I read aloud. He continues, "yes, some of these places that were bombed were tourist attractions, but these weren't *just* tourist attractions. They were places people worked. Places people hung out. These

were places people would go nightly to see friends. This is where mothers and fathers would take their children at night." He describes an image of four family members sharing one motorcycle, parking, the parents eating nuts while their children run around. "People would go to these places *every single day*." The pitch of his voice has raised, drawing out the words *every single day*. In that moment, I can feel his disdain for the war and his sadness for its casualties.

Again, only days before finishing my project, I find my partner sitting in front of the television, looking at a video of a tourist's recent visit to the iconic hotel in Aleppo, Syria. One of the oldest hotels in Syria, *The Baron* sits empty, the paint on the walls peeling while whatever is left lies largely in ruins. The majestic staircase that used to be lined in red carpet is now anything but glamorous. Not taking his eyes away from the screen, he says to me, "I stayed there." Shortly after, the tourist in the video talks about guests at *The Baron*, including King Faisal I (of Iraq and Syria), Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and iconic novelist Agatha Christie who wrote parts of *Murder on the Orient Express* from room 203. The expression on my partner's face takes me back to years earlier when he was looking at pictures of Mosul. I do not believe he will ever look at pictures of *The Baron* again.

I wonder, what *does* happen to collective memory when the physical manifestations that a culture is bound to are gone? "This is not a question about the physical buildings" he tells me. "It's about what happens to the relationships, experiences, the culture tied to these structures." It is about enduring the loss of normalcy. Perhaps it is also about normalizing loss.

What is at stake in the formation of cultural identity[15] when a group's material environment becomes indiscernible? What happens when the rubble of *The Baron* cannot be discerned from the rubble of your neighbor's home, or from the rubble of what once was a local bakery? If a community's material environment heavily influences cultural identity, what reveals itself in the formation of identity when cherished landmarks and physical manifestations become unrecognizable? It is through the consideration of these questions that I am drawn to explore how and why remembrance practices emerge.

Simon (2011) identifies remembrance practices as emerging from collective memory. Collective memory refers to "the use of a specific set of texts, images, and rites within which a group's sense of unity and individuality is based" (p. 1). The symbolic key; *right of return* rhetoric; the Oslo Accords; the Quran, are examples of texts, images and rites that inform collective memory of Palestinians. For Simon (n.d.), "…an *a priori* intimacy and bonding are central to a social practice of remembering that serves to reproduce and reinforce these relations" (p. 1). Texts, images, and rites illuminate common experiences within a group, which then cultivates unity and homogeny around a common goal. In turn, this common goal nurtures intimacy and bonding between members of a community, which is essential for remembrance practices that wish to

[15] When referring to *cultural identity* in my project, I am referring to "the feeling of belonging to a certain social or cultural group" (Aristova, 2015, p. 154). It is also "the definition of groups or individuals (by themselves or others) in terms of cultural or subcultural categories (including ethnicity, nationality, language, religion, and gender) and in stereotyping, this is framed in terms of difference or otherness" (Chandler and Munday, 2011, p. 137). Appadurai (1996) suggests the mobilization of group identities lies at the heart of the adjective *cultural* (p. 13). Resisting the noun form *culture*, suggesting an adjectival approach, Appadurai (1996), "stresses its contextual, heuristic, and comparative dimensions and orients us to the idea of culture as difference, especially difference in the realm of group identity" (p. 13). Vital to cultural identity is its lack of homogeneity and its expansiveness.

reinforce these connections. One informs the other and is necessary for the other to come to fruition.

Simon (2005) identifies collective memory as emerging from both unifying and competitive narratives. This is a critical point that argues against the pendulum swinging to favor and promote certain perspectives over others. In fact, inviting competing narratives is not only a reality of collective engagement, by the standards of communities of memory it is essential.

Simon (2005) recognizes a need for a diversity of social identities to prevent communities of memory from inevitably falling into the same pattern (trap) embedded in colonial knowledge whereby historical knowledge only “reflects the perspective of those whose histories have prevailed” (p. 61-62). Simon (2005) points out that, for communities of memory to flourish they need to possess the ability to integrate and intertwine shared memories with differing and oppositional memories that recognize sameness and disparities (p. 61-62). Communities of memory are not homogenous, nor need they be. By attending to competing ideas, spaces made up of diverse social identities are created whereby *loss* can become a tool to re-evaluate and reshape what remains.

In considering how many younger Palestinian generations know of Palestine pre-1948 only through stories retold, connections are likely formed through a collective goal. Simon (2005) speaks to the significance of a common goal, identifying the promissory link between memory and redemption as what binds people. For Simon (2005), “… members of a community of memory pursue a redemptive course in the interminable return to and renewal of their understanding and

assessment of past events" (p. 61). Redemption is the act of either being saved from evil or else recovering something such as a possession or one's freedom. The word's origins are Latin and the literal meaning is to "buy back". For Palestinians, the common goal is to recover their homeland, sovereignty, and freedom. This common goal is established through remembrance practices. A community's shared commitment to unite and bond is strengthened by the production of objects that make up collective memory (such as poems, literature, and paintings) and is essential for remembrance practices. This is in part because remembrance practices also wish to reinforce these connections.

I wonder, what unfolds when social coherence does not exist within a community? Zygmunt Bauman (1999) proposes that in all societies social unity has served as a shelter and guarantee of certainty which, in turn, nurtures the trust, self-confidence and courage necessary for freedom and a willingness to experiment (p. 30). In other words, social unity is vital to imagining "worlds otherwise" because it must be present for members of a society to feel secure enough to experiment and conduct everyday life in unconventional, untraditional ways. This is not to say that experimentation cannot occur without social cohesion. Experimentation can also be birthed within ruptures and can be messy, unruly, unpredictable and anything but cohesive. What I understand Bauman (1999) to be saying is that non-exclusionary remembrance practices have significant potential in building social cohesion, and social cohesion is fruitful (but not necessary, i.e., ruptures) to experimentation, fruitful to imagining "worlds otherwise." In turn, remembrance practices have transformative potential. Since, producing *art that resists* can be a practice of remembrance, as art helps make up collective memory, *art that resists* has the potential to

transform a society. In sum, there is a meaningful link between art as resistance and remembrance practices wherein a group's collective memory is strengthened through remembrance practices, practices that shape, and are shaped by, social unity and feelings of security.

I continue my thinking by exploring aesthetic theories and ideas. These theories and ideas including aesthetic disobedience, decolonial aesthetic practices, and imagining "worlds otherwise" are explored to further develop the foundation for my analysis of the art and interviews of my participants.

Aesthetic Theories and Ideas that Guide My Project

Political aesthetics shed light on the intricate and ambiguous connections of aesthetics with social, cultural, and political encounters in contemporary societies (Virmani, 2016). The term "aesthetics" maintains its relevancy as a robust connecting agent between the individual, state, and society (Virmani, 2016). Concepts such as aesthetic disobedience and "decolonial aesthetic" practices maintain characteristics found in political aesthetic practices and are often summoned through *art that resists*. For this reason, I focus my analysis of political aesthetic practices within the concept's aesthetic disobedience and decolonial aesthetic practices. Then, I consider the notion of imagining "worlds otherwise" as an aesthetic idea which suggests that through the creation of art as resistance, radical subjectivity and decolonial thinking can emerge.

Aesthetic disobedience

Aesthetic disobedience is situated in qualities that counter status quo approaches to aesthetics and that commit to notions of "revolt." Because aesthetic disobedience is located in narratives that support "revolution," the term can also be applied more broadly to most innovations in art that go against the grain of established aesthetic practices. 'Movements' in art, or 'schools' of art are recognized by how they depart from/revolt against established practices. Thus, aesthetic disobedience is widely applicable beyond political contexts.

For my project, which requires an exploration on geo-political issues and wars, I consider what a commitment to political aesthetic practices might look like by drawing on characteristics found in aesthetic disobedience and decolonial aesthetic practices, two concepts that fall under the umbrella of political aesthetics. To begin, aesthetic disobedience highlights deliberate participation in the transformation of pre-existing rules and boundaries of the artworld (Neufeld, 2015).

I consider this definition of aesthetic disobedience, a form of artistic transgression that "break[s] some entrenched artworld norm[s] in order to publicly draw attention to, and recommend the reform of, a conflict between artworld commitments and some shared commitments of a community" (Neufeld, 2015, p. 115). My analysis of the three artists I interviewed breaks entrenched artworld norms by either employing the artistic medium of graffiti - grounded in notions of anti-establishment, or by creating artworks with materials that are not usually employed or thought unconventional in the artworld such as water, sugar, and dye.

Aesthetic disobedience also represents revolutionary dissidence. What must be maintained for an art object to be categorized as part of an aesthetic of disobedience is a revolutionary dissidence in particular, a distinction that differentiates it from other rebellious aesthetic practices. "Specifically, the notion "revolution" is one that replaces a normative order with another one and in political philosophy, "revolution" is reserved for movements that aim to overturn the existing legal order and replace it with an entirely new one" (Neufeld, 2015, p. 116). It is the political philosophy of "revolution" and it being at the forefront of aesthetic disobedience that proves this form of artistic transgression as relevant in the mobilization of (post)colonial theory and anti-Occupation discourse.

Decolonial Aesthetics

Decolonial aesthetics is separate but complimentary to aesthetic disobedience in that it refers to artists contesting and debunking the practices and values espoused in imperial globalization. For Joy James (2013), "decolonial aesthetics work to re-imagine, re-map, and re-constitute an elsewhere" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014). The "re" before each verb suggests an undertaking that involves the *redoing* of colonial knowledge. Decolonial aesthetics exhibits characteristics that express the decolonial struggle, offering an alternative imaginary; a "thinking otherwise" (Milburn, 2003), which destabilizes colonial systems of thought and power.

I believe reimagining meaning requires what Aparna Mishra Tarc (2011) describes as a "transferential exchange between object and learner, [where] knowledge is made, broken down and remade" (p. 366). This breaking and remaking colonial knowledge opens space for alternative

ways of thinking and knowing. Political aesthetics, and specifically characteristics found in decolonial aesthetics and aesthetic disobedience, allow for Mishra Tarc's (2011) sense of transferential exchange.

The Transnational Decolonial Institute (2013), which maintains decolonial aesthetics "seeks to recognize and open options for liberating the senses" (Martineau and Ritskes, 2104, p. II). Decolonial/decoloniality/decolonialism refers to a school of thought which focuses on untangling the production of knowledge from its Eurocentric roots. Decolonial aesthetics critique Western aesthetic categories and how those categories organize the way we think of ourselves and others, to expose the contradictions of coloniality.

> Decolonial aesthetics acknowledges and subverts the presence of colonial power and control in the realm of the senses. A decolonial approach refers to a theoretical, practical or methodological choice geared toward delinking aesthetics, at the epistemic level, from the discourse of colonialism that is embedded in modernity itself. (Palestine-Palestine, 2013).

Decolonial aesthetics creates opportunities for imagining "worlds otherwise."

Unlike aesthetic disobedience, decolonial aesthetics is not concerned with simply disrupting and transforming pre-existing rules and boundaries of the artworld, but it *is* concerned with destabilizing colonial systems of affect, thought and power.

I draw on political aesthetic practices, specifically aesthetic disobedience and decolonial aesthetic practices, to analyze objects, such as graffiti, stencils, edible materials, and prescription

medication. While my initial approach was to solely examine graffiti[16] art, I realized it is less about the medium itself and more about *acts* that resemble resurgence and disobedience in Occupied Palestine, *acts* that can also be represented through other artistic mediums.

A tension that arises from my analysis is in navigating and identifying artists as participating in political aesthetic practices while maintaining the desire expressed by the respective artists to be seen as 'artists.' It is true that in some sense, artists generally derive their recognition and reputation as artists by "breaking entrenched artworld norms" while creating and experimenting with new forms of execution. So, although this Chapter can be understood as essentially building an analytical lens (from the concepts I have introduced), I also recognize there is an excess that cannot be contained by the lens. Art and artists cannot be neatly contained within the lens of political aesthetics or any lens for that matter.

In sum, political aesthetic practices give artists space to perform and break through colonial enclosures, creating space for the re-imagining process; creating space for making sense of the world we live in and for a commitment to transformation. When the excess cannot be contained by the concept of "political aesthetic practices," the spontaneous and uncontainable spill-over can also create dynamic opportunities for discovery.

[16] An aesthetic practice considered criminal, founded in anti-establishment and class consciousness rhetoric, embodying characteristics found in aesthetic disobedience.

Imagining "Worlds Otherwise"

My commitment to understanding art as transformative is due to the acute relationship that exists between art, and social and political arenas (Rancière, 2000). Until recently, the aesthetic theory driving my project was Rancière's (2000) "distribution of the sensible." I now understand this to be problematic as my project's central aesthetic theory when discussing decolonial art. Although I maintain that art can help us dissect and make sense of the difficult, uncomfortable, and complex (Rancière, 2000), and that "artistic practices are 'ways of doing and making' that intervene in the general distribution of ways of doing and making as well as in the relationships they maintain to modes of being and forms of visibility" (Rancière, 2000, p. 13), I would be remiss not to acknowledge the tension that exists between euro-centric aesthetic theories and decolonial Indigenous thinking that subsume/consume Indigenous voices within its hegemonic logic of domination (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. I). Specifically, I see a tension arise in my thinking with Rancière's aesthetic theory: "the distribution of the sensible." This is because, "Indigenous art disrupts colonial hegemony by fracturing the sensible architecture of experience that is constitutive of the aesthetic regime itself – the normative order, or 'distribution of the sensible' – that frames both political and artistic potentialities, as such" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. I). Hence, I engage with Indigenous perspectives on aesthetics to suggest that art can help render ideas sensible by creating opportunities for imagining "worlds otherwise." Engaging with Indigenous aesthetic ideas is important when mobilizing a (post)colonial lens because,

> the task of decolonial artists, scholars and activists is not simply to offer amendments or edits to the current world, but to display the mutual sacrifice

> and relationality needed to sabotage colonial systems of thought and power for the purpose of liberatory alternatives. (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. II)

This is the foundation for radical subjectivity (James & Gordon, 2008). Decolonial aesthetics breaks away from coloniality's hyper-individualism that seeks to maintain current systems and structures (seeks to maintain *this* world), "and diffuses itself through shared artistic processes to imagine "worlds otherwise" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. II; Escobar, 2007). For artists who choose to work within this vision, decolonial aesthetics "seeks to recognize and open options for liberating the senses" (TDI+Transnational Decolonial Institute, n.d.). I consider epistemic disobedience and de-linking as essential pursuits to decoloniality, while also anchoring my use of aesthetics within the artistic exercises "of artists and communities engaged in *material struggle for decolonization*" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014, p. II). Imagining "world's otherwise" makes space for rethinking and dismantling colonial logics. As Kidane and Martineau (2013) argue, "it is in these spaces that we find stories of ancestral spirits unfiltered through the white gaze" (p. 189). Hence, imagining "worlds otherwise" is a critical aesthetic idea driving my project.

Charles R. Garoian and Yvonne M. Gaudelius (2009) discuss a dynamic challenge that has emerged from writing about art, visual culture and transnationalism which is the introduction of politically charged terminology into the critical lexicon such as 'hybridity,' diaspora,' 'cosmopolitanism,' 'exile' and 'post-colonialism.' For Garoian and Gaudelius (2009), "All of these terms point to a shift in art language, a shift that encompasses the social and the political in far more explicit ways since they point to the conditions under which contemporary art and visual culture is produced" (p. 143). Art and visual culture are produced under cosmopolitan, diasporic,

(post)colonial conditions and, in turn, art and visual culture evoke an *engagement with* or a *response to* these conditions. For example, one artist, historian, curator, critic, and educator described incorporating art as a way of understanding social issues and committing to social change: “we employ specific pedagogical tactics to challenge hegemonic social relations, not only in the classroom, but outside it as well” (Miner, 2013, p. 2). Art can render hegemonic social relations sensible, and once rendered sensible, critiques can emerge. This is a moment of discovery and, in turn, a moment to consider the potential of alternative ways of thinking and doing. I suggest this type of thinking and doing can be described as imagining “worlds otherwise.”

Gaps in Literature

There are many other scholars writing on the Occupation in terms of its historical context, the notion of resistance, Palestinian art as resistance, the living conditions of those in Palestine and those displaced elsewhere, the two-state solution, and the impact that the Occupation has on the socio-economic and cultural life of Palestinians. What I rarely encountered during my research was examples of pedagogical engagements with artworks, to make sense of the Occupation and all its nuances. One of the few sources I found that illustrates this type of reading was Boullata’s (2019), *There Where You Are Not: Selected Writings from Kamal Boullata*. Boullata displays and discusses artwork in a way that echoes this type of pedagogical reading.[17]

[17] “Pedagogical reading” as in the learning that takes place when we’re engaged with art, and, on the other hand, consciously using these artworks to develop a pedagogy inspired by political works of art.

Another area of research underrepresented is the link between capitalism and Palestinian art as resistance. This topic puts into question the troubling and lofty conditions that make up contemporary art. In terms of the Palestinian experience, it questions how capitalist conditions that make up contemporary art and society shape and are shaped by the Occupation. As identified by G.G. Sholette (2017), "For while all art encounters the contradiction of its own entrepreneurial marketization that follows and disciplines the artist herself from classroom to exhibition space and beyond, the committed activist artist must also contend with the paradox of producing work that is always already caught up in a system it openly opposes and deplores" (p. 12). In Chapter Five, I speak briefly to the relationship between capitalism and Palestinian art as resistance, linking it to the Occupation through my analysis of artworks and a pedagogy of reading eliciting an aesthetics of response. With that in mind, the relationship between capitalism and art is not within the scope of my project and is an area of research that I hope to return to more thoroughly later.

During my research, I found a vast amount of literature theorizing Palestinian art as resistance. Less common was theorizations of art as Palestinian resurgence. Writing on resurgence included Nayrouz Abu Hatoum's (2016) dissertation exploring Palestinians' and Israelis' relationship to landscapes, including borders and the Separation Wall. Abu Hatoum (2016) is concerned with the concept of landscapocide, whereby landscapes are framed to be either seen or unseen and how visual fields influence the structuring of national imaginaries and visions of the future. This exploration on the visual fields that influence national imaginaries about people's future relationships with landscapes summons notions of resurgence practices by considering and investing in Palestinian futurity.

Next, I explore the constructs that guide my pedagogical engagement with the artwork and interviews of my participants. My purpose is to create an understanding of how art supports people to resist and engage in decolonizing and resurgent movements towards building futures. In addition, these constructs support my method of analysis and methodological approach.

Methodology

I draw the sample of artwork for this study from a small group of Palestinian artists living in Palestine. This sample is not random as it is critical to conduct interviews with artists living in Palestine whose art specifically speaks of creating and living under occupation. My project investigates the relationship between art making and resistance. It also explores the pedagogical implications that might arise from this relationship.

For this project I sought artists who engage in public graffiti at least once while living in Palestine. I did this because my initial research was concerned with graffiti but after interviewing my participants, I decided with my participant's consent, to incorporate a variety of art mediums for two reasons: 1) two of these artists do not use the medium of graffiti often and, in fact, one has only inscribed graffiti once, and 2) I was moved by pieces these artists created when using other mediums and their stories. My attempt at finding graffiti artists proved beneficial because it unintentionally connected me with artists who employ political aesthetic practices through other artistic mediums.

Other criteria I used when searching for participants include having internet access and access to social media or a valid email. The artists needed to be willing to communicate with me

in the English language. I used these criteria because I needed to be able to conduct interviews over the internet,[18] I needed a reliable way to contact these artists in order to schedule interviews and be given clarity on questions I had that stemmed from our interviews, as well as I needed to be able to *literally* communicate with the artists and, unfortunately, I am not fluent in the Arabic language. Furthermore, my consent forms were in English. I needed to ensure that participants understood what they were consenting to.[19]

Although seven artists were approached and considered for the study only three fir the criteria for selection and agreed to participate. One artist lived in Jordan rather than the Occupied territories, two of the artists denied my request to participate out of fear or disinterest in participating in the project and one dropped out because we did not speak a common language.

The three participants who consented to participate in the study provided a profound amount of rich data. Artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid provided several pieces to be analyzed and I am grateful to have been able to work so closely with them.

Using a qualitative approach, I conducted in-depth, semi-structured personal interviews with the three artists. Although I asked set interview questions, I included follow-up to these as they emerged from my discussions and interactions with the participants. I also gave some time

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[18] During the time when I was conducting interviews, I was in Canada and the artists I interviewed were either in Palestine or visiting Lebanon.

[19] Years later, at the point of finishing my project, I see the lack of decolonial work done in the interview stage. Unfortunately, I missed the opportunity to speak with many artists that did not have the privilege of access to internet, however, I am still unsure how to solve that barrier. Having a better understanding of decolonial work now, in the future I would offer and provide consent forms in the language requested by the participant and seek the services of a translator when needed.

for participants to guide the interviews, introducing new themes that unveiled experiences living as an artist and within the Occupied territories.

Each interview took approximately one to three hours. I conducted two semi-structured follow-up interviews to clarify statements and gather further information on artworks (such as date and title of work). I used open-ended questions because they are "important when you want to determine the salience or importance of opinions to people, since people tend to mention those matters that are important to them" (Spencer, 1995, ii). Data from the interviews and the objects (artworks) I studied were further supplemented and substantiated by my literature review. There was so much richness to the data that it led to several short non-structured, informal discussions after the semi-structured interviews. Since these discussions after the interviews were not recorded yet provided a lot of insight into my topic, I wrote in a notebook for later use. To summarize, the study used three distinct sources of data: (1) three individual interviews (one with each Palestinian artist); (2) personal notes based on informal discussions; and (3) secondary data comprised of a variety of published scholarly material.

The artists' interviews generated perceptions about various artistic mediums, motivations for creating art, and the benefits and downfalls of being an artist who is also Palestinian. Much of what we spoke about during the interviews were prompted by the artist's thinking beyond the questions asked. For example, when I asked Arafah if he feels pressure to produce political art, he responded by telling me how relieved he is to not be part of the larger system. "The routine, the being engaged completely in the system, uhm, the working [for] someone else. I'm not doing all

that, I feel I'm released. I feel free doing what I like." Arafah continues for a while, talking about the freedom he derives from being an independent artist in Palestine.

> I feel I am living the life that I wish, and I want. As well, in my life, I had these chances to be living somewhere else like in Europe or the West, but with my experience there, when I spent 3 months, 4 months there, I didn't have the same passion about life as when I live in Palestine. (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

When I asked Abdel Hamid why he was in Lebanon during the time of the interview, Abdel Hamid began to describe how, if you stay in Ramallah "for a long time it kind of feels like a sensory deprivation unit… So, it's not exactly great for work 'cause everything is on autopilot with the senses" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

In my interview with Abu Ayyash, he confirms he is currently living and working in Ramallah. When I asked him what it means to be an artist in Palestine and whether it is safe, he replied

> Yes, it is safe in a way. Threats… they are common to any Palestinian. There's nothing different. Being an artist, you have to be in a certain level. You have to be an activist. So, if you're just presenting art without a message, it will be something shallow without a meaning. Like, it's not genuine. Right? So, if you are a semi-activist or someone who can translate their activism into more elite image, that's something. Or clean image, or nice image. It's considered a threat. So, you most likely [will] be questioned and maybe imprisoned and in extreme cases being assassinated. (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

In these responses each artist gives a very compelling and complex responses that spoke to their artistic motivations, personal achievements, loss, the Occupation, suffering, and “the sense of time” under the Occupation.

My overall data analysis drew on the artists’ thoughts conveyed in the semi-structured interviews and unstructured discussions, artworks I chose from each of their collections, as well as relevant secondary sources.[20] My study’s theoretical and empirical support came from broader theoretical frameworks on (post)colonialism, political aesthetics, anti-Occupation discourse, neoliberalism, bio-politics, and a philosophical analysis of the experiences of Palestinians living under Occupation.

Lastly, I am suggesting that to engage with the images is, in itself, pedagogy; analyzing the artwork is pedagogy. My methodology entailed thinking about the artworks and images as pedagogical objects, that is, objects from which we might derive insights into concepts such as apartheid and conditions such as the Occupation. I illustrate this through a pedagogy of reading eliciting an aesthetics of response throughout each chapter, and with each of the three artists I interviewed. I suggest there is transformative potential in pedagogically engaging art.

I end this chapter by considering my own relationship to the project. This is a relationship that implicates me as descending from colonial settlers; being in a position of power due to the

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[20] In the early stages of this work, I spoke with the artists about what images I would analyze and received images directly from the artists that I could chose from. The images I engaged with are also available within the public domain and are open to various interpretations. As agreed upon between myself and the artists, a copy of my dissertation will be provided to them once it has been published and made public by York University.

privileges I am granted because of my ethnicity, class, and education. My ancestors colonized the very country I live in and reap the benefits of. I consider my position through a (post)colonial lens by incorporating the work of Tuhiwai Smith and Rothberg.

My Position as Researcher-Outsider

I speak here to my position as researcher and outsider in the context of writing on the Occupation of Palestine, as a gesture toward my acknowledgement of concerns raised by Tuhiwai Smith (1999) and Diana Allan (2014). Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes,

> The word itself, 'research', is probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world's vocabulary… It is so powerful that indigenous people even write poetry about research. The ways in which scientific research is implicated in the worst excesses of colonialism remains a powerful remembered history for many of the world's colonized peoples. (p. 1)

As an outsider, I am implicated[21] in the use of colonial systems of thought and power and my retelling of other's stories may take away from the voices of those experiencing loss manifested by the Israeli-led Occupation.

As a researcher, I am implicated: perpetuating, condemning, and exploring the violence embedded within my role. I question my own temptation to reduce Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid to their circumstances and whether writing on this topic perpetuates the very problematic I

[21] See Rothberg (2019).

wish to avoid. I summon Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" and consider how western academic thinking is produced to support western economic interests. For Spivak (1988),

> In the face of the possibility that the intellectual is complicit in the persistent constitution of Other as the Self's shadow, a possibility of political practices for the intellectual would be to put the economic 'under erasure,' to see the economic factor as irreducible as it reinscribes the social text, even as it is erased, however imperfectly, when it claims to be the final determinant or the transcendental signified. (p. 24)

Spivak (1988) explains that this form of epistemic violence, wherein the Other is perceived as the Self's shadow and the western intellectual orders the erasure of the Other's economic viability, as "the orchestrated, far-flung, heterogeneous project to constitute the colonial subject as Other" (p. 24-25). Spivak's essay leaves me questioning how to prevent myself from constituting Palestinians as Other. When I consider how I draw on (post)colonial theory throughout my project, I believe Spivak's example of epistemic violence (the constitution of the Subject as Other) to be a significant concept to my interactions and subsequent analysis. To be true to (post)colonial theory, I must consider my own complicity and implication within my work.

Committed to writing from a place that acknowledges my implication, I locate my positioning within historian Rothberg's notion of the implicated subject. Rothberg (2019) describes what it means to be implicated, writing, "implication,' like the proximate but not identical term 'complicity,' draws attention to how we are 'folded into' (im-pli-cated) events that at first seem beyond our agency as individual subjects" (p. 1). Without having to be direct agents of harm, implicated subjects are privileged, occupying powerful positions (Rothberg, 2019).

Furthermore, "an implicated subject is neither a victim nor a perpetrator, but rather a participant in histories and social formations that generate the positions of victim and perpetrator, and yet in which most people do not occupy such clear roles" (Rothberg, 2019, p. 1). I take this conundrum with me and sit with it, in it, often and with deliberation. I take measures throughout my project to sit with my implication, including summoning and discussing (post)colonial scholars and Indigenous scholars, and questioning my participation in reproducing the legacies of historical violence and structures of inequality that presently exist.

During her research with Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, Allen (2014) grapples with the problematic of coming from a position of power and privilege while writing about people devastated by the legacies of historical violence and the present structures of inequality, writing,

> The world of refugees is lost between the mouths of scholars, activists, and chroniclers – people *like me*, in short – who set out to give voice and end up taking it away… I wondered if it was possible to avoid repeating the very problem I had set out to redress. (p. 213)

Allan's (2014) reference to "the mouths of scholars…" follows a conversation between Allan and Umm Yusuf, where Yusuf remarks, "il-dunya day'a bayn atmam al-nas" (English: The world is lost between the mouths of people) (p. 213). The idea that the retelling of another's story can (re)produce loss represents a challenge felt by many researchers and scholars and, even more so, by those whose stories are being retold. This proposes that the commitment to a "collective memory" established through collective remembrance practices by members of a shared

community is a significant one and may be necessary in addressing this ethical dilemma around the telling and retelling of history.

My interviews with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid give voice to the Palestinian struggle in a way that the advantages and limitations of any interview allow. What I mean by this is that without these three artists, a lot would have been missed and assumed. Yet, these three interviews are also a minute fraction of the voices being represented. At no point do Arafah, Abu Ayyash, or Abdel Hamid state they speak for all artists nor for all Palestinians. That in mind, themes emerged that connected these conversations and exposed the inadequacies of my positionality. In other words, there were questions and problematics brought forth by all three artists that at times overlapped and yet developed into three extremely distinct and unique conversations. I am grateful for the time, patience, and care Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid took in guiding me through such complex and charged territory.

In Chapter Two: Political Aesthetics, I consider the concepts explored in the section above on theories guiding my project's approach to political aesthetics, by engaging with the artworks of Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid as pedagogy. I consider how each artist reflects on their role, confronted with a profound tension between the Occupation as creative inspiration and as contributing to the erosion of creativity.

Chapter Two: Political Aesthetic Practices and Imagining "Worlds Otherwise"

Visual culture creates, as well as reflects, personal and social freedoms, and as a result, consideration of its character and impact is critical to a democratic education. As such, how and what people come to know about art, inside and outside of institutions, is important in the formation of cultural identity, political economy, and individual enrichment.
-Kerry Freedman, Teaching Visual Culture

In this chapter, I discuss and analyze three works of art created by the Palestinian artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid, respectively. These works of art are titled *Horizon* (2010), *Pacifier* (2014), and an untitled graffiti piece (2014). My analysis is shaped, largely, by the theoretical framing discussed in the previous chapter. For this purpose, in this Chapter I provide a tangible illustration of how I interpret political aesthetic practices such as aesthetic disobedience and decolonial aesthetic practices within the respective artist's works. In considering how *art that resists* can be made through employing political aesthetic practices, while acknowledging the excesses that cannot be categorized or labeled, I see a significance in understanding creative exercises that help me with interpreting art as resistance.

I continue in this chapter to think with and about the artworks and images as pedagogical objects. I consider how aesthetic experiences affect people, making aesthetic experiences a key component of curriculum and our pedagogic practices. To do this, I explore how Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid summon political aesthetic practices through their artworks.

Furthermore, I continue my analysis of the potential for moments of transformative change that can emerge from encountering pedagogy through the respective artworks.

I begin by locating Arafah within his reflections on the role of the artist.

Artist Arafah's Reflection on the Role of the Artist

Arafah spoke to me from his studio in Beit Sahour, Bethlehem. He described himself as not identifying with any particular artistic medium. His time at the Art Academy influenced his move away from graffiti when he "learned that art can be practiced in every possible space. So, the question is what is the best form or medium for such an idea… the answer is by experimenting, and here is where I find my passion in making art" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Artistic mediums explored by Arafah include painting, graffiti, installation, constructions with wood, and different media forms. He describes himself as having a long, loving relationship with painting: "I am in love with painting" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Arafah further notes, "I like to play with the elements, to create fantasy, imaginativity" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). In one interesting piece, Arafah creatively plays with the elements, displaying paint splattered work boots, seen in figure 1.

Figure 1

To Not Be in the Garbage

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, (n.d.).

When Arafah is not in his studio he is at home in a refugee camp[22] with his family. When asked about safety in relation to the camp, Arafah explains how danger and precarity become a part of one's life when you live in a refugee camp in Palestine. For Arafah,

[22] "In the camps, over six decades, Palestinians have organised institutionally, socially, culturally, politically and sometimes militarily to ensure their survival and reproduction in exile, and to demand a just resolution of their situation" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 71). The organization that emerges within the camp is unrepresentative of Agamben's silenced and disempowered *homines sacri*. Camps have proven to have active arenas of organization and resistance against "being made" dispossessed. As a contrary argument to Agamben, Puggioni (2006) articulates the camp as also becoming a space of dissent in which refugee *subjects* resist dehumanization, speaking and acting for themselves. "Crucially, a straight Agambenian reading of the camp would cast doubt on the political meaning of such activities. If the camp is a zone of indistinction where political life is suspended, then acts of resistance and agency by those in the camp can only be the silent expressions of bare life (e.g., Edkins and Pin-Fat 2005) *not* forms of political agency" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 71). Since Palestinians have organized for over six decades, I articulate the site of the camp as one where forms of political agency, such as artistic forms, emerge.

> It becomes just part of your life, yanni [English: friend]. I don't know. Since I was a child, this meaning of safe, I didn't get to know exactly the meaning until I traveled for my first time to France. It was strange for me, not being worried that something will happen, yanni, in the night. And I think, myself and so many people who live in the camp, are traumatized in a way in their character, in their decisions, in their ideas, in their growing up, I don't know, but I think this is very basic because I think safety is the most principal issue to have in life. Other than that, everything is secondary yanni, no? (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

Although everything else is secondary to safety and survival, Arafah goes on to say how there is "no space left for sadness or pity. These are the facts amongst so many other facts" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). He lives with these facts but cannot dwell on them.

I ask Arafah about the pressures around producing political art, whether political art is necessary, due to the context of being an artist in Palestine. For Arafah, it gives him a sense of relief to produce art even though it does not always provide a comfortable living:

> The routine, the being engaged completely in the system, the working for someone else. I'm not doing all of that, I feel I'm released. I feel free doing what I like. This is something exceptional. I know so many people here are wondering how I am living, how I make money, but I'm satisfied yanni [friend], with how I live… The way I'm doing my things, I'm so much inspired. I have been lucky to travel abroad, and I saw that each community they have their problems, they have their misery, maybe in Europe less than other places, maybe in the U.S. less than other places, but let's say that the majority of the world have their misery and hard situations. Being in one of those really hard situations is really exceptional to make art because you have to find solutions all the time, you have to think everyday of new things, you have to imagine houses, people, faces, laughing, jokes, sky, you have this passion of watching things out of the box and doing something different, looking for the good life. Luckily, there is a way to define the good life and I feel like I'm doing this, I'm living the good life in terms of not being engaged completely in the system. I don't have a bank account. I don't have something called loans. I have lots of pressure from my family and my

> friends and the community: "why are you not getting married", "why you don't build your own house?" I feel I am released from all of that and I feel that I am living the life that I wish and I want and as well, in my life, I had these chances to live somewhere else like Europe or the West, but with my experience there, when I spent 3-4 months [in each place], I don't have the same passion about life as when I live in Palestine. When I live in my community, yanni [friend], like close to my friends, to my parents, to all of that, and doing art. That's the great thing. (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

Arafah does not want to become embedded in any structural system whether it be the crevices of capitalism or social norms around marriage. He uses the Occupation as "inspiration" to fuel his artwork, a concept I return to in my Conclusion. Arafah travels the world displaying his art in galleries, museums, and exhibitions.

While sifting through the data I collected, traversing page after page of transcriptions, I realized the more Arafah spoke about his role as an artist, the less I felt inclined to ask about his position as a Palestinian. Not yet halfway into our interview, direct and to the point, Arafah discloses, "in fact, I don't like to talk about these things [injury and death] because, ummmm…. I, khalas,[23] I feel so much yanni,[24] heavy on my heart when I talk about these stories… I would like to talk more about art" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). The focus of the interview shifts to his work as an artist. There is something to be said about how artists speak through their artwork.

[23] Arabic to English translation: "khalas" translates to "enough," "ok," "stop" or "lets move on."
[24] Arabic to English translation: "yanni" translates to "like," "meaning" or "for example."

"Art is not only about beauty and doing nice drawings it's more [about] understanding other sides of the cube" Arafah explains. "I believe that art should be produced as this moveable statement, yanni, that does not agree and does not refuse but is always in between. [Art] is not to say this is right, this is false, this is wrong, I think art is somewhere else, [it] just has to push people to a place where [things are] lighter and clearer… I think art should make you question and ponder what you should change or [how] you should experiment [or] how to [do things in] a different way. I think art and philosophy [go together/ are alike], but art can be everywhere" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Here, Arafah suggests there is a dynamic ideological undertaking involved in the production of art. For Arafah, art has a philosophical component, encouraging one to think critically and imagine "worlds otherwise."

I continue with a closer examination on the connection between Arafah's work as an artist and Indigenous aesthetic thinking. I continue with my exploration on political aesthetics through my own reading and interpretation of Arafah's *Horizon* (2010). The conclusions I draw from this reading is significant because it reveals an alternative way of thinking about the Occupation and the transformative potential of pedagogically engagements with art

Reading Arafah's Horizon

Figure 2

Horizon

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, 2012.

Speaking on his piece *Horizon* (2010), Arafah describes the creative process, "I did these expressions of the sea. I created this Facebook page and invited people to bring me a bottle of water from the sea. Any sea that they can reach to fill a bottle of water from there and send it to me so I can create a tiny sea from everywhere. I spent that year, when I started the project, living in Ramallah and I was getting the sea packages in Ramallah. It is the only possible sea to have, we have no access to the sea in Ramallah" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Arafah states this fact with such ease I find it almost startling. Upon reflection, I imagine the juxtaposition of vast, sprawling, vigorous, open waters to the cramped, closed off landscape of the Dheisheh refugee camp.

"How people reacted to this project, [they] started to send me water from the sea – that makes things more interesting, and I collected all the sea and the sea water in the buckets" Arafah continues. "I display them first and then I put all the water [into] clear plastic bags, huge bags, 2 meters by 4, and I fill it with all the water of the sea that I have, and I rope it." Arafah describes how this project is a mobile sea kit. I find myself both saddened and enthralled. "Did a lot of people send water from the sea?" I ask. Arafah replies, "Ya, I got around 300 something bottles" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

By now, Arafah has described this project so many times to so many people that surely the number of bottles he received no longer surprises him. I find myself in awe of what he has been able to accomplish with *Horizon* (2010). Unable to fathom how this project has travelled so far, I continue to listen to Arafah's story. "Of course," he continues, "from Palestine I got so many, but as well from all over the world I receive bottles of water from the sea. Even people started to send me water from the lake and river. Even in the Israeli jail, there is a prisoner, a Palestinian prisoner, he heard about the project from the radio and so he wanted to send me a bottle of water from the jail to participate in this project, but it was a little bit hard to send water." Arafah proceeds to take me through the many ways individuals participated. "My neighbor in Dheisheh camp wanted to participate but he wanted to fill the bottle of water from his tanks, house tanks. So, I felt the project is taking on other levels." I chime in, stating how this project almost seemed to take on a life of its own. Arafah agrees, "I was happy to receive some bottle of water from Gaza. […] From the Lockness in Scotland, from the river. In Berlin, from Syria, from China, from Lebanon, from Belgium, from Norway, from a lake in the U.S., I forgot the name" (A. Arafah, personal

communication, August 16, 2018). Having listed off several places he received water from, the inspiration behind this piece unfolds.

"And so, through all of that, everybody has a story," he tells me. "Everybody have something to talk about; about the sea, about the acts, about the time, the concept of distance, because geographically the distance between where I live and the sea is one hour in the car but politically the distance is until I get permission" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). With those last four words, I am covered head-to-toe in goosebumps. What a clever way for Arafah to access a Sea otherwise stolen.

Arafah's piece *Horizon* (2010), seen in figure 2, disrupts and transforms pre-existing rules and boundaries of the artworld through the interactive process of collecting sea water from people around the globe. It destabilizes colonial systems of thought and power by navigating around the restrictions to sea water, finding ways to obtain the very thing being withheld by the Israeli State and military. In turn, *Horizon* (2010) disobeys orders and limitations placed on Palestinians. It suggests resurgence by taking the water back, affronting geo-political barriers. Arafah's strategy to collect sea water, a task he is otherwise restricted from undertaking, evokes a sense of agency, autonomy, and rebellion.

I wonder what is meant by the title *Horizon*. Darwish writes, "We Palestinians suffer from an incurable malady: hope" (as cited in Vadasaria, 2018, p, 146). Could Arafah be looking to the horizon, anticipating a future without the Occupation or, at the very least, a future in which a Palestinian can visit the sea without having to seek permission? After all, *Horizon* (2010) illustrates

how it is easier for a Palestinian to get sea water from Iran than from a sea that is in their own backyard. It locates the subjugation of Palestinians within the context of distance and mobility, exposing the incongruencies between the two concepts. What *is* time, when one hour can translate into a lifetime? How are the incongruencies between distance and time embodied? Arafah's *Horizon* (2010) disobeys and disrupts linear notions of time. It also challenges the contradictions between distance and time faced by Arab Palestinians. This is significant because Arafah's *Horizon* (2010) disrupts the false narrative that Israeli courts are a vessel for neutral, fair arbitration,[25] allowing for tangible, concrete connections to be made regarding the unjust, unrelenting conditions experienced by Arab Palestinians. What is also important here is how Arafah mobilized his art into becoming a vessel that interrogates the rules set out by Israel, committing to resurgence practices by recovering something stolen from him and his ancestors: the sea.

Poignantly, the water in Arafah's *Horizon* (2010) could easily one day disappear. Water evaporates. Bags tear and water leaks. Just as people "made" dispossessed disappear, access to territory disappears, suffering disappears and reappears, and connections to land and time disappear. *Horizon* (2010) asks the observer to reconsider relationships to land and sea: a land stolen, a land estranged, and to a sea that their parents once swam in yet is now only known through stories retold.

[25] See Butler and Athanasiou (2013), expanded on in Chapter Two: Dispossession.

Thinking on the sea, the shape of water is never the same in any two given moments. Whether forming into gentle ripples amidst the calm or large waves hitting the shore, the sea moves just as a person dispossessed must move physically and through the cracks of subjugation. The individual dispossessed and the land Palestinians once cultivated is never the same in any two given moments and yet those cracks must be navigated through or else disrupted.

Could *Horizon* (2010) be located, not in some neatly drawn horizon of hope, but in the messiness and unpredictability of waves? Or else, the wavering relationship between Palestinians and land? Could the unpredictable access to the sea and land during times of Occupation represent the process of something emergent but never fully formed? A process anthropologist Daniel Arthur Yon (2016) refers to as "becoming." When speaking on tidalectics[26] and cosmopolitanism, Yon (2010) refers to Kamau Brathwaite's "interest in how the ebbs and the flows of the seas become, in a way, a way of explaining our histories and our lifestyles and life changes." Maybe, *Horizon* (2010) represents a way of explaining what is becoming of Palestine, of Palestinian identity and of Israel's devastating power and positioning over the territory and those native to the land.

Yet, with all the problematics *Horizon* (2010) exposes through themes of dispossession, suffering, and "the sense of time," there is a gentleness to Arafah's work, which contrasts with the harshness of his enclosures under the Occupation. Looking at the bags of water, *Horizon* (2010) re-imagines, re-maps and re-constitutes an elsewhere (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014) which

[26] Tidalectics, a concept coined by Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite, "comes from a larger theoretical orientation that he also called 'sea-metrics' as in, from the sea" (Yon, D.A., 2010, "Tidalectics, Cosmopolitanisms and the making of Sathima's Windsong").

condemns the Israeli-led Occupation and liberates Palestinians in a way that is almost serene. It turns the gaze, ever so gently, back at the aggressor. I believe it does this because of what the sea represents. In an interview on the film *Mining Memory*, Yon states,

> Remember, in the 19th century, more than a hundred million people traveled across seas and oceans, many were forced to do so, many were in search of better lives and the sea was, and is, the depository for unimaginable numbers of lives lost at sea. The sea is central to the making of what we call modernity. (Peters & Yon, 2018, para. 6)

Horizon (2010) asks us to consider historical encounters with the Mediterranean Sea. In 1947, when fleeing Nazi Germany and its allies, Jewish immigrants boarded a ship destined for British Mandated Palestine. While on route, British officials boarded and sent Jewish refugees back to refugee camps in Europe (Stewart, 2002). The following year, Jews successfully arrived by way of the Mediterranean Sea. Thus, the very Sea that Palestinians used to roam, the very Sea that welcomed Jewish refugees, was seized from Palestinians by the Jewish-Israeli government. *Horizon* (2010) serves as an aesthetic object that prompts us to think about the hypocrisy of the aggressor as once subjugated, now subjugator; what it means to live under the Occupation and, what democratic and political freedom could mean for Palestinians. Maybe one day Palestinians will be given the freedom to return to the Sea they used to roam.

Artist Abu Ayyash's Reflection on the Role of the Artist

Abu Ayyash was born in Lebanon in 1981. He travelled with his family to Syria, from Syria to Tunisia, and from Tunisia to Jordan. In 1997 he and his family moved to Hebron, Palestine. They lived in Hebron until his family moved to Ramallah, Palestine in 2000, at this point Abu Ayyash

moved to Nablus where he lived for four years. The distance is only a forty-five-minute drive but at the time it was the second intifada[27] and Abu Ayyash could only visit every one or two months: "it was like a warzone" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Abu Ayyash studied fine arts in Najah University in Palestine and graduated in 2004. He is a visual artist specializing in graffiti and calligraffiti, seen in figure 3. For Abu Ayyash,

> Graffiti is any visual action on any walls. Especially on public surfaces. Graffiti is mainly to represent the refusal of a system. The rejection of a system. It's like an artistic way to express the rejection, as I said. There are many theories about where graffiti started but most famous one is that it started in New York by the African American community. There are many other theories… A special style that's based on calligraphy started to take the shape and form around 2007, I think. Ever since, it became a subgenre from graffiti. Inside calligraffiti you also have many subgenres depending on the language that you are using to do the graffiti. The main element in calligraffiti is the letters itself. When we talk, its calligraphy and graffiti. So, calligraphy is based on letters. So, the subgenres inside calligraffiti is the language, all the cultures. (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

[27] The Second Intifada which began in September 2000 and ended in February 2005, also known as Al-Aqsa Intifada, was a period in time when violence intensified between Israel and Palestine. Palestinians refer to this time as an uprising against Israel while Israelis consider this time to be a prolonged terror campaign.

Figure 3

Art, Coffee and Nahawand

Note. Reprinted with permission. By H. Abu Ayyash, (n.d.).

Abu Ayyash's artistic talent has granted him the opportunity to travel to places such as Berlin in 2016, where he participated in a workshop with refugees from Syria and Africa. Abu Ayyash chuckles while recollecting his time at this particular workshop and states an interesting observation: "…for once the Palestinian was not the refugee. Yes, ironic" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). When considering how Palestinians traveling outside of Palestine are predominately classified as refugees, the fact that Abu Ayyash was in a workshop for refugees but not one himself stood out.

When Abu Ayyash reflects on being an artist in Palestine, he notes the struggle and demands embedded in subjugation. For Abu Ayyash,

> You have to be an activist. So, if you are presenting art without a message, it will be something shallow without a meaning. Like, it's not genuine, right?

> So, if you are a semi-activist or someone who can translate their activism into a more elite image, that's something. Or clean image, or nice image. It's considered a threat. So, you're most likely to be questioned and maybe imprisoned and in extreme cases be assassinated. For example, you have Naji al-Ali. He was assassinated in '89 in London by the Israeli Mossad. You also have Ghassan Kanafani, he was a novelist and a writer and an artist. He was also assassinated in Lebanon. [They were assassinated because] you know, sometimes one word is stronger than one thousand guns. That's why sometimes being an artist or intellectual person or creative person with reputation, somehow, it's a bit more dangerous than being an accountant or a lawyer. Every creative act that you do might affect 10,000 people that you are not aware of. (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

Abu Ayyash does not seem fazed by the risk involved in being an artist and political activist in Palestine, or maybe his ease reflects his familiarity in living under such circumstances.

Right from the beginning of the interview I conducted with Abu Ayyash, he identifies himself as an artist specializing in graffiti and calligraffiti. He explains how graffiti represents the refusal or rejection of a dominate system and describes the situation Palestinians must endure as "sick." I ask him what it means for him to be an artist in Palestine. "Being an artist […] you have to be an activist" he tells me. "If you're presenting art without a message, it will be something shallow without meaning. It's not genuine… If you are a semi-activist who can translate their activism into a more influential image, clean image, or nice image, that's something. It's considered a threat. So, you most likely [will] be questioned and maybe imprisoned and in extreme cases assassinated" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). What I interpret from our conversation is how Abu Ayyash is putting his own life on the line as an artist in Palestine by creating the very art (graffiti) that calls into question the very people that have the power to

interrogate, imprison, or assassinate him. Abu Ayyash's work represents art as resistance and subversion.

I am not surprised Abu Ayyash's next thoughts are to summon the work of Naji al-Ali, renowned Palestinian cartoonist, and creator of Handala.[28] Naji al-Ali was assassinated in London, England in 1987, outside of a Kuwaiti newspaper he drew political caricatures for. Perhaps the most popular cartoonist among Arabs, "Time Magazine" described him, stating, "This man draws with human bones" and "The Asahi Newspaper" in Japan once wrote, "Naji al-Ali draws using phosphoric acid" (Through the eyes of a Palestinian refugee, n.d., para. 2). In 1988, the "International Federation of Newspaper Publishers" posthumously awarded Naji al-Ali the Golden Pen, stating he was "one of the best cartoonists since the 18th century" (Quitaz, 2017, para. 8).

Naji al-Ali was known for speaking out against Israel's Occupation of Palestine and the United State's support of Israel, as well as against the hypocrisy of the Palestinian leadership and other regressive and repressive Arab regimes. His legacy is Handala, a representation of the people of Palestine. Through his sketches of Handala, Naji al-Ali illustrates Palestinians as oppressed but not as voiceless victims. Rather, Handala represents defiance and a commitment to defending the oppressed, poor, and powerless. These are ideas also reflected in the motivation behind graffiti in

[28] A drawing of a young refugee child, shown from the back, clothes ragged, feet bare, is a prominent national symbol and personification of the Palestinian people, an iconic symbol of Palestinian identity and defiance. Handala also symbolizes a rejection toward outside solutions to the Palestinian problem.

that graffiti is about conveying defiance against the very systems of power that seek to further oppress, impoverish, and disempower those already (made) subjugated.

Thinking with Naji al-Ali's art but returning to Abu Ayyash's work, I am confronted with how the medium Abu Ayyash employs (graffiti and calligraffiti) and his motivations for creating artworks are indicative of aesthetic disobedience and decolonial aesthetics, which adhere to attributes that make up political aesthetic practices.

When asked whether the political aspect of his artwork is intentional or inherent, Abu Ayyash answers in a similar tone to Arafah. "It's not always political what I do. Sometimes it's only for beautifying the space. In a certain level, it's also politics. Like, resistance is resistance. Any message that I'm here is like a resistance and proof of my existence in this place. Even if I left a beautiful mark without any direct political message, it's like a political statement also. I'm here. I'm still here. I'm not leaving. I'm existing. My existence is a resistance to the Occupation, from the surface it [might] just [be] a beautiful thing, a cool image" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Here, Abu Ayyash is summoning the illustrious statement, "to exist is to resist," a concept I return to in the Conclusion. For Palestinians, resisting extinction is about more than survival, its about resurgence, recovering a land once theirs. In fact, the very artworks made by Abu Ayyash complicate the 'this' and the 'there' by blurring the lines between victim and victor; those silenced and those doing the silencing. For example, in figure 4, pregnant, decapitated Palestinian women, arms outstretched in condemnation, embody dominance over their killers. The "prey," preyed upon no more. Looking with this image, I imagine these women are both judge and jury, once subjugated, now disobedient; once dominated, yet never silenced.

By making *art that resists*, artists like Abu Ayyash attempt to resist in ways other than to merely exist. Thinking with the object, I now turn to Abu Ayyash's untitled (2014) piece to provide a framework for how this type of reading unveils and illuminates complex ideas and difficult knowledge, rendering them palpable.

Reading Abu Ayyash's Untitled Work

Figure 4

Untitled

Note. Reprinted with permission. By H. Abu Ayyash, 2014.

This is Abu Ayyash's illustration of the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre[29] seen in figure 4, in an interview wherein Abu Ayyash is asked why the bodies in this piece are decapitated. He replies,

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[29] The Sabra and Shatila (Chatila) massacre occurred in 1982 as part of the Lebanese Civil War. Between 460-3,500 civilians, mostly Palestinian and Lebanese Shiites (Shiites/Shias are one major domination of Islam, the other is Sunnis) were killed by a predominately Christian Lebanese right-wing party militia. Sabra is a neighborhood in Beirut, Lebanon. Shatila is the refugee camp adjacent to Sabra. The widespread massacre lasted approximate a day and a half

"because that's what they did. And every pregnant woman they opened her up. It's about Shatila and Sabra. It says Sabra and Shatila only. That's it" (as cited in Hopper, n.d., para. 30).

Looking and wondering with this image, I see pregnant women with their round, bleeding, open bellies standing with authority. The arms of these bold women are pointing away as if their headless bodies are demanding their murderer's departure or execution. As if to say, "you have done enough, khalas. We won't stand for anymore." I wonder whether Abu Ayyash is alluding to how these bodies haunt their murderers, the white ghostly paint representing their apparitions.

The cracked mirror confuses me. Does this signify disillusionment? If mirrors reflect light and thus the world around these bodies, and if light is understood as a symbol of wisdom and awareness, do the cracks in this mirror symbolize broken truths? Or else, do the cracks represent these pregnant bodies as dead, no reflection, their truths forming into nothing more than dust particles around a corpse robbed of light – robbed of life. After all, the only thing reflected in the mirror is a ghostly white mist.

This untitled graffiti illuminates the nuances of a tragic event. Through my analysis of this piece – which I see as a pedagogical engagement - I am given space to understand and critique the Sabra and Shatila massacre based on my own perception of the artwork. For example, thinking with this object makes me wonder whether the true motivation behind this massacre was to remove

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and was ordered by the Israeli government under the watch of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) to clear the area of Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) fighters (Malone, 1985).

PLO fighters. If so, why cut open pregnant women's bellies? Could it be to demonstrate the elimination of the next generation? No future, no rebirth, no natality.

When I asked about the image, Abu Ayyash says little but translates the writing shown beside his graffiti. He explains that the inscription "hungry for freedom" was inscribed prior to his piece. Freedom is such an elusive concept. What does it mean to be free? Is this a hunger for democratic and political freedom? Or it is for a different kind of freedom, possibly a multitude of freedoms, including ones that emancipate the (creative) mind?

I write and reflect on this piece, amidst the awful destruction and killing that continues unabated. There is something about this image, maybe the fact that these bodies are decapitated, that makes me think of a recent video that continues to haunt me. In this video, a Palestinian man in Israel was driving his car through streets filled with Israeli protestors. Unable to drive any further ahead due to the sea of people, he was pulled from his car and thrown to the ground. A group of men stood over him and beat him unconscious. I watched as his body swayed back-and-forth from being kicked and stomped on. Within a minute his body lay seemingly lifeless (Staff, 2021; Champion, n.d.). I am not sure whether others cried while watching this, or whether others were able to watch this video more than once, or at all. What I am sure of however, is that those pregnant women's bodies that were decapitated and cut open were not done by the monsters you read about in fairy tales. These acts were committed by individuals no more mythical than the men that nearly beat that man to death in a matter of seconds. This makes me wonder what makes everyday people commit such heinous acts.

Another idea that this image confronts me with is what it means to defend oneself. Palestinians are known for throwing rocks at Israeli military as a form of defense, this being a particularly popular strategy amongst children and youth. Palestinian resistance groups including Hamas are condemned for launching rockets into Israel. Most of these rockets are intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome that can stop rockets from 43 miles away (Gold, 2017). A recent novel weapon being used by Palestinians is referred to as "incendiary balloons." These helium balloons are strapped with homemade bombs and are propelled into Israeli territory by the winds from the Mediterranean Sea. What is important to put into context here is the level of risk and danger that these sorts of weapons pose in relation to the artillery of the Israeli government and military. Palestinians rely on stones, homemade bombs, balloons, wind, and insufficient rockets, to defend themselves against their occupier. Israel has access to an air force, navy, missiles, and heavy artillery such as U.S. made bullets, guns, and tanks.

Thinking with this image, I see the juxtaposition of these decapitated Palestinian bodies in Abu Ayyash's piece and how they use their arms, hands, and presence as a form of self-defence and intimidation, next to the Israeli military's use of machetes as a form of defense, intimidating and massacring Palestinians. This is one of the *loops* that Palestinians must live with: once Palestinians attempt to denounce their occupier, resisting apartheid and total domination, they are bombed, slaughtered, and removed from their homes by their occupier in the name of "self-defence." This perverse logic is just another element of the Occupation that Palestinians must resist and expose.

I interpret this piece as revealing a source of power within these decapitated pregnant corpses. It depicts Gerald Vizenor's (1999) interweaving of survival and resistance as a sort of active sense of survival ("survivance") because the object rearticulates ideas around dominance, tragedy and victimry in a way that gives these decapitated bodies power to condemn their murderers. Arms lifted and strong, pointing away, this image suggests these murdered women are making demands at their aggressor, suggesting dominance. In the crux of their elbows, I see what looks to be the tops of hats - caps of some kind. I picture these hats sitting atop the heads of the militia that murdered these women, now trapped in a headlock.

Having reflected on this piece, I am confronted with how pedagogical encounters with art that helps us to move from affect to thought can be fruitful. I ask myself however, what is gained from thinking with this image? Surely, the dead corpses making demands against their murderers, possibly haunting their murderers, illuminates notions of disobedience and resurgence. So, what is gained from illuminating these notions and from thinking with this image? I want to propose that, what is gained is an opportunity for pedagogical engagement and reflection with the provocative affective force of these images that, in turn, create opportunities for thinking and doing differently; for imagining "worlds otherwise." This type of reading creates space for a rearticulation of dominance, as identified through my analysis of figure 4.

Next, I explore how artist Abdel Hamid navigates notions of resurgence and disobedience within his art. I begin by exploring how Abdel Hamid defines his role as an artist. It became evident from the interview I conducted with Abdel Hamid that he wishes to destabilize objects that

symbolize Palestinian identity, partly in an effort to challenge the fetishization of Palestinians and reconfigure what it means to be Palestinian outside of the confines of the Occupation.

Artist Abdel Hamid's Reflection on the Role of the Artist

Abdel Hamid lives between Lebanon and Ramallah. His family lives in Ramallah. Although Abdel Hamid has accepted many invitations to showcase his artworks, travelling to various Middle Eastern and European countries he has also declined many interviews and exhibitions due to the rigid focus on his being Palestinian rather than an artist. Abdel Hamid argues against being reduced to his ethnicity; he does not want to become Palestinian by profession (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

When asked about whether he considers himself a graffiti artist, Abdel Hamid states how he was never a graffiti artist and only created a single piece seen in figure 5 titled *Land Art* (2007), on the Wall, making it very site specific (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). For Abdel Hamid, that piece was not about producing graffiti even though he enjoys observing graffiti:

> I never signed the work, and I will never sign the work. It's not an ego-centric approach to graffiti and I don't have a signature, so it's detached from universal graffiti practices because it's all about the sign, it's all about your signature. (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

The intentions around *Land Art* (2007) were meant to address the site, not the medium.

Figure 5

Land Art

Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2007.

When talking about the present situation of the artworld, Abdel Hamid argues that there is no school of thought or agreed upon conceptual framework for anything anymore. Maybe in the future we will look back and find something, but if you compare the current art movement to post-modernity, abstract, expressionism, mediums are dissolving, he tells us:

> it's like the first time when cameras were introduced. Now cameras are incredibly redundant, so what do you do? What's the point in taking more pictures, everyone's taking billions of the same picture. […] You can't just say the medium is dissolving strictly for one reason. But you can see it done indirect, the attention span of any human being has changed. The amount of information, the bombardment, I mean there is an influx of imagery or visuals all the time so at some point a person is desensitized, and I'm not talking strictly about violence… And then this idea that you no longer need or feel things anymore. You just touch a screen… With photography, when it was printed it was sort of different because even if there is no texture it was still a thing; the physical presence of this had value. You had to pay attention not to put your fingerprint and this idea is disappearing like the newspaper is disappearing and, for me, its about the pictures more than the text. So, the pictures in the newspaper are also going. (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Artistic mediums are dissolving, our connections to images are dissolving, and the human attention span is decreasing, all symptoms of imagery bombardment and the removal of physical touch in relation to images – one is no longer committed to protecting images. Abdel Hamid notes, this level of human disconnect is also a symptom of how images never leave (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). With the advent of smart phones, “the Cloud,” and external storage space, we can forever hold onto images. We are constantly inundated with images and yet we save them. Save, maybe to protect, perhaps to hoard.

Abdel Hamid notes that his artistic inspiration comes from stories of others, events, locations or experiences and the ways in which we react (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). For Abdel Hamid,

> it’s a process of not trying to make sense of the thing or normalize it but to experience it and to try and transform or work with this experience with a medium that is also a part of the work… Basically, sometimes I just have the medium and I love it and I put it on the side and eventually it clicks and it works together (the medium serves the idea best) and sometimes it’s a horrible failure and sometimes it’s ok. (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Exploring stories, experiences, and affect during such a terrifying time and then attempting to transform these within an artistic medium speaks to the ways in which life can move people to create and think and how art is a creative and pedagogical tool in which stories and experiences can be told and understood.

Abdel Hamid speaks candidly to his role as a contemporary artist since the advent of social media. For Abdel Hamid, there is a dynamic pressure to create art that fits within the boundaries

of the artworld by insisting each artist ensures that past artists' work resonates within their own whilst creating something unique. Heartily, he confides, "[the artist's challenge] is realizing the impossibility of inventing any sort of wheel while we're being indoctrinated, to a certain degree, by this idea of creating something new" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). The desire to create something new is not what drives Abdel Hamid. What he is more concerned with is how difficult and horrific experiences get exploited and how he, as an artist, chooses to engage with such horrific experiences.

Abdel Hamid references working on a piece inspired by *Tadmur*, a prison in Syria known for its horrifying torture and inhumane treatment of prisoners. "So, for me, like, when I work on this [piece] it's not about the stories of the people who went there and their names. It's more about what happens to your brain regardless of you as a fetish. Like, the person and the prisoner or the sufferer becoming, like, this fetish object that we consume" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Speaking passionately, he describes the act of consuming these objects in terms of watching films, reading original stories, and viewing art on a podium at an art event. For Abdel Hamid, his work as an artist is not about conveying personal stories. Rather, "it's a process of not try[ing] to make sense of the thing or normalize it but to experience it and to try and transform or work with this experience [and] with a medium that is also a part of the work" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Abdel Hamid's artistic commitment to working with people's experiences in a way that does not attempt to normalize them is partly done in an effort to avoid fetishizing and romanticizing people and their experiences.

Abdel Hamid expands on the notion of fetishizing identity through a discussion on how his work attempts to defetishize iconic Palestinian symbols. This is important to his artistic philosophy because, "our role is not to cater to the masses, our role is not to massage the ego, our role is to ask really uncomfortable questions and if people are uncomfortable, people are uncomfortable" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

Abdel Hamid speaks on the fetishizing of Palestinians further, stating, "I was trying to deconstruct the fetishized symbols of Palestinian identity," Abdel Hamid takes a drag of his cigarette and continues, exhaling smoke with each lingering word spoken. He refers to symbols such as the key, Naji al-Ali's Handala, and the olive tree. For Abdel Hamid, rather than recreating these objects as symbolic, he creates art that challenges their symbolic message, suggesting another message, an unconventional message hidden behind a traditional one. He refers to these objects as symbols that get "incorporated into the system" and how fetishizing these symbols is "helpful at maintain[ing] the status quo" because people are more open to talk about these symbols in ways that fetishize them as opposed to deconstructing and critiquing them. When I ask him why he thinks that is the case, he explains that during times of war, certain kinds of conversations are more likely to be "shut down." "You can't have these discussions when you have siege…" he replies, "so what do you do?" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018).

Although I may not have the answer Abdel Hamid is looking for, I understand his artwork as *key* in finding an answer. This is not to conflate artists and artwork with *only and always* creating or becoming agents of social change. In fact, this is an idea that repulses Abdel Hamid. "This idea that art can change [the world], art being an agent of change [in] the world, which I find very

romantic, repulsively romantic" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). What I hope to evoke in my exploration of the artworks by Abdel Hamid, Arafah, and Abu Ayyash is how the transformative nature of art is less concerned with being *only and always* an *agent* of social change and more so a *tool* of provocation that, under the right circumstances, *has potential to become* transformative by inciting and provoking non-conventional ways of thinking and doing. This includes creating opportunities for a rearticulation of identity. Artistic forms of resistance can transform and guide how artists in exile navigate their own internalized "outsider" identity.

The notion of being an "outsider" on one's homeland is reflected on by Boullata (2019). In particular, he suggests his Palestinian identity under exile shaped his identity as an artist.

> I had been declared an "outsider" in my place of birth and was identified as "other" in my place of residence. This dualism began to give shape to my attempts to respond to the political challenges posed by both the cultural authority in my place of exile and the state of hegemony in my culture of origin. Each cultural center generated its own margins. In the case of Western culture, the Eurocentrism underlying the dominant discourse achieved institutional legitimacy over a long period of time. Its history went back to the earliest encounters with people outside Europe. Thus, as I continued working on my art, I was aware that art created by non-Westerners like myself did not cease to be categorized as "minor" or as an "ethnic" form of expression. Whether such expressions were produced within a former colony or in a Western metropolis, and regardless of the art's inherent quality, they were relegated to the outer margin of the ethnocentric center. (p. 28)

Here, Boullata grapples with the political challenges embedded in exile. Navigating the outer margins of the ethnocentric center impedes Boullata's ability to be recognized as an artist first and foremost. Boullata is suggesting that his professional identity is bound and reduced to his cultural identity. The Eurocentric artworld regards artworks by western artists as superior. It also reduces

non-western artists to their cultural identity or, as Abdel Hamid posits, the Eurocentric artworld "reduces Palestinians to an event (the Nakba)" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Through political aesthetic practices, Abdel Hamid problematizes fetishized symbols, his artworks embodying notions of disobedience and resurgence by illustrating how fetishized tropes obstruct and narrow the path to recovery. By destabilizing these iconic symbols Abdel Hamid's artworks ask us to think outside of colonial logic and to reconsider Palestinian futurity as under-discovered and bountiful.

I imagine Abdel Hamid taking another drag off his cigarette, the smoke billowing around his head as he contemplates the messiness of being an artist in times of war. Thinking about how Abdel Hamid defetishizes the key within his own artwork, committing to the characteristics embedded in aesthetic disobedience and "decolonial aesthetic" practices, I continue my analysis by thinking with his artwork, *Pacifier* (2014). In my analysis below, I commit to a type of pedagogical reading that conveys how working with political aesthetic objects can be effective in unveiling and rendering difficult knowledge[30] palpable.

[30] When referring to difficult knowledge in my project, I refer to loss, dispossession, suffering, war, and violence. With that said, I understand that difficult knowledge is not limited to the concepts I refer to in my project.

Reading Abdel Hamid's Pacifier

Figure 6

Pacifier

Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2014.

Abdel Hamid's work *Pacifier* (2014), is a sculpture of keys, seen in figure 6. These colourful keys – a hyper-satirical ode to children's candy - are made of sugar and dye, completely edible, completely dissolvable. In the same way that borders seem to be dissolvable. These candy keys were baked, like a cake. Their size is much larger than that of regular keys. By design, the keys are useless. The size, colour and material confess what I imagine is the artist's intent: a sense of absurdity that the keys in the pockets of diasporic Palestinians still open the doors they once belonged to. Suitable for a fairy tale, these keys are whimsical, playful, and impractical. I wonder, if they were *real* keys, would they be useful?

It is not coincidental that these keys were created by an artist who is also Palestinian. The key is a familiar symbol of the *right of return* for refugee Palestinians living elsewhere and for

those living under Occupation. This makes answering the above question quite simple. Whether the keys are made of sugar and dye, steel or brass, for many Palestinians, each is just as useless as the other.

From a political aesthetic lens, these keys represent more than a sense of absurdity, they symbolize persecution and provoke a sense of contempt towards the Nakba and the violence since. One of the predominate characteristics of aesthetic disobedience is with how it represents revolt. The presence of politics within artworks is understood to illustrate artistic transgression, particularly when the notion of "revolution" either literal or metaphoric, is endorsed (Neufeld, 2015). And so, I wonder whether Abdel Hamid's keys suggest just that: revolt.

Thinking about Abdel Hamid's keys and the notion of revolt, keys (when they function properly) involve the potential of being turned, an association with "revolution," which literally means a turning around. If a key is stuck and it doesn't turn, you remain locked out. Knowing that Abdel Hamid's keys in *Pacifier* (2014) do not function properly and cannot be turned, it suggests Palestinians are indefinitely locked out. Given that there is zero potential the keys in *Pacifier* (2014) could ever be turned, is Abdel Hamid gesturing toward a "revolution" that does not require keys? A revolution that mocks the symbolic key. A revolution in which the lock itself must be destroyed. [31] The destroying of the lock itself reflects a sentiment characteristically seen in notions

[31] "Word, is, born!
Fight the war, FUCK the norm!
Now I got no patience
So sick of complacence
With the D, the E, the F, the I, the A, the N, the C, the E
Mind of a revolutionary, so clear the lane

of dissidence because it suggests destroying the box that one is forced to fit into rather than conforming to that box. I think further on Abdel Hamid's sculpture and wonder whether *Pacifier* (2014) is manifested by the presence of, desire for, and commitment to a space where notions of disobedience take shape.

The word "pacifier" itself might conjure up notions of disobedience. What does it mean to pacify? When a baby cries, we stick a pacifier in their mouth not only to appease them but also to quiet them. Unable to communicate, the pacifier becomes a negotiating tool between two very different worlds: infant and adult. In a sense, it is a way to quiet disobedient infants.

However, it goes without saying, the key is not a symbol of infanthood. So, what is Abdel Hamid saying with these candy keys that he calls *Pacifier*? Might this sculpture represent the ways in which these keys - symbolizing the *right of return* - are used to placate displaced Palestinians through hope? Is it possible that by merely holding onto these keys, Palestinian refugees are holding onto hope – the hope of return, the hope that there is something left to return to?

Thinking on hope summons me to think with Lauren Berlant's (2011) "Cruel Optimism," which is defined by "the condition of maintaining an attachment to a problematic object *in advance*

The finger to the land of the chains
WHAT?! The "land of the free?"
Whoever told you that is your enemy!
Now something must be done
About vengeance, a badge and a gun
Cause I'll rip the mic, rip the state, rip the system
I was born to Rage Against 'em!
Now action must be taken
We don't need the key, we'll BREAK IN!" (Rage Against the Machine, 1992, 2:02-2:35).

of its loss" (Berlant, 2010, p. 94). Berlant (2011) defines her use of the term "cruel," stating that the cruelty behind these attachments lies in the fact that although the presence of this attachment threatens the subject's well-being, the *content* of the attachment provides a continuity of the subject's sense of what it means to continue living and looking forward to being present in the world (p. 24). In the context of Palestine, I consider Berlant's "attachment" to be present within Abdel Hamid's keys, the key being the thing that the subject is attached to. The *content* of the attachment (key) is represented by *right of return* sentiment.

Thinking on *right of return* sentiment as rooted in hope, I am reminded of Darwish's confession: "We Palestinians suffer from an incurable malady: hope" (as cited in Vadasaria, 2018, p, 146). Could it be that through this sculpture Abdel Hamid is alluding to how keys are used to manifest a false hope that offers little other than placating Palestinian refugees? Could Abdel Hamid's *Pacifier* (2014) unveil the key as a form of hope that distracts Palestinians away from practices that make room for resurgence by *pacifying* its subject? This would align with Berlant's (2011) notion of an attachment being cruel when it hinders an individual or group's ability to flourish beyond that attachment. At the very least, Abdel Hamid is acknowledging the uselessness of the key. After all, the key is made of sugar and dye. One moment on the tongue and it starts to dissolve.

Just as the keys dissolve into nothing, many of the doors that their brass counterparts once opened are now gone, merely a memory of a time not so long ago. Following the Nakba, house keys were often one of the few items taken by those displaced. Basma Ghalayani (2019) writes,

> When I was a child, my grandfather would tell us about his shop in Yaffa, a business he owned with his brother until 1948 before being expelled to Egypt. He told us that, on their departure, they only packed a few days' worth of clothes for him, his wife and children, having been told they would be able to come back as soon as it was safe. They left their sheets on the clothes lines, chickpeas soaking in water, and toys in the yard. He locked the door, put his key in his pocket, and headed to safety as instructed. They never returned, and his key stayed in his pocket until he died in Cairo 60 years later. (p. vii)

Ghalayani's grandfather died carrying useless keys. Keys that would have been no different if made of sugar and dye. I wonder what happened to the chickpeas soaking in water or the sheets left hanging on clothes lines. Did an Israeli family tend to the chickpeas? Were they used to make humus for another's children? Were the sheets ever slept on again or else, are they still blowing in the wind, stained by the elements, awaiting their owner's return?

Most likely, everything is gone. The chickpeas, the sheets, the toys, the house. Maybe an Israeli-Jewish settlement was built in its place and in the place of many homes forcibly abandoned. This is one story among many, told by grandparents to their children, and then to their children's children, that will later be told to their grandchildren's children. There are too many stories like this one.

Stories of dispossession reverberate through generations as to not forget the Palestinian *right of return*. Thinking more with the notion of dissolving, I am struck by what else dissolves for Palestinians. Borders seem to dissolve, the agreements made through the Oslo Accords[32]

[32] In 1993, the Oslo Accords were signed in response to the first *intifada*, which took place from December 1987-1991 (there is some disagreement around whether it ended in 1991 or 1993, due to the signing of the Oslo Accord), and was a Palestinian-led uprising condemning the Israeli Occupation of Gaza and the West Bank (Hammami, 2000).

dissolved, and just as *Pacifier* (2014) is likely to one day disappear, "becoming" dispossessed is also about disappearing away, clinging onto life through stories passed down from generation to generation.

I interpret *Pacifier* (2014) as an answer to Spivak's question: *Can the Subaltern speak* (2010), illustrating that Palestinians are aware of their subjugation. In turn, *Pacifier* (2014) enters the terrain of the established art world to disrupt the colonial legacy and offer another imaginary that asserts Palestinian agency. Hence, *Pacifier* (2014) represents disobedience because the keys in his sculpture do not fit into any lock. Disobedience is represented through the structure of the keys themselves. They cannot open a real door, they crumble if not handled with care, they begin to dissolve once slightly wet. Their size and colours suggest humor – if not thinking philosophically, it would be silly to think of these keys in relation to keys made of steel or brass. They disobey everything that makes a key, a key. I imagine Palestinian diaspora returning to their homes with Abdel Hamid's candy keys, as if to confront Israeli settlers, juxtaposing the absurdity of these keys against the backdrop of the absurdity, in terms of the inhumanity, of the Nakba. Or else, confronting the Occupation with the absurdity that they would leave quietly and leave for good. Here, the artist creates caricatures of keys to mock the Occupation and to mock the iconic status that has been given to these keys – an iconic status he mocks because many of the keys Palestinian refugees continue to hold onto no longer open the doors they once did. *Pacifier* (2014) registers the agency and consciousness of Palestinians to interrupt, and render audible the limits and absurdity of the colonial imaginary. The silliness and sadness embedded in this piece induces a way to speak back and delegitimize settler colonial violence.

If these keys highlight Palestinian subjugation, they represent rootedness as well. They call attention to the generations of Palestinians that cultivated the territories; those Palestinians that were nourished by the land before the birth of Israel. They gesture towards temporal relationships that signify *an already before*; a present that is in limbo – an awaiting. Ideas echoed in notions of resurgence. These keys also illuminate the fragility of rootedness because roots can be uprooted. Looking with this image, I am unequivocally reminded of what Darwish describes as Palestinian's unrelenting malady: *hope* in the *right of return*.

Abdel Hamid reveals the intention behind the art. He is not concerned with a recapturing of the homeland. He wants to "defetishize" symbols that Palestinians cling to as a way of (re)imagining what it looks like to live as Palestinian in the present, without bearing the burden of a life in limbo. He speaks of a story in which one is always waiting. Abdel Hamid's keys are how he conceptualizes disobeying and moving beyond *waiting*. *Pacifier* (2014) grapples with the removal of power from a symbol Abdel Hamid believes represents stasis: "We need to not cling on to symbols that we created. Why are we creating new gods? We're already struggling with the ones we have" (CBC, 2017). For Abdel Hamid, the iconic key does not symbolize power, contrary to how he feels the key is perceived by many Palestinians. Rather, Abdel Hamid is against inscribing stability and certainty into the symbolic key because he feels the key symbolizes an *awaiting* return and problematizes what it means to *wait*. It reflects revolt and disobedience through a resurgence of agency over time and space, challenging the very characteristics of pacification.

Abdel Hamid's sculpture would not occupy the same epistemological space if the collection of keys had been made of brass or steel. Abdel Hamid's work is about opening up new pedagogical questions (questions that provoke us to engage and reflect) about the nature of freedom. *Pacifier* (2014) reveals the shackles of subjugation by harnessing the notion of freedom. In other words, by mocking the key that has tethered so many, Abdel Hamid is able to rearticulate what it means to be free and revives alternative ways of thinking about the nature of freedom. *Pacifier* (2014) serves as an aesthetic object that articulates calls for democratic and political freedom.

In the Chapter that follows, I draw on Butler and Athanasiou's (2013) notion of dispossession. I ask, how do individuals and members of a community endure at times dire, unrelenting, precarious living conditions? I explore this question through the lens of dispossession and through my analysis of my interviews with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid and their artworks.

Chapter Three: On Dispossession

Ain't no fun when the rabbit's got the gun.
-Unknown

What might it mean to live our lives as if the lives of others truly mattered?
-Roger Simon, The Touch of The Past

How does one persevere under circumstances of dispossession? In other words, how does one endure unrelenting and unsustainable living conditions? In order to *be* dispossessed one must "be made" dispossessed (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013) and be subjected to some form(s) of loss. Dispossession is, at its core, constituted in violence, constituted by state induced loss. How might experiencing violent, unrelenting loss stunt imaginaries and support the decline of unfettered Palestinian futures? How does one invest in a future that is limited by/to the confines of subjugation? In this Chapter, I draw on the artworks and my interviews with artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid that employ political aesthetic practices and *art that resists*, to analyze how artists in Palestine convey, confront, and disrupt dispossession, making space for imagining "worlds otherwise."

I would like to begin with a story told to me by Arafah – a story I truly believe I will never forget. A story that represents how Arafah grapples with "being made" dispossessed.

Grappling with Dispossession: Artist Arafah

"Seven months ago, soldiers came [to the Dheisheh refugee camp] and they were trying to arrest this young boy, he's my neighbor," Arafah said. He describes how the young boy jumped from his own rooftop to Arafah's, attempting to escape Israeli soldiers. "[The] soldiers saw him and shot him, around twenty bullets in his chest." I can sense the anguish in his voice as he tells this young boy's story. "And so, he fell into my house and there was blood everywhere. That was at four in the morning." Arafah's voice raises and wavers, he describes waking up to hear the boy's brother shouting, defending him, while soldiers screamed, throwing hand grenades, and shooting gas. "I woke up, I find myself in the middle of a war, yanni" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Arafah explains how this went on for an hour: the screaming, the shooting, and then the crying. "When I made sure the solider, they leave, I open the door. I found blood everywhere and the whole family are outside, the whole family of the boy are screaming, shouting, crying. Around maybe one hundred of the camp young people, they came in the house, started to clean the blood. I remember I spent three days not able to speak, not able to think of anything" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Thinking I had heard the worst, I continue to say nothing, listening to the pain in Arafah's voice. He explains that the one shot was the youngest of five boys and how the soldiers took the boy's body to the hospital. He then tells me something I did not expected. "They gave him back to his family dead, of course. But they took everything from him. They took his eyes, they took

his heart, they took all his body from inside and when they give him back, he was like… [a] very old man." I clarify with Arafah that the dead boy's organs were stolen. He explains to me that you can get a lot of money from selling organs and that other young boys in his camp have met a similar fate (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018).[33]

There is something haunting about picturing a child being returned from the hospital to their mother and father, dead and empty, looking like an old man. Arafah offered to send me a photo of a different tragedy, a photo of twenty young boys in the hospital, no longer able to walk, shot in the kneecaps because an Israeli official wanted the young of the Dheisheh refugee camp to be "handicapped."[34] He must have forgotten to send that photo. I chose not to remind him. Having already pictured a mother holding her dead son that looks more like her dead father, my stomach tightened at the thought of witnessing young innocent boys with exploded kneecaps. That is the power of imagery: once witnessed, an image can never be unseen.

Arafah's painful story urges me to consider the depths of dispossession; the layers that are involved with "being made" dispossessed. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) urge dispossession be understood as a practice that mobilizes the colonial project, a method of violence aimed at eradicating a targeted population. When I reflect on Arafah's story of the dead boy's carcass being emptied of its organs, and of the young boys coming together to clean up the blood, I am confronted

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[33] See "Doctor admits Israeli pathologists harvested organs without consent" (Black, 2009); "The Body of the Terrorist: Blood Libels, Bio-Piracy, and the Spoils of War at the Israeli Forensic Institute" (Scheper-Hughes, 2011); "Israel Blasts Palestinians After Accusations of Organ-Harvesting" (*Reuters*, 2015).
[34] Now commonly referred to as "kneecapping." See "How Israel is disabling Palestinian teenagers" (Ashly, 2017); "42 knees in one day': Israeli snipers brag about deliberately crippling Gaza protestors" (*The New Arab*, 2020).

not only by the violence embedded in dispossession but also by a sense of hiraeth for these families whose sense of home has forever changed after the loss of their son/brother/nephew/grandson.

Unequivocally, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) deconstruct the concept of dispossession by positioning it in its most bare-bones form: dispossession as loss. It is the experience of loss that conditions the ability to become dispossessed; loss must come first: "dispossession encompasses the constituted, pre-emptive losses that condition one's being dispossessed (or letting oneself become dispossessed) by another; one is moved to the other and by the other – exposed to and affected by the other's vulnerability" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013, p. 1). Butler and Athanasiou (2013) express the conditions that create dispossession and that locate human beings as social beings, exposed and affected by one another. This reveals the profound reality that individuals are dependent upon each other for survival.

In my interview with Arafah, we speak on the notion of survival. After recapping the tragic story of Mohammed Abu Khdeir,[35] I ask Arafah whether he lives day-to-day worrying about his safety and survival. Again, Arafah's response surprises me. I suspect his response made me confront my own privilege living as a white person in Canada, even if only for a moment. He says to me, "Exactly. [The conditions that make up the Occupation] becomes just part of life, yanni. I don't know. Since I was a child, this meaning of safe, uhhhh, I didn't get to know exactly the

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[35] Abu Khdeir was a 16-year-old Palestinian boy who was kidnapped, beaten, and burned to death by three Israeli teens on July 2, 2014. The perpetrators claimed the attack was revenge against the abduction and murder of three Israeli teens on June 12, 2014. It is suspected that the murder of the Israeli teens was committed by two Hamas members from Hebron. Hamas (translating to Islamic Resistance Movement) is a Palestinian nationalist organization.

meaning until I travel for the first time to France. It was strange for me… not being worried something will happen, yanni, in the night" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). To think, the feeling of safety has never been experienced by so many individuals, by so many communities riddled with politically induced suffering and violence. To think that safety is felt only by those *privileged enough*… It took traveling to France for Arafah to realize something was stolen from him; to realize he had lost something he never truly had. Hiraeth.

Thinking with Arafah's loss of security, I am reminded of something my partner often says to me: "Where I come from, we don't plan things." This is usually followed-up with brief remarks about the precarity of living in Iraq during war. When I consider dispossession and the precarity of living under such circumstances through the lens of Butler and Athanasiou (2013), I understand these feelings of loss as reflecting experiences with "being made" dispossessed. The linguistic significance between "being" and "being made" dispossessed is an idea I will return to shortly.

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) constitute dispossession which "originally referred to practices of land encroachment," and is characterized in "how human bodies become materialized and de-materialized through histories of slavery, colonization, apartheid, capitalist alienation, immigration and asylum politics, post-colonial liberal multiculturalism, gender and sexual normativity, securitarian governmentality, and humanitarian reason" (p. 10). Included are practices that result in "forced migration, unemployment, homelessness, occupation and conquest" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013, p. xi), destruction of homes and social bonds, experiences of uprootedness, and struggles for self-determination (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013, p. 11). I wonder, how does Arafah's travels to France, his first time feeling "safe," reflect histories of slavery, colonization,

apartheid, occupation and conquest, the destruction of social bonds, experiences of uprootedness, and struggles for self-determination? Incessantly fearing for one's life, having the threat of injury or death constantly lingering, impedes the ability to create strong and secure social bonds. It can create experiences of uprootedness and can hinder self-determination. The four short stories mentioned above that Arafah shared with me in our interview (neighbor boy returned without organs; boys with shot out kneecaps; Abu Khdeir; first time feeling safe when traveled to France) convey what it means to be an individual or community "made" dispossessed. I can't image what other stories of dispossession Arafah could have told if we had another hour together and if he had the stomach to tell them.

I now turn to two paintings by Arafah that reflect ordinary moments and yet speak to the nuances of dispossession and the Occupation. This is the transformative potential of art that I speak about throughout my dissertation. The transformative potential is rooted in how art can convey mundane and everyday instances amidst a backdrop of abnormal and devastating circumstances.

Reading Arafah's Women Dressed in Their Handmade Embroidery and At Lunch

Figure 7

Women Dressed in Their Handmade Embroidery

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, 2004.

Figure 8

At Lunch

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, 2004.

Much of Arafah's work centers around paintings of people. Usually, I would pick one image for analysis but, in this case, I feel that both these images evoke a similar sentiment and make visible the beauty of Palestine. In both paintings we see a piece of Arafah's cultural identity depicted.

Figure 7 is a painting of five women. Five Palestinian women sitting at the bottom of a staircase outside a home in a neighborhood in Dheisheh refugee camp. What strikes me most about this painting is the simplicity of it. Painted in 2004, there are no depictions of bombs, soldiers, or blood. The women look as if they were once engrossed in conversation, now interrupted. I picture Arafah walking up and asking them whether he can paint them or photograph them and then be on his way. Or did he watch from a distance, lingering on a park bench with a sketch pad in the hopes he would find a group of women to paint, just like this one? The meeting between these women looks casual, recreational. I imagine these same five women meet at this stoop almost daily to plan family gatherings, share recipes, and gossip about their daughters' and sons' potential engagements. For Arafah, these five women reflect an aspect of his cultural identity that he wishes to capture.

At Lunch (2004) is a painting of Arafah's family sitting together, enjoying a meal. Again, the painting, with all its geometric detail, has a simplicity to it. Thinking of my own grandmother that died and all the family gatherings that died along with her, this painting evokes a sense of hiraeth in my own heart. Much like the painting of the five women, *At Lunch* (2004) evokes the idea that these eight people sit together often, eating meals as a family, familiar with each other's favorite dishes, knowing who to serve grandmother's delicate pastries to and who has just enough room in their belly for chai.

Thinking with this piece through the lens of dispossession, I wonder about the moment of rupture – the moment family lunches such as these cease or change. In considering how dispossession is rooted in loss, how do individuals, families, communities navigate loss when loss takes ordinary moments and makes them extraordinary? A mother making one less plate of food for the first time, a child bringing one less seat to the table. What occurs the moment one goes from eating lunch with their children to burying them? Thinking about the moment of rupture when the ordinary becomes catastrophic, I am drawn to a story told by Boullata on the time when Jerusalem was divided and eventually fully annexed by Israel. Boullata (2019) writes,

> I was less than ten years old when the meaning of no-man's-land first found its way into my life. At the time, Jerusalem, the city in which I was born, had just been divided into two separate worlds. On one side, the city's Jews began to live in a state all their own. On the other side, Arabs, regardless of their religion, staggered together under the burdens of their newly broken lives. Barbed wire marked the borders beyond which we were now forbidden to cross. Sites which grown-ups started referring to as no-man's-land became the only terrain linking two segregated sides. Through the coils of barbed wire, we began to see what looked for a time like an irremediable wasteland haunting our neighborhoods. Trespassing through wild shrubs to recover a ball that strayed into what only yesterday was a relative's courtyard now meant risking stepping on a mine or being shot by a sniper. (p. 27)

Boullata's recollection of the fear and potential death in "trespassing" on landscapes that Palestinians freely roamed sits in the pit of my stomach like a stone. Homes that used to welcome family members and neighbors with the promise of musakhan[36] and maqluba[37] now abandoned or

[36] Musakhan/muhammar is a Palestinian Arab dish consisting of roasted chicken baked with onions, sumac, allspice, saffron, and pine nuts served over taboon bread. It is commonly referred to as the national dish of Palestine.
[37] Maqluba is a popular dish in Palestine, consisting of meat, rice, and fried vegetables placed in a pot which is flipped upside down when served. The Arabic word maqluba literally translates in English to "upside-down."

occupied by Jewish settlers. I imagine this separation of space and place signifies a sense of hiraeth in Boullata's life.

Boullata's description of Jerusalem as divided into two separate worlds suggests an urgency in understanding the nuances of dispossession, including the nuances of the language of dispossession. Before I move to consider the linguistic nuances of the notion of dispossession through the lens of Butler and Athanasiou (2013), I am confronted with thoughts on my discovery of the term "de-developed," coined by the leading academic specialist on Gaza, Sara Roy (1995; 1999). For Roy (1999)

> De-development is perhaps best understood when compared to underdevelopment. Both processes describe a structural relationship between a stronger (dominant) and weaker (subordinate) economy. But while most definitions of underdevelopment allow for structural change and reform within the weaker economy (though that change is often disarticulated because it is oriented to the needs of the dominant economy), de-development not only distorts the development process but undermines it entirely. (p. 64-65)

The term "de-development" is significant in relation to Palestine because, "Gaza has the look of a Third World country, with pockets of wealth surrounded by hideous poverty. It is not, however, undeveloped. Rather it is 'de-developed,' and very systemically so" (Chomsky, 2015, p. 72). In other words, Palestine *was* developed, as was Iraq, as was Syria, as were other countries that have been the victims of colonial imperialism. Maybe it is because Palestinians know of a better life, a life their ancestors had, that there is a commitment – a *resurgence* – toward *re-developing* their

nation. Thinking with the notion of a nation "de-developed" helps me think further with the linguistic peculiarities of the notion of dispossession.

I understand the pedagogical distinction required to understand the notion of dispossession, as presented by Butler and Athanasiou (2013), as rooted in Boullata's poignant distinction in a *before* and *after* – the *before* being when Jerusalem was not segregated and the after being when this artificial division was contrived. As identified earlier in the Chapter, dispossession is constituted by loss and requires a shift from "being" to "being made" or towards "becoming."[38] The linguistic difference is nuanced yet critical to understanding the rhetoric, production, and manifestation of dispossession. For Butler and Athanasiou (2013), this pedagogical dissection is vital. They write,

> in fact, one of our efforts in this intervention ought to be to seek to denaturalize and repoliticize the ways in which "being always already dispossessed" is often summoned to legitimize an abdication of political responsibility for social forms of deprivation and dispossession. (p. 5)

Dispossessing another is not a passive or submissive act. It is not natural or inevitable. For instance, the removal of olive trees - a means of survival for many Palestinians, is symbolic of Israel's intentional demolition of Palestine[39] and an act of dispossessing another. Dispossessing another is an engineered process. It requires planning and direct action. To ensure political bodies are held

[38] Experiencing dispossession requires one to "be made" dispossessed by another or to let oneself "become" dispossessed by another.
[39] See Braverman (2009).

accountable and to ensure the notion of dispossession is not understood as merely an individual problem or an inherent consequence, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) urge that one attends to contextual and historical nuances.

Understanding dispossession as forced and unnatural reveals how "becoming" dispossessed is not inevitable and, in turn, means there are opportunities for such violence to change or be altogether eradicated. Also, recognizing Palestine as a nation "de-developed" locates profound Palestinian loss as forced and unnatural. It reiterates Palestinians as a community "made" dispossessed. In turn, understanding the linguistic significance of a country "de-developed" versus "undeveloped" or a people "being made" dispossessed versus "dispossessed" suggests a pre-contact history that can be resurrected as inspiration for resurgence practices. This epistemological distinction also reveals the relevancy in employing political aesthetic practices to make sensible the notion and idiosyncrasies of a community and nation "de-developed." In other words, a critical connection can be made to the fruitful work found in political aesthetic practices. Such work can unveil how dispossession is not inevitable, rendering the complexities of dispossession sensible, creating space to think differently, to imagine "worlds otherwise."

For instance, the legitimation of dispossession and the relinquishment of political responsibility can be made tangible by summoning the conventional rhetoric embedded in Palestine-Israel land disputes. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) speak on the nuanced language used to justify and conceal acts of dispossession, writing,

> When Netanyahu refers to the settlements in the West Bank as evidence of a "land dispute," he imagines two parties, equal in power, who are submitting

> their conflicting claims to some neutral arbiter. But Israel is at once the colonial occupier, the maker and arbiter of the rule of law, which means that the rule of law is implicated in the colonial project itself. So though there are on occasion "good decisions" that emerge from Israeli courts, the scene is still one of extraordinary inequality. It is also why efforts at co-existence that do not fundamentally challenge the colonial structure end up ratifying and extending that structure, even offering an alibi for colonialism's "humane" versions. (p. 25-26)

For Butler and Athanasiou (2013), Israel and Palestine are not on equal playing field and the legal system Palestinians must turn to is illegitimate. Not only is the law itself based in the colonial system but the law is often not upheld equally for Palestinians as it is for Israelis. The Israeli courts are used as a vehicle to maintain and reproduce colonialism. They are also used to justify and conceal the profound levels of inequality faced by Palestinians because the Israeli courts *appear* neutral and fair and are open to Palestinians even though they do not work in their favor. The *appearance* of a legitimate rule of law is what Butler and Athanasiou describe as "offering an alibi for colonialism's 'humane' versions."

Pointedly, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) is proposing structural change by acknowledging that if dispossession and loss are approached in a way that juridically adheres to the confines of the existing colonial structure, one can merely maintain and reproduce that very structure. It becomes a cyclical pattern built on the wickedly false idea that everyone within the system is treated "equally" and that the system itself is "legitimate" and "fair." For fundamental change to occur, the colonial system itself must collapse, and new systems must form, ones that radically

rearticulate "humanness."[40] Once colonial knowledge is not considered absolute one can be open to encountering, exploring, and reconsidering new ways of thinking. Making space for the formation and emergence of new or alternative ways of thinking is critical in the fight for democratic and political freedom because it pushes back against conventional colonial thinking.

Thinking with the language of dispossession helps me to "think otherwise;" to think with ideas that revere decoloniality by exposing the violence embedded in colonial logic. My thoughts now shift from my interview with Arafah and his artworks to my interview with Abu Ayyash. I am drawn to a story he told me about intimate encounters between Palestinian strangers, which revealed to me how elements of intimacy exist within acts of resistance and resurgence. This story is also an example of how Abu Ayyash himself grapples with the notion of dispossession.

Grappling with Dispossession: Artist Abu Ayyash

Almost immediately during my interview with Abu Ayyash I am made aware of the motivation for visual art and graffiti. "Graffiti is mainly to represent the refusal of a system" he tells me. He continues, "[Graffiti represents] the rejection of a system. It's like an artistic way to express the rejection" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Abu Ayyash explains that

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[40] "When it comes to "the human," the matter that must be addressed constantly and forcefully is the differential allocation of humanness: the perpetually shifting and variably positioned boundary between those who are rendered properly human and those who are not, those who are entitled to a long life and those relegated to slow death. The human cannot be presumed, then. The point here is not to introduce a distinction or temporal spacing between a pre-existing, original and inherent humanness which only later comes to take form through being variably allocated under contingent power configurations. Rather, the point is that the human has no "proper" place to take outside social situatedness and allocation, including the exposure to the possibility of being undone" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 31-32).

graffiti exploded onto the art scene as a form of protest in New York by African Americans rejecting racism and segregation. He describes how it became embedded in hip-hop culture. Lastly, he explains one of his preferred forms of creative expression, calligraffiti, a subgenre of graffiti that is based in letters.

Abu Ayyash shares how he left his birthplace Lebanon and travelled with his family to Syria, Tunisia, Jordan and eventually Palestine. He then starts to speak on checkpoints, invasions, and war. Abu Ayyash shares instances of land encroachment, restrictions on movement, apartheid conditions, securitarian governmentality, experiences with uprootedness and struggles with self-determination. One story about Abu Ayyash's experiences with checkpoints stood out as representing many of these dire living conditions while also illuminating the intimacies that arise from times of crisis.

Every Palestinian living in Palestine knows what a checkpoint is. Most, if not all, have encountered checkpoints when attempting to leave or enter any Palestinian city in the West Bank. This includes villages - any village along the road. Abu Ayyash tells me, “We call them a temporary checkpoint” and then, as if he knows what I want to ask next, says, “just you and your luck. You might pass, and you might not pass.” “What happens if you don't pass?” I ask. He replies matter-of-factly, “you should go home.” His answer surprises me and, after I attempt to reiterate, he explains the situation to me further. “Yea, they send you back and sometimes you're just stuck between checkpoints. So, the checkpoint that you exited right now will refuse to let you back in. So, you get stuck in the road” (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Confused, I ask whether a person would then need to search for another checkpoint. Now, Abu

Ayyash describes to me a scenario that continues to play out time and time again during the Occupation.

If unable to find another checkpoint, Abu Ayyash explains, “you can find a near village. This is one of the most amazing things that I love about Palestine, especially during the hard times. All houses [are] your house. Everyone welcomes you. Even [if] you are a stranger, but you are Palestinian stuck outside of your village or town, so they open their houses for you. For you to spend the night, the day, so you can carry on your journey for the next day. It happens with me; I can’t remember how many times. It’s like [a] common thing to happen.” Abu Ayyash goes on to describe how checkpoints can “waste” an entire day or else that you might spend seven or eight hours to travel between two cities that are forty-five minutes apart (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

I could write an entire dissertation on the nuances and inhumanness of checkpoints, on the entangled relationship between violence, time, and temporality when a person’s movement is restricted; when a person’s body is confined to the very landscape that simultaneously displaces it. Abu Ayyash’s experiences illuminate dispossession and also the profoundness of Palestinians’ calls toward political and democratic freedom. The relationships that are built between strangers over meals, when the realities of the Occupation put life on hold, when you are offered help with open arms without having to ask, these are the types of responses and interactions that reflect a way of thinking that, I argue, does not align with colonial logic. Rather, these types of responses expose the crux of resistance and resurgence practices in Palestine because they suggest a unifying thread that connects diasporic Palestinian communities across the globe. In Abu Ayyash’s

scenario, a stranger would offer to share their meal even when they barely have enough to feed their family. This way of thinking and being goes against the values prescribed within a capitalist society and illuminate the meaningfulness in imagining “worlds otherwise.”

I continue with my analysis of checkpoints through an exploration of Abu Ayyash’s graffiti entitled *My Hunger Carries My Homeland* (2013). This inscription illustrates a visceral portrayal of the Occupation. Not only is this graffiti piece inscribed illegally and publicly, but it also reveals the connection between identity and place, questioning how someone is meant to grapple with the loss of a place once called home. A landscape that once nourished Palestinians and now imprisons them.

Reading Hamza Abu Ayyash’s My Hunger Carries My Homeland

Figure 9

My Hunger Carries My Homeland

Note. Reprinted with permission. By H. Abu Ayyash, 2013.

Abu Ayyash's *My Hunger Carries my Homeland* (2013) is inscribed on a wall in a refugee camp in Palestine. In this piece, the figure uses his intestines to tie and carry the map of pre-1948 Palestine on his back. The hunger Abu Ayyash refers to in this graffiti piece is the hunger for the *right of return*. Here, a basic human sensation (hunger) is symbolic of the profound desire for Palestinian liberation. The exposed intestines suggest that the figure would likely die for this struggle and may even be dying in that moment, fighting for the *right of return*.

As my eyes wander over this inscription, I am struck by the notion of territory and the perverse idea that a population can be confined to refugee camps on their own land; that displacement can occur in conjunction with restrictions on movement. For Butler and Athanasiou (2013) the coupling of displacement and restricted mobility is consistent with colonial violence:

> Surely colonial violence can work both ways, by depriving an indigenous population of their land, and yet restricting the mobility of that population to the very land they no longer own. Certainly, occupied Palestine is a case in point, but so, too, are any number of refugee camps that detain and immobilize at the same time as they dispossess a population. (p. 23)

I wonder what it does to a person's sense of belonging when they are restricted to the very land they have been deprived of. How might one negotiate their relationship to their homeland when they are restricted from leaving and yet told they cannot stay?

During my interview with Abu Ayyash, he speaks to the reality of the incongruencies between being made to stay and told to leave, stating, "Israelis are occupying most of the West Bank, full of settlements. Around every Palestinian city you have more then five to six settlements around the cities. Not to mention between the cities there are also settlements." I understand there

is no point in my declaring the absurdity of these settlements to Abu Ayyash as he already knows they are illegal and that this has not prevented new settlements from being built - he knows all this because he lives it everyday. He continues, "so, they are controlling the whole land and are claiming that 'ok, we gave you this piece of land to build your own state on it, but we don't want you to have a state because we want to have the whole land.' It's all messed up, ok?" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

Restricted mobility refers not only to the inability to leave the territories but also to the inability to visit areas within the territories. "Let me tell you something about Hebron" says Abu Ayyash. "Its a city in West Bank. There are settlements inside the Palestinian city and agreements that divide the West Bank into areas A, B and C for the three stages for the Oslo Agreement. Hebron should be area A with full Palestinian control but there are still Israeli settlements inside the city, in the heart of the city itself. There are checkpoints inside the city and there are many places and roads inside the city that are not allowed by the Palestinians to cross" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). I imagine the suffering that accompanies not being able to move freely within one's own city and province. To some degree, Abu Ayyash is describing what it means to be trapped.

"Inside the Palestinian city, its forbidden for Palestinians to go to that road, these roads" he continues. "You have also Jerusalem, it's a totally different story. Its very complicated over there. It's considered to be our land… half of it actually, that was occupied in '67, and it's supposed to be part of the West Bank, supposed to be a Palestinian area according to the Oslo Agreement and the peace investigations." I listen without speaking, aware of the Oslo Agreement and the fact

that the promises in that agreement were never upheld. "But, there's a huge… not just a checkpoint, its more of a border point between Ramallah and Jerusalem" he tells me. "We Palestinians are not allowed to go to Jerusalem... It was occupied also in '67 not '48, but its one hundred percent Israeli. Controlled by Israelis, everything is Israeli over there and we are not allowed to go there unless we have a special kind of permit that allows us to pass through the checkpoint/border point" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). What Abu Ayyash is unequivocally explaining here is one of the many ways Palestinians have "been made" dispossessed. The movement of Palestinians is restricted to an area that Palestinians have also been exiled from. They are confined to unrelenting, precarious, at times dire, circumstances and are a people displaced on their own homeland.

I visualize the continuous checkpoints that Abu Ayyash describes in the shape of a loop. Round and round like a race car track Palestinians drive, trying to find a hole in the loop, some chance to escape this arduous looping. Except, once you escape the loop – once you escape the place between check points – there is another loop waiting for you. Travelling in Palestine must be like traveling through a labyrinth of loops, each one just as dangerous as the last.

Next, I explore how Abdel Hamid grapples with his own provocative loop through the notion of dispossession. Through this exploration, the concept of sur-vivance unfolds, acknowledging how *art that resists* creates an invisible tie between the past and the present, the living and the dead. This tie between past and present, living and dead, reveals the transformative potential of art.

Grappling with Dispossession: Artist Abdel Hamid

Abdel Hamid touches on numerous topics and philosophical ideas in our interview together. He reflects on the Occupation for brief moments, weaving in other profound ideas and questions. He touches on the changing artworld, describing how art mediums are dissolving and evolving with modernity and the advent of social media, and how social media platforms inadvertently accelerate trauma. He speaks on the mass production of imagery and desensitization. He expresses his thoughts about his own geopolitical identity and how that has both hindered and helped him as an artist. He speaks on wars elsewhere, performing being poor, the romanticization of Palestinians, and the fetishization of trauma and the role of the artist to avoid this, these are all thoughts I have already spoken on or thoughts that I return to later in this chapter and in other chapters.

I begin by thinking about dispossession alongside the interview I conducted with Abdel Hamid wherein he locates and crystalizes his concern with the saying “never again.” “After every genocide we say, ‘never again.’ So, you have… the major ones. You know, the Holocaust, the Armenian genocide, Rwanda,” he explains, “every time this thing happens and we say, ‘never again.’ But then,” Abdel Hamid pauses. I hear him take a drag from his cigarette before saying, “it happens again.” Releasing the smoke from his lungs, he continues, “And again – its on a loop. And then it becomes apart of [and] incorporated within the genocidal event. [Then] the reactions [from people] are going to happen [like] the fundraisers. [But] what do you do when nothing can be done” (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)?

I certainly recognize the loop Abdel Hamid is referring to, as his last sentence loops in my head: what do you do when nothing can be done? The fundraisers, the rallies, the articles, the artworks, my very own dissertation, these are all responses meant to challenge the Occupation, motivate resistance and resurgence efforts, or propel humanitarian aid, and yet what can these responses truly offer? Is one response more transformative than another? What *can* be done to dismantle or erode Israel's settler colonial project? These are all questions that emerged for me from this short passage, questions that emerge out of dire, unrelenting living conditions. These are questions that delicately reveal how Abdel Hamid negotiates the inevitability of "again;" the incessant appearance of the aggressor; the experience of a person and community "made" dispossessed.

I consider these questions, provoked by my interview with Abdel Hamid, and am reminded of Jacques Derrida's notion of "sur-vivance." I wonder whether it is within this concept that I might find an answer to Abdel Hamid's question. Or else, maybe it is not an answer that I need – I am not convinced Abdel Hamid was looking for an answer and I am not convinced there is *one* answer or *any* answer that will suffice. Maybe, Derrida's "sur-vivance" reveals how responses to the Occupation guide and locate resistance and resurgence practices. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas introduce Derrida's work on mourning, exploring Derrida's assertion that the dead speak through the living and mourning "consists in interiorizing the other and recognizing that if we are to give the dead anything it can now be only in us, the living" (Derrida, 2001, p. 9). Here, Derrida is suggesting that the living speak for the dead. "Derrida suggests that it is only 'in us' that the dead may speak, that it is only by speaking *of* or *as* the dead that we can keep them alive"

(Derrida, 2001, p. 9). I take seriously Derrida's (2001; 2011) assertion that the remnants that remain after loss; after death, remain through the living. I locate art, including *art that resists*, as a way for the dead to live on, either through their own creative exercises that have outlived them, or else through the artists that summon the dead, transcending the here and the now through their creative works.

Further articulating Derrida's work on mourning and friendship, the friend's otherness is a marker of separation that distinguishes them as already beyond us. The friend is still "in us," looking at us, but from a place "already beyond us" (Derrida, 2001, p. 11). Returning to thoughts on Abdel Hamid's question, I wonder whether keeping the dead alive by speaking *of* or *as* the dead is committing to doing *something* in times when *nothing else* can be done?

Resolute in dissecting Abdel Hamid's question further, I find my thoughts now lingering around Vizenor's (1999) notion of "survivance." Vizenor's (1999) "survivance" also suggests that the dead live on, in an active state of survival, yet Vizenor's analysis centers around native "survivance" stories and resurgence practices. Vizenor's use of the suffix -*ance* as opposed to -*al* (surviv-ance as opposed to surviv-al) insists on moving beyond merely existing to actively inheriting and transforming Indigenous cultures within contemporary times. "Survivance" stories, in turn, complicate victimhood and rearticulate subjugation through stories retold of a past prior to the white gaze. "Survivance" is the marrying of resistance and survival. Again, I wonder whether nothing can be done *but* an understanding of Derrida's "sur-vivance" and a commitment towards Vizenor's "survivance." In turn, these practices evolve into a type of resistance wherein resurgence practices emerge and persist.

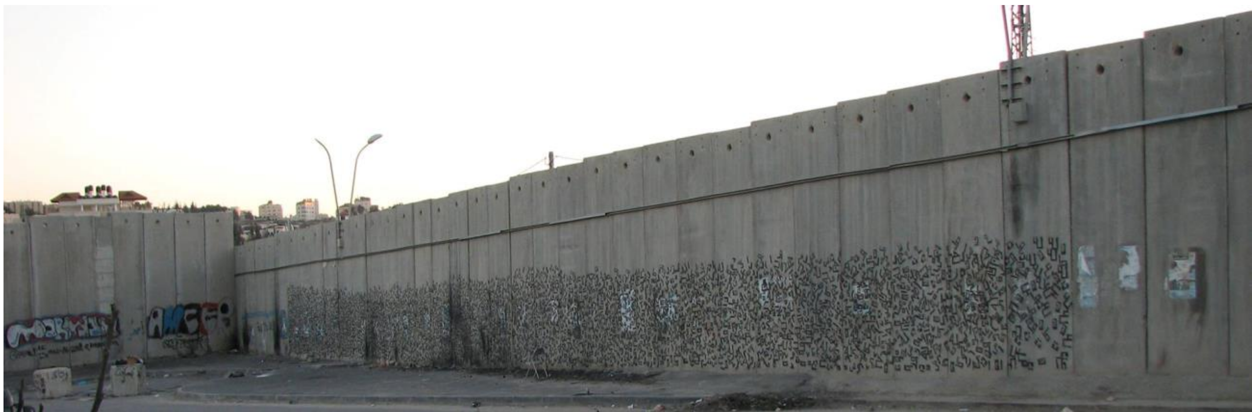
I suggest that the transformative potential of art (Zinn, 2003) gives space for the dead to lives on "in us," through us, by us. "There's always more poetry in defeat" Abdel Hamid tells me. And so, in considering all of these ideas my analysis turns me back towards the art as a tool to better understand how defeat is taken up by Abdel Hamid - how the dead live on through his artwork.

I turn to Abdel Hamid's *Land Art* (2007) to translate how artists are revealing and condemning dispossession and the Occupation.

Reading Abdel Hamid's Land Art

Figure 10

Land Art



Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2007.

Figure 11

Land Art

Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2007.

In Abdel Hamid's piece (figures 10 and 11) the letters, once unjumbled, assemble the declaration written by Darwish and proclaimed by Palestinian political leader Yasser Arafat in 1988. Since 2012, Palestine has been referred to as "the world's largest open-air prison" (Chomsky, 2012). The contrast between the Declaration of Independence and the description of Palestine as an open-air prison twenty-four years later exposes the unrelenting subjugation of Palestinians by Israel. In considering international support for Netanyahu, the Israeli Prime Minister responsible for building illegal settlements,[41] the contrast between the declaration and the unsustainable living conditions in Palestine speaks volumes to the power held by Israel globally.

[41] Illegal settlements refer to Israeli settlements that currently exist in the West Bank on Palestinian land occupied by Israel. The international community (United Nations and the International Court of Justice) considers the settlements and continued construction illegal under international law (Roberts, 1990). "About 130 government-approved settlements and 100 unofficial ones are home to around 400,000 Israelis in the West Bank… an additional 200,000 Israelis reside in 12 neighborhoods in east Jerusalem" (Levingston, 2020, para. 2); "The population of Jewish

Land Art (2007) is Abdel Hamid's only piece of graffiti. The letters represent a commitment to the rights of Palestinians and to Palestine as a sovereign nation. Tangled and disorderly, the letters identify a commitment abandoned by the Israeli state. Abdel Hamid's decision to jumble the letters suggests a sense of confusion or else uselessness to what the Declaration espouses. *Land Art* (2007) is site specific, inscribed on the Wall, exemplifying the futility of the document and the reality of Palestinians' continued persecution.

Consider the site housing *Land Art* (2007): The Separation Wall. The Separation Wall runs 708 kilometers in length, 15 per cent running along the Green Line[42] or in Israel, 85 per cent cutting deep into the West Bank, isolating approximately 9 per cent of the land, leaving an estimated 25,000 Palestinians detached from the majority of the territory (UN OCHA, 2011). Unequivocally, the Wall is a site of violence. Many Palestinian artists refuse to inscribe on the Wall to avoid normalizing its existence by beautifying it. I am reminded of a story told by Banksy, the British international artist; he tells us that while inscribing his artwork onto the Wall he had a conversation with a Palestinian man walking by:

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settlements [in the West Bank] surged by more than 3% in 2019, well above the growth rate of Israel's overall population" (Federman, 2020, para. 1).

[42] Also known as the 1949 Armistice Line, is the internationally recognized border separating pre-1967 Israel from the Occupied Palestinian territories.

Old man: You paint the wall, you make it look beautiful.
Me (Banksy): Thanks.
Old man: We don't want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall, go home.
(de Turk, 2019, p. 73).

Those protesting the Wall as a site for inscription consider not only how it beautifies subjugation but also consider *who* the message is being relayed to. For Abu Ayyash, certain messages are more suited to face the aggressor, suited to confront the Israeli government and military, suited for the other side of the Wall (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). For Abdel Hamid, this inscription is deliberately site specific. His choice to write on the Wall facing Palestinians suggests the message is not meant for the aggressor. In considering Abdel Hamid's decision to inscribe on the Wall, I wonder, is *Land Art* (2007) an effort to summon Palestinians to reconsider and reconstitute a document that is essentially at the mercy of settler colonialism? Is Abdel Hamid signalling toward the futility of the document and gesturing toward a new understanding of what it means to live outside of that document, stripping it of its symbolic power? I consider these questions while thinking that there is much more being represented in Abdel Hamid's inscription that cannot be summed up by exclusively examining its politically charged site.

Thinking with this image makes me think about a question I posed at the beginning of the Chapter: how does one persevere under dire, unrelenting living condition? Although I am still mulling this question over, returning to this question once more in the Conclusion, I am certain that thinking about how individuals cope with suffering may be one point of inquiry. Thus, I end

this Chapter by thinking on the notion of perseverance alongside the notion of politically induced suffering, which is at the forefront of my next Chapter.

In considering perseverance amidst suffering, I am confronted by ideas on suffering as omnipresent. The omnipresence of suffering suggests a relationship between suffering and perseverance. Thinking with suffering, I illustrate pedagogic encounters with artworks that adhere to characteristics found in political aesthetic practices, encounters with *art that resists*. This is significant because it reveals how pedagogic encounters with artworks encourage the unearthing of ideas that challenge the status quo and conjure ideas around resistance and resurgence.

Chapter Four: On the Economy of Suffering

After a few steps I was struck by the feeling I'd cut off a part of my wrist. But I concentrated my mind on the transition, and so allowed my feet to move freely over the firm surface of the ground. It didn't take me long to reconcile myself to what I'd done, to feel convinced that no severance had occurred. Perhaps this was because I was going further and further away from the inaccessible place where it had happened. I'd done no more than scratch the dry scab of an old boil on my wrist, and feel the painful pleasure accompanying this, as a feeling of relief slowly pervades the body. And with it the memory of the wound itself disappears and becomes as though it had never been. Nothing remains except a white patch that bears no relation to the wound that preceded it.
-Ghassan Kanafani, All That's Left to You

Not only did men leave and children grow up and die, but even the misery didn't last. One day she wouldn't even have that. This very grief that had twisted her into a curve on the floor and flayed her would be gone. She would lose that too.
-Toni Morrison, Sula

Although Ghassan Kanafani and Toni Morrison's poetic writings on experiences with pain and suffering speak to different painful events which, in turn, come with their own nuanced language, oppressive conditions, and historical context, they both speak to grappling with a sense of something lost, to a feeling that comes after misery has left. Both pieces summon a need to reconcile with what remains after loss. Thinking with these two excerpts, I wonder, what emerges from the loss of loss? My thoughts return to the respective artworks as reminders of a very present

yet withstanding sense of loss. A sense of loss[43] that not only motivates these artists' work, but also motivates an entire region to fight for their right to life, democracy, and sovereignty.

In this Chapter, I consider how suffering unfolds in areas where insurmountable loss is almost inevitable, commonplace, expected. Kanafani and Morrison's poetic passages help me to think through ideas that emerged from my thinking on politically induced suffering[44] while reflecting on the respective artist's interviews and artworks. Ideas that emerged include the unshareability of pain[45] and suffering, the banality of suffering,[46] performing suffering, and how cultural identity shapes, and is shaped by suffering.

Grappling with Suffering: Artist Arafah

Can one ever really truly understand another's pain? I think about this question as I reflect on an excerpt from the interview I conducted with Arafah. At one point, his interview led us to the story of Abu Khdeir. Having given me the background behind his death, Arafah tells me how children in the camp are traumatized. He then says to me, "Still, I'm not telling you this to feel sorry or to

[43] The scope of my project considers individual loss and the loss experienced during times of war: "Although the problem of loss is always *this* loss, this person or relative I knew and loved, it is also, especially in the context of war, all those who are injured or destroyed by the peoples and nations who wage war" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 143).

[44] Politically induced suffering refers to the political effects and concrete manifestations of tactics and vehicles of governance and domination that produce and maintain certain injustices and abuses against political subjects (e.g., citizens and those seeking refuge within the State). Tactics and vehicles of governance and domination aim to disempower, criminalize, and (*sometimes, always*) cause death. Politically induced suffering produces, reproduces, and maintains government-led human rights abuses against its own citizens.

[45] When speaking on pain in terms of suffering in relation to Palestine, in the spirit of Susanna Trnka (2011), I also "consider the pain caused by political chaos and social turbulence, the pain of corporeal violence, and the pain of witnessing large-scale economic destruction" (p. 16). As well, I consider the pain of loss; loss of loved ones, loss of culture, loss of land and loss of an existence whereby dignity and democracy are nurtured and felt.

[46] By the banality of loss, I am referring to loss as everyday, commonplace, and predictable.

feel sad. Uhhhh, that's the situation, this is how I live and how people live. And what I'm saying is some little facts of so many other facts, yanni, uhhhh, I feel there's no space to feel sad or sorry. You understand? I don't know if I'm saying it right, yanni." With a moment's pause, Arafah continues, "In fact, I don't like to talk about these things because, ummmm, I hallas, I feel so much yanni, heavy on my heart when I talk about these stories." Before I am able to respond, Arafah tells me, "I would like more to talk about art" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). We returned to the art but, to be honest, after leaving the interview and reflecting on this moment I realized not only *had I not* understood how there is no space to feel sad or sorry, but *I could not*.

As a listener who is detached from the story for the mere fact that I am an outsider in every way, I found myself curious to hear more. As a witness to something so devastating such as is the case for Arafah, the story holds a deep sadness that I can never understand. This is one of the troubles with suffering. It is everywhere and yet nowhere; it is omnipresent and yet it can never fully be understood by those who are not directly experiencing it.

Scarry (1985) writes, "whatever pain achieves, it achieves in part through its unshareability, and it ensures this unshareability through its resistance to language" (Scarry, 1985). Scarry asserts it is easier for those in pain to understand their pain, but for those witnessing it there is a need to seek understanding, to strive for it; it does not come natural to the onlooker. Being inundated with stories about pain and suffering does not require sufficiently understanding another's suffering. In fact, I wonder whether having to reconcile so much suffering further prevents any sufficient understanding of it.

Speaking on the human condition, Arendt also points to the limitations of communicating pain. For Arendt (1958),

> the most intense feeling we know of, intense to the point of blotting out all other experiences, namely, the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all. Not only is it perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit for public appearance, it actually deprives us of our feeling for reality to such an extent that we can forget it more quickly and easily than anything else. There seems to be no bridge from the most radical subjectivity, in which I am no longer "recognizable," to the outer world of life. (p. 50-51)

For Arendt, great bodily pain is the least communicable feeling. It has the ability to remove us from reality so far so that one forgets the very pain that caused this departure. In moments of great bodily pain, one is no longer "recognizable."

Yielding to Scarry (1985) and Arendt's (1958) position on the unshareability of pain, my mind returns to how immensely painful experiences get shared over-and-over again. These continuous testimonies of suffering, in turn, are often responded to with more, and different, painful stories. The cycle is repeated without the language to describe the magnitude of the scars that are carved into our bodies.

Although it is evident that great pain is "most private and least communicable" (Arendt, 1958), the telling and retelling of great pain persists. The immediacy and accessibility of stories of suffering on online platforms creates an environment that resembles a conveyor belt whereby there is a constant and simultaneous appearance of, withdrawal from, and reappearance of the object, or idea, in question. I suggest that when living under often dire, unrelenting, precarious living

conditions, the banality of suffering; the inundation, desensitization and unshareability of great pain, produces an environment where subjugated subjects must perform their suffering in order to compete with a myriad of others' suffering, and in order to survive and resist.

This myriad of others' suffering is what I refer to as the banality of suffering. Arafah gestures to suffering as omnipresent while speaking on the redundancy of photography. In the interview I conducted with Arafah, he points to several artistic mediums that have been used to saturate the Wall in Bethlehem with anti-Occupation art. For Arafah, the use of photography alongside social media has resulted in an overwhelming inundation of imagery, transforming art and the ways in which the artworld functions. Arafah notes,

> I always wonder… what my painting could make between this traffic of paintings and murals and graffiti on the Wall in Bethlehem…. It's become crowded [with] murals and paintings and drawings and graffiti… it does not make sense anymore now when everybody has his own camera and everybody [is] connected on Facebook and you can see what is happening in Mali and in China. (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

In the above excerpt, Arafah highlights how the medium of art is dissolving and the functionality of the artworld is shifting to make space for the advent of social media and an acceleration of imagery.

I wonder, what is at stake in the formation of identity when people are constantly confronted with others' pain; unshareable pain? Pondering over his artistic motivations, Arafah notes how his identity is shaped through the creative process of making art,

> I realized that art is not only about beauty and doing nice drawings. It's more [about] understanding other sides of the cube and to understand what is behind what we see, and to go deep into the self, to understand as well who I am and what is my identity, the real identity. (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

The creative process of making art helps Arafah establish his personal and cultural identity. These artworks (objects) "sur-vive" as forms of "collective memory," unifying heterogenous "landscapes of group identity" that will live on, move, and also live elsewhere. Arafah's cultural identity informs his art, and his art informs his cultural identity.

I reflect on the effects politically induced suffering has on personal and cultural identity and recall Dionne Brand's (2001) exploration of identity and belonging through stories of childhood in the Caribbean. In *A Map to the Door of No Return*, Brand (2001) begins by revealing a rupture (in history; quality of being; in the physical sense; of geography) that enveloped her when her grandfather could not tell her what people their family came from ("Yoruba? Ibo? Ashanti? Mandingo?"). Brand (2001) writes,

> Having no name to call on was having no past; having no past pointed to the fissure between the past and the present. That fissure is represented in the Door of No Return: that place where our ancestors departed one world for another; the Old World for the New. The place where all names were forgotten and all beginnings recast. In some desolate sense it was the creation place of Blacks in the New World Diaspora at the same time that it signified the end of traceable beginnings. Beginnings that can be noted through a name or set of family stories that extend farther into the past than five hundred or so years, or the kinds of beginnings that can be expressed in a name which in turn marked out territory or occupation. I am interested in exploring this creation place – the Door of No Return, a place emptied of beginnings – as a site of belonging or unbelonging. (p. 6)

For Brand, "the Door of No return" is where Blacks were forcibly departed from the Old World into a New World Diaspora.

Brand's passage speaks on this forcible departure as having created a fracture between the past and the present, "having no name to call on." Brand yearns to know what people her family came from, what people she *belongs* to. She conveys a sense of urgency in getting to know her past when she describes persistently asking her grandfather about their history. This travesty of "having no name to call on" gestures to the significance of memory and remembrance, as if calling on "collective memory" practices as a way to reimagine and reconstruct cultural identity. It is not just Brand but also Said that is living on "the remnants of a destroyed society … and memory" (Musallam, 1979, p. 22). As identified earlier in the work of Arafah, Brand's cultural identity also informs her art, informs her creative writing, and her art informs her cultural identity.

A profound discovery when comparing notions of Said's undefined identity and Brand's "Door of No Return" is in the nuances around the idea of *not being able* to return. For Brand (2001), there is no return: "This door is not mere physicality. It is a spiritual location. It is also perhaps a psychic destination. Since leaving was never voluntary, return was, and still may be, an intention, however deeply buried. There is as it says no way in; no return" (p. 1). I believe Said would agree with Brand, that there is no return, and that, as Musallam (1979) points out, *return* looks different for Palestinians. Brand's door is not about mere physicality, there is no way in; there is no return due to spiritual and psychic enclosures. Said's door, although also limited by

spiritual and psychic enclosures, has a very physical element as well,[47] and it is the door's physicality that prevents many Palestinians from entering and leaving.

I consider the "Door of No Return" as a creation place, a site of belonging and unbelonging, because the notions of "belonging" and "creation" intrigue me. How might members of the Palestinian community make the "Door of No Return" a site of belonging? How can a place signify the end of traceable beginnings *and* be a site of belonging? In what ways can the "Door of No Return" be a creation place? Furthermore, can cultural identity be reconciled from within this place? In thinking with these questions, my thoughts return to the language, objects, texts, and stories that make up collective memory.

Just as suffering is rooted in loss, the "Door of No Return" is about loss. The loss of home, culture, language, history, heritage, a name. These losses shape and are shaped by cultural identity. By navigating the complex relationship between politically induced suffering and cultural identity, I expose an urgency for a re-articulation of colonial legacies, giving space for new and reimagined histories and stories to emerge. I suggest personal and cultural identity is shaped beyond suffering, rather than reduced to it. Even with insurmountable loss, creativity can unfold, resembling what Eng and Kazanjian (2002) refer to as "loss as creative." I suggest that remembrance practices that make up "collective memory" can be one articulation of this creation place. The questions above help fuel my project's undertaking because the relationship between the concept of a creation place

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[47] Consider the lack of global recognition of Palestinian citizenry; Palestinians being issued travel documents as opposed to passports; rules and regulations that control Palestinian movement within and outside of the Occupied territories.

and making *art that resists* is undeniable. Maybe making *art that resists* is one example of how members of the Palestinian community make the "Door of No Return" a site of belonging, a creation place.

Next, I analyze an untitled piece by Arafah. Delving into the interviews I conducted with Arafah and figure 12, I am moved to reflect on the relationship between loss and cultural identity. The everydayness of cactus picking and the connection it has to the liberation of Palestinian women is conveyed in this painting. Yet when I think further about the historical, cultural, political, and economic situation in Palestine, I am confronted by how this painting reveals the *perplexity* of freedom in that one person's understanding of freedom can vary greatly from another's.

Reading Arafah's Untitled Work

Figure 12

Untitled

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, 2020.

When I asked Arafah about this painting, seen in figure 12, I am told that this was done from "memory," a childhood memory that Arafah has of his mom picking the flowers off cactus plants. Arafah explains to me that cacti are significant to Palestinian culture, describing the fruit found inside as delicious. Not known for its beauty, the fruit of a cactus is delicate in flavor and once the thick spiky layers are peeled off, it becomes fragile to the touch.

Cacti and olive trees are common to the region and have become emblematic to both Palestinians and Israelis, for varying reasons. One cactus farmer describes his symbolic understanding of the cactus, referring to the plant by its Palestinian name "sabr":

> "[The cactus plant] lives in the hardest environmental conditions," says Yasin. "It lives in the desert. It resists drought. It endures the weather conditions. In the end, the product is the fruit." In Arabic, sabr also means patience, and Yasin's words echo a well-known mantra of Palestinian resistance: *sabr wa samud*, or patience and steadfastness. (Berger, 2019, para. 18)

A million things go through my mind after reading this paragraph alongside Arafah's painting. The symbolism in the cactus as withstanding cruel, grueling environments – the harshest environments for that matter, and the meaning behind its name - the mantra of Palestinians to remain patient and steadfast – it all sounds poetic. And yet, there is also nothing romantic about these cruel conditions, nor is there anything romantic about the *absolute need* to live with patience and steadfastness to avoid utter extinction. But it's not the symbolism that interests me most. In fact, the symbolism could be the very romanticizing of the Occupation that I wish to avoid. What I am interested in here is Arafah's personal take on the significance of the cacti.

This untitled piece painted in April 2020, was inspired by Arafah's memory of his mother picking the cactus fruit from their home. Arafah recounts how he would sometimes watch her as she picked, in anticipation for the delicious treat that would emerge from the prickly exterior. It is shortly after Arafah recounts this memory that the conversation shifts in a way I had not expected. Arafah begins to explain to me how, for women in Palestine, picking the flowers of cacti is also political, embedded in their own demands for liberation – not only as Palestinians but as women as well. "I believe that Palestinian women are under double Occupation – [the Occupation by Israel and an Occupation by] the masculine of the community. Women are doubly resisting. Picking the cactus is telling their story, in a way. Picking cactus is not nice. It causes pain" (A. Arafah, personal communication, June 21, 2021). The relationship between liberation and pain moves me. I am also in awe of Arafah's intimate reflection on what it means to be a woman in Palestine. Is the pain emblematic of these women's stories? Is Arafah suggesting their story is one of pain? Arafah's reflection on the link between freedom, gender, and labor is one that I could write an entire dissertation on. I can only imagine the perplexities involved in being chained by the Occupation in addition to patriarchal demands of one's community.

In Arafah's painting (figure 12), the woman that represents his mother is wearing gloves to withstand the painfully sharp needles that protrude out of the cactus plant. A handkerchief wrapped around her head makes me think the day is hot, that small piece of fabric being the only thing preventing her eyes from becoming filled with beads of salty sweat. I imagine the fabric becoming soggy, needing to be rung out every couple of hours to make room for new sweat to settle in its threads. I hear the words repeat in my head: "picking the cactus is telling their story."

I am drawn to think about an Indigenous practice of memory work mentioned in Chapter One, wherein Indigenous women would make moss bags and tell stories, this often being a practice of remembrance, a time to speak proudly and fondly of one's history and culture; a practice of "survivance." For Palestinian women, picking the flower off cacti is a labor intensive, quite literally painful job. It is a means of production in a society where patriarchy informs societal norms and values. One of the ways Palestinian women contribute with their labor is through the picking of the cactus plant. Women in Palestine are liberated by this laborious work because they are viewed as bringing economic value to an economically repressed community (a concept further complicated when considering the pervasive nature of capitalism) and because, I imagine, it gives Palestinian women a sense of independence.

I push Arafah a little further on this question, fascinated by his insights. "As a Palestinian" he says, "we should understand how important freedom is. How important it is for women to be liberated. But tradition is powerful and not easy to break and change" (A. Arafah, personal communication, June 21, 2021). Freedom is a notion that runs throughout my project. Arafah's point makes sense to me: those shackled should recognize its harm and resist shackling another.

Interested in *why* tradition is so hard to break and change, I ask Arafah whether he believes this is in part due to the stability and familiarity that comes with tradition. In a way, does tradition offset the unpredictability of the Occupation – does it provide a sense of balance, I ask. Arafah replies, "I'm not blaming the community because the Palestinian community doesn't have the chance to travel abroad and see things done differently" (A. Arafah, personal communication, June 21, 2021). Arafah recognizes that part of what shapes community is an understanding of the outside

world. I wonder, what is lost or gained in the formation and development of community when members of that community cannot leave that community; cannot explore other communities? Arafah explains that people in Palestine are all fighting for a meager amount of opportunity to "live the good life."

> [People are] looking for the balance to find peace because here, its easy to be aggressive. The chance for a full life is little, so people are fighting everyday to make a good life. I wish to learn myself about how the community develops… when the chance of a good life is under pressure, it makes people stick to traditions. (A. Arafah, personal communication, June 21, 2021)

Thinking about this excerpt, I am brought back to Berlant's notion of "the good life" and how misleading, destructive, and harmful the pursuit can be. I am also reminded of Said's essays on exile, wondering about how traditions take shape among those displaced, outside of the place they call(ed) home. Said (1992) writes,

> Certainly, the destruction of Palestine in 1948, the years of subsequent anonymity, the painful reconstruction of an exiled Palestinian identity, the efforts of many Palestinian political workers, fighters, poets, artists, and historians to sustain Palestinian identity – all of these have teetered alongside the confounding fear of disappearance, given the grim determination of official Israel to hasten the process to reduce, minimize, and ensure the absence of Palestinians as a political and human presence in the Middle Eastern equation. (p. xx)

Said (1992) recognizes the unrelenting navigation involved in sustaining identity amidst the fear of disappearance, the fear that comes with being a very *people* in dispute. For Said (1992), identity cannot be separated from this bewildering fear, nor can it be reduced to it. The efforts made by Palestinians to sustain Palestinian identity have *teetered* alongside "the confounding fear of

disappearance" but have not *disappeared*. This makes me think how holding onto tradition is also about *not disappearing* as a community and culture.

The tradition of a patriarchal society is not unique to Palestine. On the contrary, the majority of societies across the globe are patriarchal in practice. However, for Palestinians there is another complex layer that sustains tradition: the Occupation. The coupling of restrictions on movement and the fear of disappearing away is balanced by/through tradition.

Speaking on his role as an artist since our last conversation, Arafah reiterates and redefines the intentions behind his work: "I try to present [my ideas] to my community to remind ourselves who we are because our identity is confused… I try always through my art to present the beauty of the community and of Palestinians. Palestine is thousands of years of civilization and art, [and this] helps me to open my eyes to see bad and good things within the community" (A. Arafah, personal communication, June 21, 2021). I see this piece, inspired by Arafah's childhood with his mother, as a way for him to represent beauty, culture, and history.

I now turn to consider how Abu Ayyash grapples with suffering. My thinking with the interview I conducted with him, and his respective artworks, moves me to explore the relationship between suffering and performativity. I ask, how does insurmountable suffering force performativity, and in what ways do already suffering bodies perform?

Grappling with Suffering: Artist Abu Ayyash

At a symposium held in New York in 1991, Cornel West "introduced his distinctive brand of 'tragic' pragmatism, in which suffering bodies compete for the resources to weave hopeful webs of meaning" (as cited in Rajchman, 1995, p. viii). Immediately struck by the word "compete" I am brought back to my earlier discussion on the banality of suffering. What is at stake in terms of personal and cultural identity when already suffering bodies must compete for the resources to survive and thrive? The ability to thrive comes in part from the ability to maintain and sustain a meaningful life. The resources that West speaks of are not only necessary for survival, but they are also essential in creating meaningful lives.

Having to perform suffering is not a concept unique to Palestinians. As a shelter worker, I see suffering bodies compete for resources regularly. There is a constructed division in North America between "the deserving poor" and "undeserving poor."[48] Access and perceived rights to resources depend on socio-cultural norms established within the community and standing government. In North America, the stigma around poverty and access to resources is insidious and the judgements made are cutthroat.[49]

In terms of the Palestinian experience, the need to perform poverty is symptomatic of a community "made" dispossessed. By situating West's "tragic pragmatism" through the lens of dispossession, it becomes evident that Palestinian performativity is necessary for Palestinians to

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[48] See Arneson (1997); Harding (2018).
[49] See Harding (2018).

remain "relevant" enough to receive resources and thus, Palestinian performativity is necessary for "weav[ing] hopeful webs of meaning" and for survival.

Thinking about performativity, I am reminded of our conversation around checkpoints. Abu Ayyash explains to me how checkpoints can be open or closed, remaining open more often than not. That being said, he explains to me that the Israeli military and government can close the checkpoints whenever they wish. As Abu Ayyash describes it: "no entry, no exit" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018).

When asked whether there are always military officers at all checkpoints, Abu Ayyash explains, "More than ninety-percent of the time there are Israeli military at the checkpoints. You know, they are there so they can close it whenever they want but the road is open. It's like full control over the situation… Imagine, every time you want to enter or exit any Palestinian village or town or city, you have to face it" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). I am confronted by the notion of having to perform whenever met with roadblocks and the IDF (Israel Defense Forces). I imagine one must perform their suffering in these moments by assuming a non-threatening, submissive, obedient role. Movement within the territories – what many would consider a basic freedom - is restricted for Palestinians, and yet they are forced to assume a co-operative role in their subjugation or else bare the consequences that might result in imprisonment, injury, or death. The dire need to perform in order to survive or else avoid imprisonment makes me think about the very basic fact that, when imprisoned or dead it is difficult or else impossible to "weave hopeful webs of meaning."

Thinking with hope and performativity when living with profound suffering, I find myself lured again by Darwish's statement, "we Palestinians suffer from an incurable malady: hope" (as cited in Vadasaria, 2018, p, 146). I am lured by this statement because of what it represents and what it does not. When I think on hope through the lens of Darwish, I think of notions of resistance, recovery, resurgence, and a sense of *hope*fulness. Initially, I interpret this quote to convey hope as something utterly different; something nagging, a burden, an ailment to be rescued from. I ask myself, if hope is an incurable malady, what is the alternative to hopefulness? Could Darwish be suggesting hope is, in a sense, *cruel*?

Thinking on hope as cruel, my thoughts return to Berlant's (2011) work, *Cruel Optimism*, "a relation of cruel optimism exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing" (p. 1). I continue to wonder, what is the relationship between Berlant's "cruel optimism" and Darwish's incurable malady? For Berlant, people continue to remain attached to unachievable fantasies of the good life. Maybe, the notion of being attached to an unachievable fantasy of the good life is what Darwish is referring to when he speaks on Palestinian hope as an incurable malady. In other words, maybe the incurable, nagging hope that Darwish speaks on is a reflection of a Palestinian attachment to an unachievable *right of return* fantasy? Yet, to say this may be equivalent to suggesting Palestinians "give up." Seeing Darwish's hope as solely cruel may in fact create a nihilistic perception of Palestinian futurity that impedes transformative opportunities that might otherwise emerge from *having hope*.

Unsatisfied with the notion that even Darwish believes having hope in returning is cruel, I consider whether the attachment to *right of return* sentiment is *not* an attachment to unachievable

fantasies. For instance, Berlant (2011) notes, "all attachments are optimistic. When we talk about an object of desire, we are really talking about a cluster of promises we want someone or something to make us and make possible for us" (p. 23). Maybe, the hope embedded in *right of return* sentiment illustrates an optimist attachment, an object of desire members of the Palestinian community wishes to make possible. Or else, maybe, this attachment *is* cruel in terms of maintaining an attachment to a potentially unachievable object of desire, but maybe it is necessary to uphold if any transformative change is to emerge. In other words, although hope can be a hinderance it may be worth the risk if it can also be a catalyst for transformation. As Berlant (2011) suggests, bounding ourselves to optimism helps to ward off a sense of despair and nihilism, the consequences of which could create a more dire situation. By considering the possibilities for transformation alongside the notion that suffering bodies must compete for resources, it could be cruel to be anything *but* hopeful.

In his collection "Hiya ughniyah, hiya ughniyah" [English: "It's a song, it's a song"], Darwish, desperate to dream, addresses not the cruelty of optimism but rather the cruelty of hopelessness, gesturing toward the significance of West's (1991) "hopeful webs of meaning." In his poem, "Muhawalit Entihar" [English: Suicide Attempt], Darwish writes,

If I find no dream to dream, I will fire my bullet
And I will die like a blue-tailed fly in this darkness,
Without appetite.
(2008, stanza 13)

I am struck by the word "appetite." For Darwish, one loses the appetite to live when one can no longer dream. His reference to "darkness" suggests he dreads the black void that exists after

dreaming has stopped. It is as if the “darkness” is less bearable than death. In this stanza, he articulates that, when the mind goes blank, when the color from dreams cease to exist, one is left in darkness and unrelenting despair. If one must live in darkness, one might as well be dead. In this poem dreaming is akin to hope. For Darwish, if he can no longer dream, he has nothing to live for. I believe Darwish’s poem signifies the profound attachment to *right of return* sentiment (hope), an attachment that could result in hindering Palestinian futurities if resurgence is never manifested. However, I also believe Darwish’s poem illustrates the necessity to look toward that object of desire, to hold onto the promise of return as a way to reconcile despair and mobilize despair into something fruitful and transformative.

There is an urgency in reconciling and mobilizing despair into something fruitful and transformative. Realizing that war is not being done away with (Zinn, 2003), members of the Palestinian community perform as a call for political and democratic freedom, as a form of resistance and disobedience, and as a practice of resurgence. The significance of this call is rooted in the omnipresence of suffering, and in how such immense suffering cultivates an environment whereby people must compete for their resources in order to survive and “weave hopeful webs of meaning.” I interpret the hope that comes with competing for enough resources to survive and thrive as the sort of “cruel optimism” Berlant speaks on because there will never be enough *available* resources to prevent already suffering bodies from suffering more, there will only ever be enough to maintain their suffering. Yet, the “cruel optimism” that emerges from “tragic pragmatism” may be a necessary means toward transformation. Maybe, what Darwish is expressing in his poetry is the agony of hope, without suggesting there is any alternative.

Using an interpretive reflective tone, as I have throughout my dissertation when analyzing the respective artworks, I continue to explore the notion of performing one's suffering through a pedagogic engagement with a graffiti piece by Abu Ayyash. I interpret Abu Ayyash's nameless piece of a horse, inscribed on a wall in a refugee camp in Lebanon he visited in 2012. In this piece, I recognize Abu Ayyash as employing political aesthetic practices and rendering sensible the relationship between performativity and suffering.

Reading Abu Ayyash's Untitled Horse

Figure 13

Untitled

Note. Reprinted with permission. By H. Abu Ayyash, (n.d.).

Figure 13 is a graffiti piece by Abu Ayyash inscribed in Shatila Camp[50] in Lebanon. In Arab culture, the horse is a symbol of freedom and pride that also rejects the concept of training. In Arabic, the word “horse” comes from the word “pride.”

It is a long and withstanding practice that most horses are domesticated and trained to obey and perform to some degree. Much like horses are expected to perform obedience (including “tricks”) under their master’s control, so too is expected of Palestinians by their occupier. When Palestinian bodies perform in ways that stray from their master’s commands, they are punished. For instance, a Palestinian child throwing stones at armed Israeli military sent to terrorize can result in imprisonment or death.[51] Yet, children continue to throw stones and Palestinians continue to revolt against the Occupation, much like the horse in Arab culture rejects training.

The rejection of training denotes disobedience. Notions of disobedience and revolt against oppressive regimes are characteristically found in aesthetic disobedience and “decolonial aesthetic” practices, highlighting the significance of this graffiti piece in terms of the insightful creative openings it evokes. These insightful creative openings are rooted in political aesthetic practices. In thinking on performing suffering, I wonder whether Abu Ayyash’s horse is a symbol of revolt against performativity. Is Abu Ayyash suggesting that, much like the horse, Palestinians perform disobedience, encapsulating the free and liberated sentiment it symbolizes?

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[50] Shatila Camp is a Palestinian refugee camp located in southern Beirut, Lebanon, with its origins dating back to 1949. As of 2014, this camp houses more than 9,842 registered Palestinian refugees (United Nations Relief and Works Agency, n.d.).

[51] See Levine & Veerman (2001).

The idea of performing disobedience resonates with Butler and Athanasiou's (2013) "performative politics of survival" (p. 31), which contends that suffering bodies must expose themselves to survive. Yet, survival cannot be the only motivation behind performativity. In considering the performative is political and intentional, there is more to performativity than basic survival – there is an effort to reclaim and transform place. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) consider what it means to reclaim and transform place, by considering the conscious act of "staying put," stating, "we should refuse the idea that claiming the right to 'stay put' is about 'traditional' stasis. As the right-to-the-city movements show, claiming a place is not merely about gaining access to what already exists but rather about transforming place" (p. 24). For some living in the diaspora, "staying put" is a commitment to reclaiming and transforming place in ways that do not conform to, or reproduce, colonial power structures.

Palestinians remain in the Occupied territories for diverse reasons. Understanding that a vast array of reasons exists, I am drawn to explore the act of remaining as an act of reclaiming place, summoning Butler and Athanasiou (2013). I speak to this reason alone because the notion of reclaiming place locates performativity as a vehicle for seeking and demanding transformative change. Butler and Athanasiou's (2013) discussion on "staying put" as a way to reclaim and transform place illuminates a profound reason for members of a subjugated community to make their bodies visible, "materializing and mattering."

Butler and Athanasiou (2013) speak to the notion of "materializing" through the lens of dispossession: "dispossession speaks to how human bodies become materialized and de-

materialized" (p. 10). Materializing is about presence, turning up, arriving. It is about appearing in bodily form.

The question of mattering, notes Butler and Athanasiou (2013), considers the "ontopology" of the human in terms of "the differential (de)constitution and (de)valuation of human matter and humans that matter" (p. 34). To "matter" implies to be of importance; have significance; have value. It means being constituted within, as opposed to outside of, humanness.

The concept "materializing and mattering" articulates the significance of subjugated communities making their bodies visible. Recognizing this significance, Butler and Athanasiou (2013) ask: what could the present become from the scene of the performative politics of survival and alternative forms of life?" (p. 31). I argue, when considering performativity as a form of disobedience and resurgence, the present might become a space for re-articulating humanness and for imagining "worlds otherwise," a world that does not conform to hegemonic systems of power.

Thinking further on "materializing and mattering," I wonder, when compelled to perform, how is one's corporeal body exposed, bound up with subjugation, and yet resisting that which binds them? To answer this question, I consider Butler and Athanasiou's (2013) articulation of how presence can unfold as either a form of subjugation or else acknowledgement:

> If we are, for instance, "present" to one another, we may be dispossessed by that very presence… It seems to me there is a presence implied by the idea of bodily exposure, which can become the occasion of subjugation or acknowledgement. The coercive exposure of bodies at checkpoints or other sites of intensified surveillance can be one instance of the former. The body must arrive, present itself for inspection, and move only according to the motion and speed required by the soldier or the machine (or the soldier-

> machine hybrid). We can say that at these instances the person who must pass through the checkpoint is "present" in a way that is bound up with subjugation. But similarly, when acts of resistance happen at the checkpoint, when bodies show up or move through in ways that are not allowed, or when communities form on either side to limit and counter military practices, a kind of presence occurs. (p. 13-14)

If we distinguish presence, in the case of Palestine, as either subjugation or acknowledgement, the idea of *performing being poor* is two-fold: it is an example of the performativity required when one has "been made" dispossessed, a result of the coercive exposure of bodies, or else it is an instance of performance as resistance to annihilation. Performativity can be a pervasive burden *and* tool.

Returning to the image, my eyes are drawn to the mane of the horse. Wild, unruly, each tuft seemingly in motion, as if dancing off the curves of the wind. My eyes move, stopping at the horse's face, turned away. The turning away of the horse's face is also a turning away of its gaze, as if to decry what is directly in front of its nose. Could it be that the horse wishes to abstain from acknowledging something that holds little significance, empty of meaning, or else is the horse abstaining from looking at something undesirable? Its expression seems unapologetic, unwilling to surrender to status quo domestication and the own-or-be-owned neoliberal apparatus that encourages imbalances of power, greed, and ownership over everything from goods and services, to natural resources, animals, and people.[52] Is it the owner/trainer/master that the horse refuses to acknowledge? In turn, is the horse turning away from the oppressor and thus, from subjugation?

[52] See Butler & Athanasiou (2013); See Hedges (2010; 2018).

When asked about the name, Abu Ayyash asserts it has no name. Why is this piece nameless? Is choosing not to name this piece a matter of consequence being that it was inscribed in a camp Abu Ayyash briefly visited, in a country that is not his own? Or else, does the namelessness contend to the idea that this horse represents disobedience and revolt against the owner-workhorse (master-slave) dichotomy that so often names and imprisons living beings? A horse, for example, does not name itself "Buttercup" or "Black Stallion." A horse is named by another, confined by another, and made to perform in ways that suit another.

Unsure and curious, years after our initial interview I asked Abu Ayyash why he chose not to name this piece, in which he replied: "I think I was overwhelmed by the camp" (2020). As if awoken from a dream-like state, I am brought back to the harsh realities of what surrounds this image. After hearing Abu Ayyash's reply and considering the psychological toll that might come with seeing more of your own people forcibly confined to a small piece of land that is not theirs, or else, witnessing the continued passion for life and resistance toward the aggressor, it's almost unfathomable to picture him spending any time naming this graffiti piece, at least while in Shatila Camp. Maybe, if named, it should be named by those living in the camp rather than by another. Maybe, not naming this piece is itself a form of disobedience against traditional artworld norms and against the act of naming another. Maybe, some things are better off left nameless.

Thinking further on the site where this piece was inscribed, what comes to mind is that this piece is not on Palestinian land. Nor is it facing the aggressor. It faces displaced Palestinians. Returning to an earlier thought, it is as if this horse, a symbol of the right to live freely without

fear of persecution, acknowledges that those confined to Shatila Camp turn their gaze away from their oppressor's ruling and away from obedience.

I move to consider how artist Abdel Hamid grapples with suffering under the Occupation. I briefly continue my analysis on performativity by exploring how Abdel Hamid understands the need for suffering bodies to validate poverty before moving to consider the banality of suffering. Understanding the need to perform being poor helps to solidify a level of urgency in the call for democratic and political freedom in Palestine.

Grappling with Suffering: Artist Abdel Hamid

West's notion that suffering bodies must compete for resources reminds me of a moment during the interview I conducted with Abdel Hamid, wherein he states, "[there is] this idea that if you're not suffering enough, you're not valid, so you need validation through suffering. So, people also perform being poor" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Rather than suggesting people are faking poverty, Abdel Hamid is articulating how suffering bodies understand that they must announce and perform their suffering in order to compete for life saving resources.

In this metaphorical dance between performativity and access to resources – a "performative politics of survival" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 31), Butler argues "that the 'politics of the performative' is a politics of insurrection" (as cited in Disch, 1999, p. 547) wherein survival gets taken up through performativity as a form of political disruption and insertion. I also interpret the "performative politics of survival" as gesturing toward an expectation for those

struggling to perform and to present in a dire and deserving manner - *and present they must*. For suffering to be witnessed, suffering bodies must expose themselves. To hide is to die.

The above statement made by Abdel Hamid is one that I could write on for pages yet, there is another idea that I wish to consider, an idea that his work also summons within me. This idea is the banality of suffering. In other words, Abdel Hamid's work helps me to think through the everydayness of suffering; how suffering is everywhere and yet nowhere, and consider how suffering gets distributed and redistributed, resembling a conveyer belt cluttered with stories of suffering.

The growth of modernity has led to developed, developing, and de-developed societies experiencing many of the benefits and tragedies that shape, and are shaped by, globalization. The mass distribution of ideas, current events and historical atrocities has led to a broader understanding of issues that otherwise may go unknown, and yet the same vehicle that bestows awareness confiscates uniqueness and creates an environment wherein people compete for empathy at the threat of having their suffering minimized. In turn, individuals attempt to validate their suffering while being compared to a myriad of others' suffering. This bombardment of information and the potential for a person, in some sense, to become numb to it all is a phenomenon of the internet and social media that creates a banality of suffering. These platforms allow and encourage, by the very nature of their mechanisms and existence, the constant mass distribution of ideas, opinions, stories, testimonies, and images. Also, the very medium itself demands ideas be distributed in bite-sized form. The level at which an individual can be inundated with stories on

others' suffering is merely dependent upon their participation on social media platforms and their access to (and usage of) technology and the internet.

The advent of social media is a relatively recent phenomenon that only grew in popularity after the internet was made public in 1991 and access to social media slowly flourished. Prior to this, in the 80s and 90s, smartphones were non-existent, and the only "digital producers" were Polaroid and instant cameras. The ability to produce and reproduce images at that time was quite limited, as photoshop and filters were either non-existent or only at the hands of professional photographers. With the recent influx of social media accessibility and usage, images are being produced, reproduced, viewed, and consumed at exponentially higher rates.

An account of the influx of imagery and the redundancy of photography as an art medium also emerged from my conversation with artist Abdel Hamid. Abdel Hamid spoke on the evolution and accessibility of information, how anyone with access to a smartphone now has the ability to perform the same work as a professional photographer, and the constant inundation of testimony and imagery:

> There is no school of thought. There is no, like, agreed upon conceptual framework for anything, if you think. The medium is also dissolving so this is interesting. Its like the first time when cameras were introduced. And then there was like a… so now, cameras are basically redundant. So, what do you do? What's the point in taking more pictures, everyone's taking billions of the same picture. [One] can't just say the medium is dissolving strictly for one reason. But its like, you can see it done indirect – the attention span of any human being has changed. The amount of information, the bombardment, I mean, there is like a sort of – there's an influx of imagery or visuals all the time so at some point a person is desensitized, and I'm not talking about strictly violence. (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Thinking on how the medium of photography is dissolving, I am reminded of Abdel Hamid's *Pacifier* (2014) for two reasons. First, it is made of sugar and dye, a moment on the tongue and it too dissolves. Second, the medium itself is multiple sculptures. This makes me wonder whether Abdel Hamid chose to work with this medium to avoid the redundancy of photographic images.

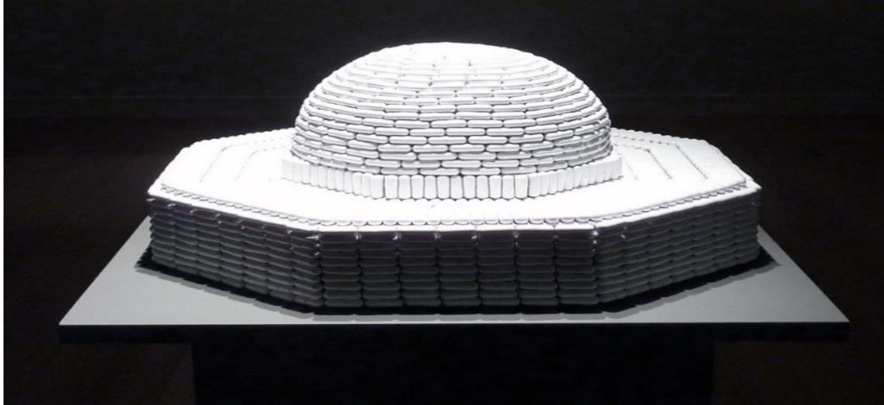
Reading through an interview between Abdel Hamid and the Ruya Foundation (2017), I come across a sentiment very similar to the above two excerpts from Abdel Hamid and Arafah: "In a world saturated with images, it is easy to become desensitised to portrayals of conflict and suffering" (as cited in Shehadi, 2017). I wonder, how might one reconcile suffering without overly dwelling on suffering when suffering is omnipresent? Does the acceleration of imagery produce desensitized subjects? Furthermore, is it the very banality of suffering that *allows* people to *reconcile* suffering so that the ordinary and mundane activities of life continue?

I continue thinking about the banality of suffering through my analysis of Abdel Hamid's *Painkillers* (2010). Continuing with a reflective interpretive tone, as I do when analyzing all images presented in my project, I explore tropes of disobedience and resurgence practices summoned by *Painkillers* (2010).

Reading Abdel Hamid's Painkillers

Figure 14

Painkillers



Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2010.

To build the sculpture *Painkillers* (2010), seen in figure 14, Abdel Hamid used capsules of the opioid (narcotic) prescription drug Tramadol to construct the Dome of the Rock, an Islamic shrine in Jerusalem. I find the use of Tramadol particularly interesting because this drug is meant to treat moderate to severe pain, and comes in an extended-release form, for around-the-clock treatment. Much like the concept of banality, the release of the drug is long and withstanding, and the feeling that comes from the drug's release is continuous, uninterrupted, ordinary, and predictable.

My fascination with this piece deepens when I read Abdel Hamid's intention behind the art:

> "The dome has been completely fetishized in Palestine, its a symbol of the state. It is printed on keychains and tissue boxes. When the President speaks on television, there will be an image of the dome behind him" Abdel Hamid explains. "On the other hand, there was a huge scandal about the drug

> Tramadol, especially in Gaza, as men were combining it with Viagra to prolong sexual activity," he says "so it was a way of bringing together the sacred and the profane". ("Majd Abdel Hamid: 'Nothing is more present today than violence,'" 2017, para 9)

Here, by bringing together the sacred and the profane, Abdel Hamid accentuates the juxtaposition between the two. Entertaining the sacred and the profane simultaneously, with the sacred referring to religion and the profane referring to sexual activity, suggests that one's values are not necessarily reflected in one's behaviour. This piece by Adel Hamid is not intended to speak on the Occupation and in fact, is representative of the juxtaposition between religiosity and behaviour, globally.

Highlighting the fact that although Abdel Hamid *is* speaking on Gaza, he is *not* speaking on the Occupation is pointedly relevant. This sculpture is about a scandal and about the fetishizing of structures, such as the Dome. Considering artworks that expose ideas and issues unrelated to the Occupation is a reminder as to why reducing Palestinians to their circumstance is a hinderance that impairs imagination and categorizes Palestinians as consumed by their dispossession to the point where they are a community *only and always* dispossessed. By perceiving Palestinian artworks as *only* taking up the Occupation, a myriad of other diverse, non-homogenous characteristics and experiences get lost in translation.

Bringing together the sacred and the profane is not the only thing that strikes me about Abdel Hamid's sculpture. Like *Pacifier* (2014) and *Horizon* (2010), it too is made of dissolvable, edible material. But, unlike sugar and water, one swallow of one capsule and the body is numbed, pain suspended. And not just pain of the physical kind. Tramadol is also used to dilute other types

of painful suffering. It is known to treat anxiety and insomnia. What a peculiar remedy for such a variety of ailments. One magic pill can take away physical pain as well as psychological. Or maybe it is not so peculiar. It is no surprise that one's psychological state is impacted by one's physical state, and vice versa.[53] Hence, Tramadol appears to be a jack-of-all-trades, remedying the physical, psychological, and in the case of the scandal in Gaza, the sexual as well.

Attempting not to stray too far away from the artist's intentions, I appreciate how Abdel Hamid's *Painkillers* (2010) speaks not only to Tramadol's numbing feature, but it also speaks to loss in many forms. Returning to an earlier question, I ask: what emerges from the loss of loss itself? If Tramadol treats pain and suffering, and the extended-release form is around-the-clock, its quality of performance is dependent on its ability to constantly alter its patient's natural biology. But why would someone volunteer to take a drug that suspends the reality of one's physical or psychological state? I guess the better question to ask is, what *entices* someone to take this drug?

Arguably, something extraordinary must first occur. This extraordinary event could range from a traumatic accident, to unemployment, to the loss of a loved one. Hence, is Abdel Hamid's *Painkillers* (2010) also answering the question of what emerges from loss? Or else, thinking back on Sula, what happens when even the grief is gone? Might *Painkillers* (2010) expose what emerges from the loss of loss itself? Maybe, what might emerge is the desire or need to become utterly numb. Maybe, the use of medications like Tramadol reveal how one might reconcile suffering

[53] One 2010 study "showed that pain has a greater impact on people who are depressed" (Berna, et. al.) and in a 2017 study "of 1,013 Canadian university students found a direct association between depression and backaches" (Robertson, et. al.).

without dwelling on suffering, when suffering is omnipresent. If suffering is commonplace, is numbing that pain the reconciliation I am searching for? Is Tramadol a prescribed treatment for desensitization?

Drawing on *Pacifier* (2014) and my earlier analysis that Abdel Hamid's sculpture of keys point to a sense of revolt against the placation of Palestinians, I am struck again, but this time by what the Dome represents: a sacred religious site. Could Abdel Hamid's piece expose not only the use of drugs to placate but the use of religion and faith to placate as well? Perhaps the use of Tramadol to construct a religious site symbolizes how faith and religion can numb pain, particularly pain that comes from loss.[54] Perhaps desensitization is a form of resolution? I sit with these questions, thinking about them, and yet am moved to consider other ways loss is experienced under dire, unrelenting conditions.

In the following Chapter, I explore how, amidst dispossession and suffering, artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid reconcile "the sense of time" under the Occupation. Notions of time as stolen, standing still, or in limbo emerged from the interviews I conducted with the respective artists. Furthermore, I interpret "the sense of time" under the Occupation, through my reflections on their artworks. Understanding "the sense of time" under the Occupation is

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[54] In a qualitative investigation of six patients titled, "If I didn't have my faith I would have killed myself!: Spiritual coping in patients suffering from Schizophrenia" Hilde Hustoft, et. al. (2013), found the patients identified spirituality as vital in their ability to cope; Sigmund Freud (1961), in his book *The Future of an Illusion*, wrote, "the defence against childish helplessness is what lends its characteristic features to the adult's reaction to the helplessness which *he* has to acknowledge – a reaction which is precisely the formation of religion" (p. 30). For Freud, people turn to religion to defend against helplessness. Freud (1961) later suggests childhood neurosis is comparable to religion (p. 55). Although Freud grew up Jewish, later in life he considered himself an atheist, recognizing religion as harmful and as a way to control the masses (Freud, 1961).

significant because it reiterates an urgency in condemning the Occupation and in the need for Palestinians to have democratic and political freedom to make space for the emergence of thriving Palestinian futures.

Chapter Five: On Time

I've given him everything an untamed nature can afford, and without knowing it, he's gone astray. But there's one thing I can't give him: time. It was sifting through his feet, and not only that, it was working against him. Yet, it wasn't time that he really raced against, but his own loss.
-Ghassan Kanafani, All That's Left to You

In order to explore what "the sense of time" under dire and unrelenting living conditions might look like. I start this Chapter with a brief analysis of affect and embodiment, and the significance of alternative notions of time. These are connected because alternative notions of time can reflect and attend to affect and embodiment and affect and embodiment shape our relationship to time. After introducing these concepts, I delve into the rich interviews and artworks of Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid. I consider how their interviews and artworks summon my own thinking about "homogenous empty time," "messianic" time, alternative notions of time, Indigenous relationships to time, children's time, refugee time, and inherited time.

Affect

My turn to affect is important for my project because it establishes the foundation for considering experiences with time that are not linear, but rather rupture linearity. An exploration on embodiment is strengthened by an exploration on affect because embodiment occurs as a response to being *moved*. I embody that which first *moves* me.

Sara Ahmed speaks to affect in relation to the concept of happiness. For Ahmed, "We can be happily affected in the present of an encounter; you are affected positively by something, even if that something does not present itself as an object of consciousness. To be affected in a good way can survive the coming and going of objects" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 31). Ahmed uses philosopher John Locke's example of the seasonal nature of grapes to illustrate how positive affect can survive the coming and going of objects. The changing of seasons, for example, being excited for summer weather during the winter months, is another example of this. If it is a positive memory or imagery then its affective response may bring relief or happiness whereas if it is a negative memory or imagery then its affective response may bring sadness, anger, or anxiety. Affect study emphasizes how we are *moved* by things and experiences.[55]

Intrigued by Ahmed's use of Locke's proposed relationship between affect and memory, I wonder how aesthetics might be a vehicle to strengthen this relationship. For Berlant (2011), a relationship between affect and memory, or affect and history with an understanding that history is reproduced in memory, certainly exists and affective traces in the aesthetic form provides evidence of historical processes (p. 16). "Affect's saturation of form can communicate the conditions under which a historical moment appears as a visceral moment, assessing the way a thing that is happening finds its genre, which is the same as finding its event" (Berlant, 2011, p. 16). In considering that affective traces can be found in the aesthetic form, and how these aesthetic forms in turn provide evidence of historical processes, we can find resonances with Simon's

[55] Consider Berlant's (2011), concept "cruel optimism."

understandings of collective memory. It is through the production of collective memory, and in turn the production of aesthetic forms, that "affect's saturation of form can communicate the conditions under which a historical moment appears as a visceral moment" (Berlant, 2011, p. 16) further strengthening the idea that collective memory can have profound unifying (or polarizing) effects.

Another significant tie between Simon's work on collective memory and Ahmed's work on affect is in how emotions circulate not only within bodies but between bodies as well. For Ahmed (2004), "…emotions play a crucial role in the 'surfacing' of individual and collective bodies through the way in which emotions circulate between bodies and signs" (p. 117). Ahmed (2004) further suggests this argument challenges assumptions that emotions are a private matter or "that they come from within and then move outward toward others" (p. 117). Ahmed suggests emotions move between bodies and that they reflect our surroundings. In other words, "…emotions are not simply 'within' or 'without' but that they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 117). Although emotions are often recognized as a private matter, they are in fact very much engrained within the collective, augmented by and through our relationality.

Having explored affect, a more fruitful understanding of embodiment can emerge. This is because, to understand embodiment, it is helpful to first understand affect.

Embodiment

What might it mean to experience embodiment or to embody something? What might it look like to embody a time that does not belong to progressive, linear notions? Furthermore, what is the relationship between affect theory and embodiment? Affect study emphasizes how we are *moved* by things and experiences. Embodiment is located within affect. First one is *moved*. Second, one embodies that which *moved* them.

A lot has changed over the years in our understanding of cognitive constructs and processes. A post-cognitive movement matured that abandoned approaches to cognitivism that took an information-processing approach (Riegler, 2006). "Starting from philosophical insights like Heidegger's 'Being in the World' (Dreyfus, 1991) and Merleau-Ponty's (1962) 'Phenomenology of Perception', embodiment (e.g., Riegler, 2002) emphasizes the importance of placing the cognitive being in an environment" (Riegler, 2006, p. 2). This is a core concept of embodiment: cognition cannot be separated from environmental factors.

The emerging opinion is that embodied cognition is the understanding that "cognitive processes are deeply rooted in the body's interaction with the world" (Wilson, 2002, p. 625). Hence, the body interacts with its environment through its cognitive processes: fundamentally, there is a consistent exchange and relationship between body, mind, and environment. These interactions are not linear or chronological, they are fluid and ever-changing, depending on what it is that causes a person to be affected and how they embody that visceral experience. As previously established, aesthetics affects people, and this section considers how the embodied

response to affect is unique, diverse, and often non-linear. “Linear stage models of grief have encouraged the view that grief needs ‘working through’ in the mind, and not necessarily the body” however, empirical data from interviews with bereaved people “illustrate aspects of the embodied experience of grief that differ from how psychological grief theories conceive of the bereaved person’s body” (Pearce & Komaromy, 2020, p. 1). Furthermore, “findings highlight the role of the bereaved person’s body in managing grief and how the absence and continuing presence of the deceased person is managed through embodied practices” (Pearce & Komaromy, 2020, p. 1). Understanding grief as an embodied experience illustrates the illustrious relationship between affect and embodiment. For example, many individuals continue relationships posthumously. “While the biological body dies, the embodied relationship does not. The felt material presence of the dead person remains as well as the ‘us’ formed in the relationship between the two bodies. The persistence of an enfleshed and material connection continues in the body of the living person as an ongoing embodied presence” (Pearce & Komaromy, 2020, p. 5). Embodiment is about giving a form to intangible ideas; ideas that do not have a physical form, and yet these immaterial ideas are experienced through a person’s physical (bodily) form.

Understanding embodiment is significant to my project because it reveals that experiences with time are unique, personal and do not necessarily follow linear patterns because they are based in temporary immediate reactions between individual physiology and one’s environment. The relationship between embodiment and grief is profoundly experienced by many living under the Occupation.

How does one navigate a time they cannot orient themselves to? Or else, how does one navigate a time that disavows experiences with time; that disavows time as embodied? Furthermore, how might one navigate universally supported notions of time when one does not want to follow traditional (historically, socially, and culturally relevant) ideas of productivity? I consider these questions through a brief examination of what an alternative notion of time means: time that does not conform to clock and calendar time.

Alternative Notions of Time

Anna Agathangelou and Kyle Killian (2016) argue for a reformed understanding of the relationship between time, temporality, and global politics. For Agathangelou and Killian (2016), "insisting on understanding time in its ontological, epistemological, and institutional arrangements, postcolonial studies argue temporal reformulations are pivotal to political projects interested in rupturing a present whose inflection is violence and fatalism" (p. 1). Time is understood not as a backdrop but as a tool waiting to be transformed and waiting to transform relationships with temporality. (Post)colonial projects seek to understand time and temporality in the sense of an indeterminate future, removing time from its presumed neutrality (Agathangelou & Killian, 2016). Such projects illustrate how time is a determinate lens for an indeterminate future, problematizing the inadequacies of orthodox notions of time ("homogenous empty time"), that is, time that is linear and meaningless, colonial time measured by clocks and calendars. [56] Examples of alternative

[56] Agathangelou and Killian also take up time within a (post)colonial lens and argue for a reformed understanding of the relationship between time, temporality, and global politics. For Agathangelou and Killian (2016), "insisting on understanding time in its ontological, epistemological, and institutional arrangements, postcolonial studies argue

notions of time include indigenous time, children's time, and refugee time. I consider these alternative notions of time while interpreting the interviews and artworks by Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid.

Having briefly established a framework for my project's undertaking of affect, embodiment, and alternative notions of time, I move to consider these concepts and others by drawing from the artworks and the interviews I conducted with the respective artists. I begin with artist Arafah. My move to consider Arafah's perspective on "the sense of time" under the Occupation further underscores the urgency behind Palestinians' call for political and democratic freedom.

Grappling with "The Sense of Time" Under the Occupation: Artist Arafah

Speaking on his role as an artist, I recognize a sort of excitement in Arafah's reply as he explains what this means to him, "…I'm satisfied, yanni, with how I live. The way I'm living. The way I'm doing my things. I'm so much inspired. As well, [as an artist] you need to talk [about the space] in between the situation in the camp and the soldier and all of that" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Hearing Arafah refer to the "in between," the excesses, what remains and persists outside the parameters of the Occupation, I can't help but think of the notion of *time*. What is it that fills the "in between?" Looking back at the data, I wish I had picked up on this statement and pursued it further, during our interview. I imagine that Arafah fills the "in

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temporal reformulations are pivotal to political projects interested in rupturing a present whose inflection is violence and fatalism" (p. 1).

between" with his loved ones and with making art. Wrapped up in the mosaics of time, the excesses outside the parameters of the Occupation are, for Arafah, meaningful. I understand Arafah's "in between" indicative of what Walter Benjamin coined "messianic" time.

When Arafah summons the significance of the "in between;" the stuff that remains outside of soldiers and the Occupation, I understand him to be speaking to a time that is filled with meaning, meaningfulness, a time of fulfillment. The alternative is time that is (un)filled with emptiness, a passing of time that is void of meaning; a time of unfulfillment.

My thoughts turn to concepts such as "homogenous empty time," which fails in providing meaningful connections with time, in part due to its relationship to capitalism, which Benjamin criticizes (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013, para 24). Rather than representing time that is *fulfilled*, "homogenous empty time" represents time that is empty, a symptom of capitalism, unable to fulfill the needs of revolutionaries. In contrast to "homogenous empty time" is Benjamin's notion of "messianic" time. "Messianic" time is not a continuous flow but rather ruptural[57] and is a kind of time that is *filled* or *fulfilled* [emphasis added] (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013). Benjamin proposes excluded groups and revolutionaries can access "messianic" time as a way to experience time differently (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013). Benjamin believes that revolutionaries accessing "messianic" time are "connected in spirit to past revolt" (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013, para 29).

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[57] McLaverty-Robinson (2013) suggests Benjamin may have seen messianism "as a means of rupture between two 'historical' worlds" (para 51) as a way of reconciling the revolutionary role of messianism and the idea that "Messianism is also the passing-away of the world" (para 51).

"Connected in spirit to past revolt," much of the younger Palestinian population continue the revolt, generations who only know pre-1948 Palestine through stories (allegories) told by elders. "Allegories are akin to ruins. They are what is left when meaning or life is lost. It provides a vision of time and history which shows them in ruins. It also has a power to make anything mean anything else"[58] (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013, para 45). In considering that Palestinians, activists, and allies have organized against the Occupation for over sixty years, I suggest future generations will follow in the resistance against the Occupation, fortifying my desire to draw on Benjamin's notions on time and temporality.

Having established my reasoning for mobilizing Benjamin, I still feel a level of discomfort in drawing on his theory. Hence, in a similar reflective position as I was in when I was thinking about the tension in mobilizing Rancière's aesthetic theory over Indigenous ideas such as imagining "worlds otherwise," I gesture to Benjamin's notion of time and temporality while also thinking about Indigenous relationships to time. I draw on Benjamin's theory as an analytical lens to consider the inadequacies of colonial clock and calendar time and move to consider how time could be explored through an Indigenous lens. It is important to note that it was much easier for me to gather and decipher literature on Benjamin's concept of time than it was on Indigenous

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[58] The notion that allegories can make anything mean anything else is exemplified in Abdel Hamid's *Pacifier* (2014) and Arafah's *Horizon* (2010) in which sugar and dye are used not to eat but to make "keys" and water is hung up in bags rather than being drank or being used to farmland. I will speak further on this through my analysis of Abdel Hamid's *Hourglass* (2012).

relationships to time. What makes this profound is how it speaks to colonialisms overwhelming hold not only on notions of time and temporality, but on scholarship, research, and literature.

There is a profound difference between colonial clock and calendar time and Indigenous relationships to time. Indigenous time emphasizes ancestral heritage, homelands, and natural ecological attachments to unify Indigenous peoples against the continual violence endorsed by the settler state. Indigenous relationships to time also involve establishing a pre-contact temporal marker. This is because Indigeneity existed before contact was made with white colonists and has existed differently since. Furthermore, this is also because Indigeneity cannot be reduced to the event of colonialization.

Indigenousness need be understood in relation to “particular geographical locations in opposition to settler societies and state formations originating in Europe and other centres of empire” (Kolia, 2016, p. 4). Understanding Indigenousness in relation to place-based identity that is not reduced to colonial notions of time (“homogenous empty time”) makes space for relationships with temporality that engage with pre-contact history. Taiaiake Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005) argue that such a temporality calls for an emphasis on ancestral heritage, homelands, and natural ecological attachments to unify Indigenous peoples against the continual violence endorsed by the settler state.

Although Indigenous communities are not homogenous in the ways they live with time, a common thread emerges that connects these communities’ experiences with time to nature. Some Indigenous communities look to the sky as a calendar, giving insight to when it is time to move to

a new place or to find a new food supply. The stars are also used to show people how to live on Earth. Some believe the stars are homes of ancestors, animals, plants, and spirits. The changing of seasons is another marker for time within Indigenous communities. For example, “It is this relationship between the sky, people, and country that enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to thrive with the Australian landscape, harvesting what they need and ensuring sustainability for future generations” (Australian government, n.d., para. 3). This is one of many examples of the ways in which the Earth and its organic matter are connected to Indigenous relationships to time. Admittedly, my feelings of inadequacy in attempting to contextualize Indigenous time leads me to acknowledge how my own thinking is entrenched in colonial logics.

Last lingering thoughts draw me back to the inadequacies of capitalism in relation to time. Butler and Athanasiou (2013) note, “liberal colonial power has depended on the constitution of subjectivities” (p. 30). Furthermore, contemporary neoliberal power, as a measure of profit extraction, ensures indoctrinating independent subjects with normative fantasies of the “good life,” which Butler and Athanasiou (2013) describe as, “a life defined, for instance, by property ownership, commodity fetishism, consumer excitement, securitarian regimes, national belonging, bourgeois self-fashioning, and biopolitical normalcy” (p. 30-31). This notion of “the good life” draws me back to my interview with Arafah because he uses these very words. Continuing with the excerpt above from the interview I conducted with Arafah, he reflects more on his position as an artist, replying, “Lucky, there’s a way to define the good life. I feel like I’m doing this, I’m living the good life, in terms of not being engaged completely in the system” (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). It seems Arafah understands how lucky he is to have found a

way to live differently, to live outside the system to a degree, to navigate the excesses that capitalism cannot attend to.

Arafah's ability to detach from the larger system, at least within the excesses, is significant when you consider how present-day neoliberal governmentality invests (politically, physically, and economically) in producing and managing forms of life, indoctrinating the construction of one's life, "while shattering and economically depleting certain livelihoods, foreclosing them, rendering them disposable and perishable" (Butler & Athanasiou, 2013, p. 31). Lives rendered disposable and perishable, in turn, become more disposable when unable to do what it takes to be a "productive" member of society. Capitalism creates a viscous cycle whereby subjects must subject themselves to master-slave like conditions while striving one's entire life for "the good life," to only find out that it is (*sometimes, always*) unachievable. The ability to live outside the system, and to work within the excesses, that is, to work in the "in between," becomes even more complex when you consider the relationship between capitalism and creativity.[59]

I turn to Arafah's work entitled, *Ghassan Kanafani* (2018), to continue my analysis and further contextualize my intertwining of time and temporality. By pedagogically engaging this

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[59]Benjamin sees the transformations of art as an effect of changes in the economic structure. Art is coming to resemble economic production, albeit at a delayed pace. The movement from contemplation to distraction is creating big changes in how people sense and perceive. Historically, works of art had an 'aura' – an appearance of magical or supernatural force arising from their uniqueness (similar to *mana*). The aura includes a sensory experience of distance between the reader and the work of art. The aura has disappeared in the modern age because art has become reproducible. Think of the way a work of classic literature can be bought cheaply in paperback, or a painting bought as a poster. Think also of newer forms of art, such as TV shows and adverts. Then compare these to the experience of staring at an original work of art in a gallery or visiting a unique historical building. This is the difference Benjamin is trying to capture (McLaverty-Robinson, 2013, para 2 & 3).

stencil drawing I am reinforcing the transformative potential in thinking with aesthetic objects by illustrating the nuances and insights that can emerge through this pedagogical encounter.

Reading Arafah's Ghassan Kanafani

Figure 15

Ghassan Kanafani

Note. Reprinted with permission. By A. Arafah, 2018.

In considering time, specifically the time surrounding 1948, I turn to Arafah's graffiti stencil work, *Ghassan Kanafani* (2018), a portrait of a late Palestinian refugee, author, journalist, and activist. Kanafani, a Palestinian born in Akka (Acre) in 1936, was part of the mass deportation in 1948. Settling in Beirut, Kanafani became an active journalist during the 1960s and is considered a leading novelist in the Arab world. In July of 1972, Kanafani was assassinated in the explosion of his booby-trapped car. In his novella, *All That's Left to You* (2004), written a year before the 1967

Palestinian exodus,[60] Kanafani grapples with time, giving it a character of its own, telling the story of a brother and sister living in Gaza separated from their family over the span of twenty-four hours. Although Arafah's piece may not directly illuminate pre-1948 history, it leads one to read Kanafani and his seminal work, which grapples with ideas outside of the Occupation.

Kanafani's representation of time is embedded in misery and hope – the misery of the past and a hopeful future, with the present both a painful circumstance and an obligation of these two temporal markers. Kanafani (2004) writes,

> Everything in life has proved contrary to a child's expectations. The years have passed slowly and painfully, and on growing up, his family demanded that he repay them for the support they had given him when he was too young to earn a living. Responsibility is in itself a good thing, but the man who endures an impossible obligation has his manhood eroded by the pressure it asserts. Everything presented an obstacle, and everyone he encountered contributed to his load and left him oppressed by a bitter feeling of inadequacy and unfulfillment.[61] (p. 52)

Here, Kanafani speaks to inheritance[62] in terms of coming-of-age family obligations – "debt-deferred promises" (Agathangelou & Killian, 2016), wherein a young adult is indebted to their

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[60] The 1967 Palestinian exodus is the *movement* of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians out of the territories Israel captured.

[61] Here, we see Kanafani use the term *unfulfillment* in relation to experiences with time and debt (having to "repay" his family for their support). This passage exemplifies how experiences with time under capitalist demands produces *unfulfilled* time, "homogenous empty time."

[62]Inheritance refers to property or monetary gifts passed down (passed onto another) after death. It can also refer to the passing down of environmental factors such as climate change or a struggling/thriving economy. Stories are also passed down through generations, and through these stories an ideology is inherited in the sense of cultural and social norms, as well as knowledge and representations (such as colonial knowledge and representations as well as Palestinian diasporic knowledge and representations).

parents for the care given to them during childhood. Rather than speaking to the past in relation to 1948 and the *right of return*, he measures time through temporal markers that signify human development alongside cultural-socio-economic expectations. He gestures to the innocence and naivety of childhood but also to the unwanted expectations of youth and young adulthood – expectations that rupture a young person out of childhood and into a world that demands and expects one is complacent in their role as a socially and economically productive member of society - social and economic productivity founded in historical, social, and cultural norms.

In this excerpt, Kanafani is speaking to a universal temporal marker for indexing and differentiating childhood from adulthood, unproductive from productive, irresponsible from responsible. This indexing adheres to colonial notions of time as linear and progressive. Yet, refugee time, children's time, and Indigenous relationships to time (concepts I explored earlier and/or explore shortly) problematize colonial notions of time.

What helped me think about children's time, and refugee children's time, was Sam Okoth Opondo's (2016) exploration on children's time in relation to the prosaics and nuances of living in a refugee camp. For Okoth Opondo (2016), it is important to consider children's time, specifically suffering children, in a way that does not subject the "adult's imagination of the child's imagination to a humanitarian frame of recognition and its related fabulations, solicitations and prescriptions" (p. 454). Okoth Opondo disavows redemptive narratives by beginning with a short story by E.C. Osondu (2008), offering an account of a child's life in a refugee camp that intertwines children's time, suffering and satire, reflecting on what it is that sustains children living precariously:

> My name is Orlando Zaki. *Orlando* is taken from Orlando, Florida, which is what is written on the t-shirt given to me by the Red Cross. *Zaki* is the name of the town where I was found and from which I was brought to this refugee camp. My friends in the camp are known by the inscriptions written on their t-shirts. Acapulco wears a t-shirt with the inscription, *Acapulco* . . . Some people are lucky: London had a t-shirt that said *London* and is now in London. He's been adopted by a family over there. Maybe I will find a family in Orlando, Florida that will adopt me. (Osondu, 2008, p.1)

Here, Osondu (2008) illuminates the nuances of and connections between precarity, anticipation and the mundane. Stories, such as Orlando Zaki's, illustrate how children living in limbo persist within unsustainable conditions. Again, we see how stories (allegories) are used as sustenance when awaiting return or else when waiting for a new home and new life. "By articulating the entanglements between the anticipatory (proleptic) and everyday (prosaic) dynamics of childhood in the camp, Zaki's introductory remarks highlight the tension between humanitarian time, the time of suffering and survival and the narrator's own biographical time (childhood)" (Okoth Opondo, 2016, p. 205). Children living under diasporic conditions are immersed in and impacted by a multitude of tensions characterized in precarity, anticipation and the mundane.

Thinking further about Zaki's introductory remarks I am reminded of an image by British anonymous artist Banksy. The image is of a black child standing in a very large heap of trash, looking through it, wearing a t-shirt that says: "I hate Mondays." There is an insinuation that the heap of trash is filled with junk from Western countries, such as the infamously American "I hate Mondays" shirt indicates (the concept of hating Mondays rooted in the mechanics of clock and calendar time). Much like Zaki's remarks, Banksy's image highlights the tensions between children's time and the time of suffering and survival, also intertwining an opposing reality filled

with greed and gluttony indicated by the heap of discarded goods dumped in an impoverished community.

Banksy's image plays with children's time and temporality by exposing circumstances that derail and reshape children's time: a child wearing an "I hate Mondays" t-shirt, mimicking Western complaints made by full-time working adults, while a child sifts through another's trash as a means for economic participation, as a means of survival. Circumstances such as famine and war alter experiences with time and temporality, especially in the context of children's experiences. In addition, dire circumstances are understood differently based on maturity and cognitive development, further complicating children's experiences with time and temporality.

Okoth Opondo's (2016) work goes on to articulate the critical perspectives offered by fictional children, foregrounding "ways of 'thinking about the everyday, the customary, and the ordinary' that have aesthetic, ethical as well as political implications for how we think and engage childhood and humanitarianism"[63] (p. 206). How are children impacted by humanitarian aid and the prosaics of waiting? Receiving humanitarian aid also requires waiting, further complicating the proleptic and prosaic dynamics of childhood in the camp. I consider the tensions around waiting for humanitarian aid alongside waiting for something else (a life outside of the camp, the *right of return*) as a dual waiting and ask: how might children's time be experienced under circumstances of dual waiting? Notably, Okoth Opondo's (2016) writing is also highlighting how displaced children experience time contrary to expectations embedded in colonial clock and calendar time

[63] See Morson & Emerson (1990), p. 15; Mbembe (1992), p. 128.

and how "emergencies" that must be addressed "now" are confounded by the very act of waiting and the embodied experience of children's time. I wonder, could children's time within the diaspora be indicative of the loss of childhood? What type of loss is inserted into "one's sense of time" when waiting on humanitarian aid is necessary for survival?

I consider this question and return to an earlier one, how might time be experienced for children whose environment is riddled with subjugation and the insidious ever-present nature of waiting? I believe that children respond through their own arenas of action whereby they organize and maintain adult responsibilities (such as work and protest) alongside childhood play and make believe. The cognitive development of children nurtures innocence. Much like other kids, children in the camp also get swept up in fantasy, fairy tale and mystery. Although the camp imposes restrictions, waiting, and precarity onto childhood, the resiliency of children is revealed in what it is that sustains children living precariously which include, but are not limited to: other children, play, caring for younger siblings, work (e.g. the story behind Banksy's image), protest (children in Palestine throwing rocks at military vehicles), fantasizing about the future, allegories, and a shared pedagogy that centers around *right of return* sentiment.

Returning to thoughts on the rupture from childhood to adulthood, Kanafani (2004) suggests an abandonment of innocence and "re-imagining an elsewhere" (Martineau & Ritskes, 2014); reconstituting a time-to-come:

> I had lived for a future devoid of fear. I used to go hungry in the hope of better days to come. I wanted so much to reach that day in the future, and the insignificance of my life was informed only by the profound hope that heaven was not boundless in its cruelty; and that the child on whose lips the smile of

> security had died one day would not spend his entire life scattered like an October cloud, grey like a valley riddled with mist, and lost like a sun which cannot break through the obscuring horizon. (p. 52)

Kanafani (2004) continues speaking on time, gesturing towards a hopeful future amidst the misery of present unwanted obligations:

> Despite all this, I used to tell myself: ‘Patience, boy! You are still on the threshold of life. Tomorrow, or in the near future, a new sun will rise. Aren’t you struggling for the sake of that day? And when it arrives, you will be proud that you have built it with your own nails from the foundation to the top.’ (p. 52)

The above is conveyed through a monologue piece, written almost as a reverse eulogy, by which the writer addresses loved ones attending the writer’s own funeral. When I think of someone feeling as though they are “on the threshold of life” I think of youth and young adulthood. I understand the sentence “Tomorrow, or in the near future, a new sun will rise” as signifying hope, orientating the speaker to a future worth investing in. The two sentences that follow discuss the difficult realization manifested in teenagerhood and erupting in adulthood, that life is messy, at times disappointing, at times rewarding. I believe Kanafani is speaking not only to the Palestinian plight but to universal coming-of-age experiences. Could the struggle for “the sake of that day” be referring to the long-awaited day when the Palestinian territories are returned to people native to the land (Palestinians)? Might building “that day” refer to rebuilding/ re-cultivating Palestinian land, infrastructure, nationhood, and sovereignty? Are these the “debt deferred promises” that Agathangelou and Killian (2016) are referring to? Arafah’s *Ghassan Kanafani* (2018) is both a reminder of the Nakba and the elusive ubiquitous realities of time and temporality. Afterall,

Ghassan Kanafani is a portrait of a prominent refugee whose *movements* are moments of rupture, reminding us how geo-political and bio-political warfare includes ensuring refugees are (*sometimes, always*) *moving* and *unmoved* within a permanent temporality that never quite asserts what the next *move*, or time of stagnation, might look like. What Arafah's stencil drawing depicts is an effective medium that creates an affective response wherein a person is *moved* by looking with this image while thinking about what he represents to the Palestinian community. I believe this type of pedagogic encounter can summon the call for democratic and political freedom by confronting "the sense of time" under the Occupation.

I consider artist Abu Ayyash's own negotiations with "the sense of time" under the Occupation. By exploring how Abu Ayyash grapples with "the sense of time" I am continuing to expose the mercilessness of life under the Occupation, revealing how one's relationship to time is significantly obscured and manipulated by the conditions of the Occupation.

Grappling with "The Sense of Time" Under the Occupation: Artist Abu Ayyash

While on the topic of his work as a graffiti artist and calligraffiti artist, Abu Ayyash explains to me how graffiti has changed over the years, since the advent of the internet, Palestinian TV, newspapers, and magazines. He tells me that less activists use the wall for direct messages because these platforms have created space for are other ways to communicate. And yet, the Wall certainly does not go untouched. Abu Ayyash acknowledges the Wall as a space still inscribed on by graffiti artists but, with a sense of disappointment, suggests motives have changed. "… the wall became like Mecca for graffiti artists all over the world. Just to come to the West Bank and do graffiti."

After a brief pause so Abu Ayyash can quickly take another phone call, he continues, “Nobody likes the wall in general but since its there many people are using it to advertise their work. Like, for commercial stuff. You can see posters on it. Billboards, etcetera. You can see some childish graffiti and, the sad thing is, you can see really good graffiti on it, mostly done by the internationals. [The internationals] are trying to sell themselves and to put themselves on the spot” (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Thinking with what Abu Ayyash has said, I am reminded of photos I saw online a few years ago of tourists taking selfies with the Wall. The backdrop in these selfies usually included capturing an inscription from the Wall; a message that the respective travellers found particularly powerful.

Abu Ayyash has described the changing times of graffiti, wherein the Wall has become a vast space for international artists to represent their work, advertise their work, to be made visible under the guise of activism. I wonder, what makes an act, an act of activism? Can art inscribed on the Wall be activism if the maker of that inscription is solely interested in becoming noticed? Would artists travel from all over the world to inscribe on the Wall if social media did not exist? These questions make me curious about what the Wall will look like, *in time*.

Thinking further on Abu Ayyash’s insights into the Wall as an advertising platform, I am confronted by how contemporary graffiti, an artform that opposes the establishment and powerholders, is (*sometimes, always*) subsumed/consumed by capitalism. Acknowledging again that the relationship between art and capitalism is out of the scope of my project, I find myself being drawn back into to its persistent presence.

Seeing the ubiquitous impact of capitalism developed within colonial notions of time, and thinking more with Indigenous relationships to time, I am drawn to consider the significance of establishing a pre-contact temporal marker. This marker does not illustrate authenticity - the very search for the "authentic Indian" (Nanibush, 2016) is located in racist, colonial ideology and (mis)representations of Indigeneity, and does not recognize the realities of temporality – rather, it attends to a space before the rupture, a space outside of subjugation enacted through settler colonial violence. It effectively whitewashes and delimits a reckoning with the violence of colonial contact. My thinking with Indigenous relationships to time alongside "the sense of time" under the Occupation inspires my turn to consider the notion of refugee time.

Adam Ramadan (2012) describes refugee status as "an embodiment of this liminal temporality, not a normal life to be lived but an enduring struggle for survival and return to a time and place of meaning" (p. 73). Refugee status, in Ramadan's terms, consists of a relationship with a time of the past within the present. I wonder, how might one negotiate a time of the past, a time when things were better, during a present moment wherein time stands still? Maybe the present does not always stand still, maybe remembrance practices, family ties, and social responsibilities rupture present time into fragments of moments, moments that stand still and moments of movement.

Thinking on movement summons me to think on the formation of refugee camps. Refugee camps do not exist in separation from Palestinians, but rather the camps are molded, becoming temporary sites that establish and intertwine Palestinian identity with an understanding of the temporality of the site. "The refugee camps are *in* Lebanon but not *of* Lebanon, located on

Lebanese territory in the present day, but drawing meaning from a separate Palestinian time-space" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 73).[64] The symbols, objects and allegories that make meaning during the Occupation, that build a shared pedagogy and collective memory, are re-established and reinvented as time in exile lengthens, in order to maintain a connection to an already distant place and time (cf. Harker, 2009). It is my understanding that refugee time is "an enduring struggle for survival and return to a time and place of meaning" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 73), marked and made meaningful through the establishment of significant symbols, objects and allegories, a reflection of the temporality of the site.

A common thread that ties refugee communities together is the notion that time in the camp is not linear and progressive. The unique qualities that define different refugee communities cannot squelch this tie. This is not to say that "homogenous empty time" never takes shape within the camp. An example of this includes time spent waiting on humanitarian aid, even so far as the time spent waiting *in line* for humanitarian aid. Yet, time is overwhelmingly non-linear and does not progress (in conventional colonial terms) inside the camp.

Echoing my reflective approach to analyzing artworks, I interpret Abu Ayyash's graffiti piece (figure 16) in relation to "the sense of time" under the Occupation. A sense of urgency in

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[64] "The symbolic landscape of the camp constantly references places and symbols of Palestine: the flag, the map, the Dome of the Rock mosque in Jerusalem, the key and the *kuffiyeh* (scarf) of the peasant farmer working the land (Ramadan, 2009). Libraries in the camps contain whole archives of information about every different area of Palestine, with detailed maps and books about individual villages and towns" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 73).

eradicating Israel's use of brutality and control over Palestine unfolds within my analysis of a very daunting and visceral graffiti piece.

Reading Abu Ayyash's My Intestines Declare My Identity

Figure 16

My Intestines Declare My Identity

Note. Reprinted with permission. By H. Abu Ayyash, 2012.

Abu Ayyash's *My Intestines Declare My Identity* (2012) is an image of a muscular human figure, presumably of Palestinian descent, kneeling down in agony, hands clutching their head, guts shooting out of their abdomen. The words next to the figure read: "My intestines declare my identity." This graffiti piece is located on a wall across from a parking lot for Bethlehem University. Here, we see how Abu Ayyash engages in a collaborative use of text with image. The text is not a direct quote of Abu Ayyash's, however. These are the words of Palestinian Nayef Bazzar who, according to Abu Ayyash, was imprisoned at the age of sixteen in an Israeli jail for six years. The guts in figure 16 are in the shape of Palestine.

I am drawn to consider the significance of Nayef Bazzar as the inspiration for Abu Ayyash's piece. At the young age of sixteen, Bazzar was imprisoned for six years for resisting the IDF by throwing stones at the military officers. Bazzar got *six years* in prison for throwing stones. I wonder, what does it do the formation of identity when one spends their adolescence imprisoned? Furthermore, how is "one's sense of time" complicated by imprisonment during the formative years of adolescence?

Abu Ayyash conveys identity within this piece by exposing the guts of Palestinians. I wonder whether the motivation (for creating this piece) is to navigate "the sense of time" under the Occupation by questioning Palestinian futurities. Might this piece summon notions of injustice and despair when considering an adolescent spent six years in jail for throwing stones as a form of defense against soldiers with guns and ammunition? Might it allude to the stagnation of time (due to the daily practices embedded in the prison-industrial complex) or time as stolen? Or else, is the motivation to uncover how the identity of many Palestinians have been shaped and maintained by the conditions of their Occupation to the point where identity is consumed by circumstance? This is not meant to suggest that all Palestinian's experience dispossession the same or that Palestinians have not been able to shape their personal and cultural identity outside of these conditions. Hence, maybe this analysis is too simplistic. Could it be, rather, that the fight for the *right of return* is so deeply entrenched in the personal and cultural identity of so many Palestinians that it encompasses their entire being? Not in that the fight for the *right of return* is a Palestinian's only source of identity. Rather, I am suggesting that Abu Ayyash might be gesturing toward the notion that this fight is a meaningful, powerful, significant force in the formation of identity. Also, that the

formation of identity is complicated because "people's sense of time" under the Occupation is riddled with tensions between past/present/future; "a sense of time" wherein time is under siege and unpredictable. Potentially, Abu Ayyash's sentiment around this fight is what establishes his artistic and political motivation.

Encountering the object (artwork) alongside thoughts on cultural identity, I think about how this piece evokes what Vamik Volkan (1996) describes as "chosen trauma" (as cited in Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 160). Volkan speaks of historically traumatic events that become "chosen trauma," insofar as they are reworked/remembered by the group to relegitimate and reestablish its identity" (Di Paolantonio, 2000, p. 160). Maybe Abu Ayyash's *My Intestines Declare My Identity* (2012) exemplifies the ways in which political aesthetic practices and *art that resists* can be a vehicle to rework/remember "chosen trauma" to relegitimate and re-establish Palestinian identity.

In our interview, Abu Ayyash speaks on the factors that motivate him and contribute to his work while also gesturing towards factors that contribute to the shaping of identity:

> I can say that the Occupation gave me a motive to push more and I had this creative tool of illustrating ideas into a visual message. So, in a way, it's just a tool in my hand and since I live in this situation. I know how to translate the situation. I have a way to say that I'm here and to say anything against, with, or anything about it. So, the Occupation, sorry for my language but I fucking hate the Occupation. It's also occupying what I do! I can't even think with a clear beautiful image without having the Occupation in a way occupying my idea and trying to resist it even in my artwork. I dream of a day where I can just go paint a tree just for a tree, not for the symbol of the tree. So, it even occupies the creative mind and we are fighting, we have inner conflicts between being purely creative and being creative with a message against the beast. (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

I am overwhelmed by the ideas and images this one excerpt evokes which is why it appears more than once in my project. I am most struck by Abu Ayyash's description of the Occupation and the powerful actors involved in maintaining Occupation as "the beast." Visualizing such beast-like characteristics, a non-human creature whose physicality is exaggeratedly large, hairy, with deadly claws and teeth comes to mind. Imagining an encounter with a beast insights fear. The thought of living next to and under a beast's control makes me feel helpless, angry, and anxious – as if I need to be prepared to fight the beast at any given moment. Yet, I am almost certain that eventually I would become used to the beast's presence, no matter how much I hate it. I think I would try and learn the movements of the beast so to try and avoid it. But, once the beast decides to sink its teeth into my skin, no matter how prepared I am, I fear the beast would win. Hence, although I could live next door to the beast and maintain some sense of normalcy, there will always be a part of me waiting for the beast to attack, knowing that its bite might be too deep to survive. Or else, that its bite might profoundly reshape my existence.

Arguably, visualizing a beast evokes different feelings compared to visualizing the sea or a tree. Wherein one may conjure fear, the other may summon tranquility. Even though one symbol might evoke fear whereas another peace, there is a common thread that reverberates between the visual of the beast, the sea, or a tree when inscribed in the Occupied territories. This is because of the politically charged environment of the artist, and the observer's perception of that environment. Once the image takes shape, an exchange between artist and observer materializes, wherein the

artwork is reconceptualized within the consciousness and worldview[65] of the observer. Reducing Palestinian artworks (such as the tree) to *only and always* symbolizing loss or resurgence, to *only and always* being political, limits artistic creativity. Recognizing this limitation is what occupies Abu Ayyash's creative mind. When reduced to an event, painting a tree can become burdening. Reducing Palestinian artist's creativity to the Occupation can be dehumanizing or advantageous. On the other hand, reconceptualizing the tree into a political symbol can also serve the interests of the Palestinian community because it aids in maintaining and strengthening a unified collective memory.

Whether perceived as the former or the latter, again dependent upon the observer's subjective response to the image, artist's living in Palestine may have no other choice but to navigate this dichotomy. For Darwish, the burden of having to take up suffering within one's art is an unavoidable quandary: "Palestinian writers, like the rest of their fellow citizens, cannot avoid this suffering and cannot avoid being impacted by politics and participating in it in some level" (as cited in Mattawa, 2014, p. 160). For Darwish, participation, as reductive as it may be, is the only option. For Abu Ayyash, no real *option* exists. Palestinian artists are plagued by having all actions, all performances, all works of art perceived as a political endeavor. I wonder, what is at stake in "one's sense of time" when creative exercises are subsumed/consumed by the Occupation?

Having developed my thoughts from thinking with artist Abu Ayyash's image, I turn to consider how artist Abdel Hamid reconciles "the sense of time" under the Occupation. In

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[65] See Berger et. al. (1972), theory "ways of seeing" and Rose's (2001), visual methodologies.

particular, I reconsider the notion of inheritance. In considering how lives can be augmented and overwhelmed by inheritance (for example, inheriting a land that brings both nourishment and imprisonment), the notion that one might also be reduced to that which they inherit emerges as a point of contempt for Abdel Hamid.

Grappling with "The Sense of Time" Under the Occupation: Artist Abdel Hamid

Talking about the importance of separating work from activism, Abdel Hamid talks about how being an activist is important to him but also how activism itself can become entangled in destructive and reductive patterns. "Because I'm Palestinian I'm… exotic to a certain degree in a very perversive way because, you know, like [Palestine] is the hot spot in the world and, in the same time… I try my best not to be reduced only to a geopolitical entity." Abdel Hamid then begins to talk about relevancy, and what will happen to the relevancy of Palestinians, but "relevant, not in terms of legacy" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). I am interested in Abdel Hamid's concern around being reduced to a geopolitical event and the notion of becoming irrelevant. Being reduced to an event is something I am aware of in my writing about the Occupation and is something I try to avoid, and yet because of my outsider position I am not sure if I have done Abdel Hamid and the other artists justice.

Thinking about Abdel Hamid's untangling of relevancy from legacy makes me think on stories of the Nakba passed down to new generations as a form of inheritance. I am drawn to a story told by Ahmad Hammash,

> As a Palestinian refugee, I grew up in a refugee camp where all the stories and narrations you hear around you are about the right of return and the case of refugees. You grow up in a refugee camp with a passion and loyalty towards the case of Palestinian refugees (…). The case of return is the major story in Palestinian refugee camps. I'm now talking about the old generation that lived during the Nakba, who felt the responsibility of talking about the Nakba, of talking about the original villages that they were displaced from. And the most important part is that you not only listen to or tell stories about your own village but about other villages as well. Because a refugee camp is a combination of people that came from different villages. So most of the stories that you hear are about return, and funny things that happened during the Nakba. Like the hope that the old generation, my grandfather's generation held, the hope that they still have to return to their villages. (Vadasaria, 2018, p. 146)

Stories, images, and representations (allegories) of the past, specifically, of past injury, have been passed down generation to generation, inherited by generations proceeding the Nakba. This inheritance establishes a future that is riddled by past injury. For some such as Abdel Hamid, stories birthed in past injury provide limited space to orient oneself with a future beyond the *right of return*.

In our interview, I ask Abdel Hamid if this interview itself is hindering notions of Palestinian futurity and reducing Palestinians to an event. He kindly assures me that this is not always the case when talking about Palestine and how he wants Palestinians to be understood as experiencing an unrelenting, unjust Occupation but not reducing Palestinians to this event. For Abdel Hamid, being reduced to the Nakba and the Occupation is a form of survival, a coping mechanism: "… if you're under stress or you're going through shit basically, then you have to convince yourself that there's something special about you and it's a survival mechanism, you need it" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Yet, for Abdel Hamid,

there is nothing special about the Occupation because "people are suffering everywhere" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Abdel Hamid continues, and I am overcome with a sense of shock when he refers to Palestinians as "lucky," comparing the Palestinian plight to Indigenous communities in Canada. "[Indigenous people] have been wiped out. A lot of people have been wiped out in the world. Because it's more recent, [Palestinians] managed to survive and that's great because otherwise we would have vanished" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). For me, Abdel Hamid's gesture is emblematic of radical subjectivity.

Maybe what Abdel Hamid is getting at are the (mis)representations of Palestinians. My thinking is about how Palestinians are misrepresented as figures of the past, hindering Palestinian futurity from moving beyond the *right of return*. Palestinians have inherited a future in which the sole aim is to recapture the past, a future reduced to an event. Abdel Hamid continues to point out that this is problematic for him: "I want to be an artist and then Palestinian, not the other way around. My idea is not to escape being Palestinian or to be something else, but [at] the same time I don't want to be strictly Palestinian. I don't want to be Palestinian as a profession (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). I see the notion of "Palestinian as a profession" as a form of inheritance. I imagine it is difficult to reconcile the emotional and physical burden of inheritance, particularly when it is unwanted. I wonder whether Vizenor's "survivance" gives inherited time the space it needs to transform from manifesting burdens to reclaiming place. Must Palestinians commit to Vizenor's survivance or else be swept up in subjugation?

With the significance of critical pedagogic encounters in mind, I turn to Abdel Hamid's artwork, *Hourglass* (2012), and provide my own reflective interpretation of how his artwork grapples with time and temporality.

Reading Abdel Hamid's Hourglass

Figure 17

Hourglass

Note. Reprinted with permission. By M. Abdel Hamid, 2012.

Hourglass (2012) is a sculpture of seventeen hourglasses. The powder in the hourglass is a mixture of sand grains and crushed cement bits chipped off the Separation Wall that runs along the Palestine-Israel border in the West Bank (Abdel Hamid, 2016). The hourglass, an enduring symbol of time and a keeper of time, represents the present as in-between the past and future. Yet, the messiness of the grains suggests an overlapping between the three periods of time. At first, the hourglass appears to adhere to linear notions of time as the sand and cement bits gently move from the top to the bottom, sifting through the narrow neck, unable to defy gravity. But, at some point

there are no more grains left to fall through the neck of the hourglass and the bits of cement and grains end up in one large heap. Time stops moving - until you turn the hourglass over and repeat the process. The grains fall again, messy, in a heap, no indication of what grains fell first. The crushed cement bits mixed in highlighting the tensions between time and Occupation, time and awaiting. I understand *Hourglass* (2012), and the grains that fall into disorganization, to represent alternative theories of time that intertwine temporality and discredit linearity, creating space to understand the conditions that bind Palestinians to the past and present.

Speaking on temporality, Shaira Vadasaria (2018) wonders how we might account for the ways Palestinians navigate the self in relation to the boundaries and incongruencies of other temporalities (p. 32). For Vadasaria (2018),

> …the identity category "refugee" – in its discursive formation – often signals to a temporal reading of the past. The political identity of the "refugee" and specifically the "Palestinian refugee" often comes to be represented as a figure of the past – a precarious subject produced through forced expulsion or coerced migration and periodized around two moments: 1948 and 1967. These representations rely on imaginings of *past* injury as a temporal marker for indexing the political identity of refugees in the present. (p. 32)

The present identity of Palestinian refugees is wrapped up in, and understood through, temporal markers that signify *past* injury, inducing a problematic representation of the Palestinian as a figure of the past. The story of Ghalayani's grandfather in Chapter Two also illustrates representations of Palestinian futurity as rooted in *past* injury as if inescapable, as if to suggest Palestinian futurity is only and always about returning to and reproducing the past. Reducing Palestinian futurity to the *right of return* further complicates how one negotiates what life might look like upon return;

what "the *afterlife* of return" (Vadasaria, 2018, p. 32, emphasis in original) might look like. "The *afterlife* of return" resembles a sense of picking-up-where-one-left-off to a generation that only knows the past through allegories, the present as an awaiting, and the future as a recapturing. What happens after the recapturing? What might "the *afterlife* of return" look like?

Returning to *Refugees of the Revolution: Experiences of Exile*, Allen (2014) writes,

> Much has been written on the way refugees relate to the past, and very little on how they orient themselves to the future. Barred as they are from ordinary means of personal development and advancement, how do they remain invested in the future? What generates for them a sense of hope and prospective momentum? (p. 31)

Vadasaria (2018) echoes Allen's observation above regarding the subjugation of Palestinian representation, arguing that by limiting Palestinians to the past one dismisses the idea of a Palestinian future worth investing in.

My eyes return to Abdel Hamid's sculpture of seventeen hourglasses. For many of them, grains and bits move slowly through the glass necks. For the rest, time has stopped. Whenever an hourglass is turned over, time starts up again. Or else, a rupture in time occurs - time was moving from one point and now from another, an earlier point, or maybe a later point; abruptly starting at the beginning again or else moving backwards from the end. I see these hourglasses as a representation of indexing through temporal markers, temporal markers that reduce Palestinians to two events: the Nakba and the granting of the *right of return* – an event that is yet to happen, the time in the middle a muddled consequence of these two moments. The grains and bits begin falling in 1948 and land in a heap at the end to signify the moment of return.

For those living under the Occupation, might these hourglasses represent temporality and time embodied in the sense that time moves and then stops moving, only to start moving again from a muddled and precarious moment *in* time, creating more muddled and precarious moments *of* time? Maybe these hourglasses represent the autopilot that Abdel Hamid is referring to when he notes,

> In Ramallah it's so… if you live there for a long time it kind of feels like a sensory deprivation unit. Not the one that maybe rich people buy and put in their homes. More of the neurotic one. So, it's not exactly great for work 'cause everything is on autopilot with the senses. (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

In the spirit of thinking on what it means to live on "autopilot," I see *Hourglass* (2012) as representing a life in limbo. It presents time as an individual and collective experience. In relation to the Occupation, time is a waiting game. *Hourglass* (2012) gestures toward a feeling that one is waiting on life to move forward, not in a linear sense but in a way that shapes and reshapes time, awaiting resurgence. Might *Hourglass* (2012) disobey expectations around waiting; disobey living a life in limbo; problematize anxieties embedded in always waiting? Might it also reflect an opportunity for resurgence, an opportunity to experience embodied time outside of the confines of waiting and to reconsider what it means to be in time? As I stare at the image of seventeen hourglasses moving and stopped, I think how this would make just about anyone anxious.

Thinking on feelings of anxiousness alongside experiences with abject loss, throughout my project I gravitate toward resurgence practices that summon a sense of moving beyond shared commitments to *right of return* sentiment. This is not in an effort to reject the *right of return*

mission. Rather, by rearticulating otherness that makes space for moving outside of "we intentions," what transpires are opportunities to acknowledge diverse identities. By acknowledging narratives otherwise excluded, otherness is better understood and ethical commitments to otherness might, in turn, reduce anxiety by recognizing and recovering diversity within the imaginary.

Mario Di Paolantonio (2001) helped me think through the sense of anxiety that comes with the resurfacing of the abject in his discussions on the problematics of "we intentions" noting,

> to the extent that the group's imaginary homogeneity/integrity (ego) becomes vulnerable to disintegration (loss), a state of anxiety takes hold. Anxiety, of course, is more frightening than fear; for whereas 'fear requires a definite object of which to be afraid' (Freud, 1920, p. 282), the state of anxiety (as fright) lacks a definite object (Freud, 1923, p. 399). (Di Paolantonio, 2001, p. 447)

Conceptualizing this dichotomy within the Palestinian experience, the definite object feared by Palestinians is Israel. However, the lack of a definite object exists in parallel in terms of how Palestinians imagine "worlds otherwise," worlds unknown, evoking excitement and fright. Returning to the image of seventeen hourglasses, moving and stopped, this installation piece reflects the diverse embodied experiences with an anxiety that has persisted within collective memory practices for over sixty years. This leads me to question how embodied experiences with persistent anxiety get taken up within "the sense of time" and temporality.

For instance, might *Hourglass* (2012) gesture towards ideas of disobedience or resurgence in relation to embodied time? I wonder whether the seventeen hourglasses, both moving and

stopped, represent one experience with time rather than seventeen; embodiment reflected in the idea that one individual person can experience a multitude of moments in time, simultaneously and spontaneously. In this case, affect may be represented in each individual hourglass, the experienced affect dependent upon the experience with each given moment. Furthermore, might Abdel Hamid's *Hourglass* (2012) expose the underbelly of collective memory in relation to time: each hourglass represents the inability to align time collectively, and thus each experience with time is different, unable to fully conform to the shared commitments that are upheld within the cultural imaginary.

Thinking about *Hourglass*'s (2012) traversing relationship with time my mind wanders, and I find myself thinking about the Sea again. I am thinking about water, and I am thinking again about Yon's discussion on the *movements* of the sea. Just as the sea water *moves* along the shore, just as sand and cement bits *move* through the hourglasses, so do refugees *move* from place to place, *moved* between one policy to the next, *moved* from the front of the humanitarian gatekeeper's filing cabinet to the back. The refugee is (*sometimes, always*) *moving* or being *moved*. In terms of Abdel Hamid's concerns on relevancy, one might ask: how are refugees *moved* in terms of their perceived relevancy? Or else, how are refugees forced into motionlessness; *unmoving*, stagnant because they are confined to the camp parameters? Thinking with these questions, I also wonder whether *Hourglass* (2012) reveals how, even if Palestinian resistance fails (stops) in the present, it will be redeemed by a future *movement* (a restarting)?

To end my reflection on *Hourglass* (2012), I consider how these seventeen hourglasses represent time as inheritance – the inheritance of past injury and a future *right of return*, bringing

along with it the anxieties embedded in expectation and obligation? Or else, do these seventeen hourglasses represent the bleak idea that no matter whose time is being measured, they will all eventually end up in the same heap, molded by unescapable enviro-political factors? In a third scenario, might *Hourglass* (2012) be disobeying linear, progressive notions of time?

Abdel Hamid's artwork suspends prescriptive expectations of time, suggesting there is no clear beginning, middle and end. *Hourglass* (2012) highlights the prosaics of waiting and the inconceivable experiences with embodiment bounded by the realities of intertwining cognition and temporality by asking us to rethink our connection with time and by revealing the ways in which colonial clock and calendar time are hindering our ability to engage meaningfully in time. Abdel Hamid work illustrates the ways in which art pushes through the confines of the colonial imaginary, imagining "worlds otherwise;" worlds that reclaim and reconsider diverse relationships with time.

In this Chapter, I provided an exploration on "the sense of time" under the Occupation through the literature I drew upon and through my analysis of the respective artworks and interviews I conducted with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid. Having traversed such a complex subject while understanding there is still so much more to be learned from thinking with these artists, I move to the last Chapter and provide my conclusionary findings. By examining the interviews I conducted with these three artists along with their artwork, I have been given a much more profound illustration of what it means to live under the Occupation as both an artist and a Palestinian. In turn, this examination has provided me the tools to grasp how pedagogical

engagements with aesthetic objects have transformative potential, encouraging alternative ways of thinking including thinking “worlds otherwise.”

Conclusion: Thinking Through Notions of Perseverance and Resistance

I wanted to live outside the History that Empire imposes on its subjects.
- J.M. Coetze, Waiting for the Barbarians

It is with great relief and a heavy heart that I move to conclude my project on how artists Abu Ayyash, Arafah, and Abdel Hamid make art that reveals the nuances of the Occupation and pushes past the confines of the colonial imaginary to imagine "worlds otherwise." This *revealing and pushing* is done by summoning democratic and political freedom through tropes of disobedience and resurgence. Or else, through making *art that resists*. Mobilizing themes that surfaced from my interviews with these three artists, an exploration on dispossession, the economy of suffering, and "the sense of time" - notions rooted in loss - were explored. Analyzing tropes of disobedience and resurgence within these three themes allowed me to wade through the data with greater ease, focusing my attention on areas that explicitly unveil the significance of political aesthetic practices and art as resistance when navigating lived experiences with subjugation. Having worked so closely with the data and the ideas that developed has left me with a sense of emptiness at the thought of this all being over. Echoing sentiments that emerged from my exploration with loss over the course of these chapters, I feel at a loss, as if saying goodbye to a dear friend. Nonetheless, I move forward with my concluding findings.

In this section, I provide final thoughts on the data collected from the interviews I conducted with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid, and their artworks. I also reaffirm how

art has the potential to create transformative moments because art is language. In order to be able to communicate with another, we must find a common language. I understand art as a form of language that is not confined to the barriers that emerge when individuals do not share an oral language. Thus, my project considers alternative epistemologies in Palestine and how they render the Occupation sensible.

Lastly, I use this space to respond to ideas and questions that emerged from my project and from the interviews I conducted with the respective artists. For example, the notion of feeling creatively inspired and tethered by the Occupation is further developed below. In addition, I respond to the question of whether the subaltern can speak, how one perseveres under conditions where one is "being made" dispossessed, and whether existence is resistance.

Before I continue with my project's summary, and in the spirit of "existence as resistance," I feel I would be remiss not to acknowledge and condemn the most recent May 2021 attacks by Israel, the heaviest Israeli assault against Palestinians since the 2014 attacks on Gaza, which lasted 51 days and killed more than 2,200 Palestinians including over 500 children (Hedges, 2021; Gaza Conflict 2014: 'War crimes by both sides' – UN, 2015).

Thinking with Arafah, Abu Ayyash and Abdel Hamid's artworks, alongside the recent onslaught of bombs sent by Israel is a reminder that this is not a "conflict." This is an assault, an attack, a war on Palestine and Palestinians. Prior to the bombings, for several weeks Israel was attempting to evict Palestinians from their homes in Jerusalem and, during what Muslims consider to be the holiest month of the year, new restrictions were imposed by Israel on Al Aqsa Mosque,

one of the holiest mosques, located in Jerusalem (Lubell, 2021). If that was not enough, the Israeli government and military brought Jewish-Israeli settlers into the Al Aqsa Mosque to bomb and occupy the mosque using tear gas and rubber bullets (Hedges, 2021; Husseini, 2021). Israel's violent and oppressive acts were then responded to with rockets by resistance groups in Palestine such as Hamas (Al-mughrabi & Farrell, 2021). This gave Israel the ammunition it needed to claim self-defence and yet the actions taken by Israel were anything but. "Israel, by employing its military machine against an occupied population that *does not* have mechanized units: an air force, navy, missiles, heavy artillery and command to control, not to mention a US commitment to provide $38 billion dollars in defense aid to Israel over the next decade, is not exercising the right to defend itself. It is carrying out mass murder. It is a war crime" (Hedges, 2021; Spetalnick, 2016). The recent bombings in Palestine by Israel have further secured Israel's strength as an occupying force, ensuring Palestinians remain aware of their occupier's presence and power.

Next, I provide a summary of my project's findings based on the data collected from the interviews I conducted with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid, and their respective artworks. My summary suggests art is a form of language that creates experiences that affect people. Thus, aesthetics has transformative potential. Through pedagogic engagements with art, complex ideas and experiences can be made sensible and space is made to discover new ways to navigate, condemn, or uphold these ideas and experiences.

Summary of Project

Art is language and aesthetic experiences affect people. These are critical points when thinking about the potential for curriculum and pedagogic practices. Because aesthetic experiences affect people and people make up a society, it is reasonable to conclude that society is affected by aesthetic experiences. Furthermore, since society, and the people that make up society, are affected by aesthetic experiences, it is reasonable to suggest that pedagogic engagements with aesthetics has the capacity to render ideas and experiences sensible and tangible. Because of this, I suggest pedagogic encounters with art create space for discovery, nurturing the potential for transformative moments and transformative change; change that is not confined to colonial knowledge and logic.

Specifically, in my project I consider how three artists living in Palestine employ political aesthetic practices by way of resistance and decolonial art practices to navigate, reconcile, and reveal life under the Occupation within the following themes: dispossession, politically induced suffering, and "the sense of time" under the Occupation. My interconnecting of the relationship between dispossession, suffering, and "the sense of time" is established by understanding how these three concepts are rooted in loss.

By examining aesthetics as a vehicle to illuminate complex ideas, generating a space for imagining "worlds otherwise," my project insists there is critical value in overturning neoliberal colonial systems of power that perpetuate the dissemination of violent colonial logic. Transforming the current status quo, a status quo that enables and promotes subjugation, allows for pockets to emerge that generate alternative ways of thinking about what it means to be subjugated and what

it means to live outside of the confines of the colonial imaginary. This is an idea I have explored throughout my project through a pedagogical engagement with, and analysis of, interviews and artworks by Palestinian artists Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid.

Next, I consider how Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid grapple with being both stimulated and shackled by the Occupation and *the right of return*.

Inspired and Tethered by the *Right of Return*

Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid all spoke of the creative impact the Occupation has had on their work as artists. All three artists to varying degrees described how their circumstances have been an inspiration and a hinderance. Abdel Hamid, in particular, vocalized how his art is hindered when Palestinians are "reduced to a geo-political entity" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). This type of fetishizing or romanticizing of Palestinians (two terms also used by Abdel Hamid) has caused Abdel Hamid to stop doing a lot of exhibits and interviews that are more interested in his being Palestinian than his work as an artist.

For Arafah, art renders complex notions around identity sensible and is a process that involves him embracing practices that enable reflection and discovery. The need to render identity sensible is, in part, a response to the tethering of Palestinian futurities. Yet, whatever he creates, no matter the intention, it will to some degree be viewed within a political context. "So, some media, they ask me if I do political art or not. I always say if I do, uhm, if I draw a butterfly, that would be [given] a political context as well because where I'm from, what identity that the media gave to me, where I grew up, the situation I'm living, that gives it a political [context]. So… this

political statement, it's already there. Whatever I will do, political or not" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). Arafah echoes similar sentiments to Abdel Hamid, recognizing that his art is inherently political due to his being Palestinian.

Another example of the influence one's environment has over how one is perceived as an artist emerged from a story Arafah told me. When he was fourteen years old, he was asked to paint murals on the walls of the school he attended. Reflecting on those murals, he describes how colorful they were and how they depicted nature and villages and how, because of the political situation, even paintings of nature and villages became political because these were murals of "the villages that people wish to return back [to]" (A. Arafah, personal communication, August 16, 2018). If I were to walk past these murals in Toronto, Canada, I might see an unfamiliar place and wonder who lives there – wherever *there* might be. For those living as refugees in Palestine, these murals represent something very different. They represent a time lost; a time so many Palestinians long to return to; a homesickness for a home to which they cannot return.

Having one's creative exercises be inherently constrained to their geo-political identity is in fact a common sentiment among all three artists. Abu Ayyash, also describes the tension he encounters between feeling creatively inspired versus tethered, stating, "I can say that occupation gave me a motive to push more, and I had this creative tool of illustrating ideas into a visual message. So, in a way, it's just a tool in my hand and since I live in this situation, I know how to translate the situation. I have a way to say that I'm here and to say anything against, with, or about it. So, the Occupation, sorry for my language but I fucking hate the Occupation. It's also occupying what I do! Like, I can't even think with a clear beautiful image without having the occupation is a

way occupying my idea and trying to resist it even in my artwork. I dream of a day where I can just go paint a tree just for a tree, not for the symbol of a tree. So, [the Occupation] even occupies the creative mind and we are fighting, we have inner conflicts between being purely creative and being creative with a message against the beast" (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018). This is now the third time I have referred to this excerpt from our interview because it illustrates so many different nuances and complexities of living as an artist who is also living under the Occupation. For Abu Ayyash, the trouble lies not only in freeing the body, but in freeing the mind as well.

Although the interviews with Arafah, Abu Ayyash, and Abdel Hamid took shape in very different ways, a common thread between the three was that there is an existing tension as a Palestinian artist to reconcile being creatively inspired and tethered by their geo-political circumstance. Each artist was compelled to speak on this even at times when the subject did not necessarily seem to fit with what I was asking. It is with this in mind that this topic re-emerges as a conclusionary thought.

I move to consider three questions posed in earlier chapters. These questions speak to main concerns that emerged from the interviews I conducted with the respective artists. First, I return to Spivak and Said to address the question: *Can the Subaltern speak*? This is significant because it reveals the pejorative, oppressive and condescending image of the East created by the West (Said, 1978).

Responding to Posed Questions

I begin this section by considering how Palestinian refugee camps outside of Palestine are organized so to re-address Spivak's illustrious question, presented in my introduction: *Can the Subaltern speak*?

Can the Subaltern Speak?

When thinking with this question, I am drawn to consider a notable emphasis made by Ramadan (2012) regarding the organization of Palestinian refugee camps outside of Palestine. Exploring the organization of Palestinian refugee camps helped me think about how Palestinian agency, disobedience, and resurgence practices are echoed in the organic formations of camps. Speaking on refugee camps in Lebanon, Ramadan (2012) notes, "the camps were not officially planned and organised spaces but grew organically with the exiled Palestinian society, each making, sustaining and perpetuating the other" (Ramadan, 2012, p. 74). Before reading this passage, I envisioned a camp established by the United Nations Human Rights Commission (UNHCR). Upon learning that these camps in Lebanon were formed by Palestinian refugees and not a government body or human rights organization, I have a better understanding of the challenges in mobilizing Giorgio Agamben's (1998) *bare life* (*homo sacer*) because, through a (post)colonial lens, I understand Palestinians to be politically vocal agents of/for resurgence as opposed to silenced and depoliticized.

Thus, returning to Spivak's (2010) question: *Can the Subaltern Speak?* I consider the organic organization of the camp alongside Said's (1978) response, in which he states,

> I will not deny that I was aware, when writing the book, of the subjective truth insinuated by Marx in the little sentence I quoted as one of the book's epigraphs ("They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented."), which is that if you feel you have been denied the chance to speak your piece, you will try extremely hard to get that chance. For indeed, the subaltern can speak, as the history of liberation movements in the twentieth century eloquently attests. (p. 335)

For Said, twentieth century liberation movements have proven that the subaltern *can*, and in fact *do* speak. The ways in which the diaspora move both separate and together, building communities that restore collective memory and common goals, exemplifies how the subaltern make their voices heard.

I move to think about a question presented in Chapter Three that I feel lingered throughout my entire project. The question I respond to is: how does one persevere under circumstances of dispossession? This question asks how a person survives being made dispossessed, how a person resists and persists, a question of utmost importance when considering the volatile living conditions faced by Palestinians.

How Does One Persevere Under Circumstances of Dispossession?

A critical question implicitly at work in my chapter on dispossession is: how does one persevere under circumstances of dispossession?[66] The nihilist inside me says that usually a person does not persevere because they cannot within the confines of colonial systems of power. The idealist inside me says that human beings have employed resiliency tactics since the dawn of time, even if for the

[66] I ask this question knowing that what perseverance looks like is subjective to the individual and community.

mere fact that survival is a biological human drive, and so people *can* and *do* persevere even under unrelenting, precarious, violent living conditions. Somewhere in the middle is the notion that to persevere in such conditions is both excruciatingly difficult and unequivocally possible.

I believe expressions in "epistemic disobedience" (Mignolo, 2011) and "discursive de-linkings" (Mignolo, 2007) from colonial thought creates space for individuals to persevere and radically rearticulate humanness in a way that establishes a system that challenges and reshapes current colonial systems of power. This, in turn, nourishes the establishment of democratic and political freedom. Establishing a common goal helps to identify the promissory link between memory and redemption which, in turn, is what binds people, strengthening a commitment to persevere (Simon, 2005; 2011). Artworks are one form of expression that can illuminate and make tangible what it means to be human and not comply with colonial thinking.

Returning to thoughts on native "survivance," I recognize "survivance" and "survivance" stories as catalysts that motivate subjugated members of a community to persevere. "Survivance" stories that incorporate histories from diverse social identities allow for the promissory link between memory and redemption to unfold and evolve. This promissory link (evolving from "survivance" and "survivance" stories) binds people not to a past of victimry and unbearable tragedy but to a future that recognizes a need to destabilize the status quo and a commitment to resurgence and transformative change.

Reminded of Abdel Hamid's concern around fetishizing trauma, I suggest Vizenor's "survivance" can reduce such fetishizing through its voicing and honoring of Indigenous identities

prior to the colonial project, and through the rearticulation of victimhood. If a group of people are *only and always* viewed as falling prey to their predator, a one-dimensional characterization of that group emerges. This is the danger of fetishizing trauma. For Abdel Hamid, "you can't reduce life [to the traumatic event]. You become this comatose patient on life support and you're just dead, basically" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Abdel Hamid continues, "This is really death…. For me, I'm not scared of being wiped out or losing Palestine forever… I don't think Occupation is something that's going to sustain itself for a long time… My worry is the day after" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Another stone falls into my stomach as I am struck by the words "my worry is the day after." Abdel Hamid continues, referring to the day when Mosul, Iraq was liberated from ISIS. "This entity disappeared suddenly, but somehow the world is still fighting. Who are you fighting? And they say the end of terrorism. What to do next? Do we need to manufacture something new" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)? These words prompt me to visualize the loop I spoke to in Chapter Four.

This visualization emerges from the fetishization of trauma that also seems to play in a loop, the condition of trauma dependent upon circumstance, those objectified or fetishized never fully formed as human; reduced of their humanness. For Abdel Hamid, "We're [society] not talking about trauma, we're fetishizing trauma. Our role [artists and intellectuals] is not to cater to the masses, our role is not to massage the ego, our role is to ask really uncomfortable questions and if people are uncomfortable, people are uncomfortable" (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018). Maybe Abdel Hamid's concern with the fetishizing of

trauma is, in part, due to its ability to hinder perseverance among those subjugated. For, if the subject is *only and always* perceived in terms of its fetishized victimhood, the subject becomes stuck in this trauma; the subject can only ever be a victim and nothing more. In this scenario, the concept of perseverance itself is pointless and out of the question. When one is *only and always* a victim, no room is left to persevere in any sense of the word.

With the notion of perseverance in mind, I am reminded of a story I once read, told from Palestinians living in Shatila, a refugee camp in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon:

> THERE ONCE WAS A KING who had a horse that he wanted trained to speak, Abu Ali began. A refugee came forward and said, "I'll teach your horse to speak, but it will be hard and it may take many years – forty, fifty, maybe more – and meanwhile I'll need a salary and shelter." Abu Ali paused, letting his poor refugee's cleverness sink in. His friends said, "Are you crazy? How can you teach a horse to talk? When the king finds out you lied, he'll kill you!" But the man responded, "A lot can happen in forty years. The horse can die, the king can die, and in the meantime I'll eat, drink, and have a roof over my head." (Allan, 2014, p. 1, emphasis in original)

I have read this story many times and each time I find myself just as riveted by the cleverness, resiliency, and resourcefulness it evokes. I recognize this story as exemplifying native "survivance" stories whereby the story cleverly takes on a tone of dominance over the colonizer and renunciates tragedy and victimry into a badge of resilience.

So, to answer my question, how does one persevere under circumstances of dispossession? There is no one answer. Perseverance can take many shapes whether it be competing for resources through performative acts, or else creating artworks that challenge hegemonic power and call for

democratic and political freedom. I contend that both examples, as different as they are, reveal how people persevere and rearticulate loss.

Lastly, I consider a very profound sentiment that motivates many Palestinians to continue to persevere. It is a statement that Abu Ayyash and Abdel Hamid referred to (in opposing ways) during the interviews I conducted with them. The statement that I am referring to: to exist is to resist.

What does Existence as Resistance mean?

To begin, what does "to exist is to resist" mean? To varying degrees, (post)colonial, critical race, feminist, and queer theorists have attempted to answer this question in unique ways (Said 1992; Schotten, 2018; Rijke & van Teeffelen, 2014; Fernandes & Arisi, 2017; Lahorgue & Maheirie, 2019). The research indicates that conceptualizing existence as resistance means to think resistance as a resistance to elimination or annihilation. Existence as resistance requires "an enduring commitment to unsettlement" (Schotten, 2018, p. 13). In terms of the Palestinian experience, existing means holding accountable the criminalization, subjugation, dehumanization, and killing of innocent Palestinian lives. Existing means to resist expulsion and extinction.

During our interview, Abdel Hamid announced his disdain for the notion that Palestinian existence *is* resistance. For him, this interpretation of "staying put" is problematic:

> this is how it is… This idea that the reason why you exist is to resist – you know, I remember people consistently saying "going to school is the resistance." "Farming your land is the resistance." So, it reduces the Arab as resistance to the oppressor. But then, no… I would go to school even if I was

> a collaborator [laugh]. You know what I mean? (M. Abdel Hamid, personal communication, November 12, 2018)

Thinking on what he might mean, I ask: could mundane activities such as going to school and farming be considered "acts of freedom that emerge from within the occupation" (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013) when they are no different from the activities of someone not living under the Occupation? Furthermore, how could these activities *not* be in a category separate from overtly political acts such as anti-Occupation, pro-democracy aesthetics?

Interestingly, when this question arose in the interview I conducted with Abu Ayyash, his stance was quite different. For Abu Ayyash,

> its not always political what I do. Sometimes, its only for beautifying the space. In a certain level its also politics. Like, resistance is resistance. Any message that I'm here is like a resistance and a proof of my existence in this place. Even if I left a beautiful mark without any direct political message, its like a political statement also. Like, I'm here, I'm still here, I'm not leaving, I'm existing. My existence is a resistance to the Occupation, but from the surface it is just like a beautiful thing. A cool image. (H. Abu Ayyash, personal communication, August 16, 2018)

The idea that proof of one's existence in Palestine is a form of resistance echoes a concept I referred to in Chapter Four, whereby Athanasiou (2003) suggests that to "stay put" is not necessarily about stagnant living. Rather, "staying put" can be about staking claim to a place.

In thinking more on "staying put" in terms of existence as resistance, I wonder how so many Palestinians "stay put" in a country encroached on through the building of illegal Israeli Settlements. My answer to this query is rooted in a story about an attack on Palestinian civilians

living in Northern Palestine, organized by Former Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Olmert, called *Operation Cast Lead*:

> the internationally respected Gazan human-rights advocate Raji Sourani analyzed the pattern of attack under Cast Lead. The bombing was concentrated in the north, targeting defenseless civilians in the most densely populated areas, with no possible military basis. The goal, Sourani suggests, may have been to drive the intimidated population to the south, near the Egyptian border. But the Samidin – those who resist by enduring – stayed put. (Chomsky, 2015, p. 71)

Echoing Butler and Athanasiou (2013), for Chomsky, to resist by enduring is to "stay put." This suggests "staying put" is a political act and that routine activities such as farming land and attending school are products of "staying put." I am not sure whether "staying put" can be considered a political act if farming and attending school are not. Maybe it depends on what motivates individuals' values.

Emphatically, my interviews with Abdel Hamid and Abu Ayyash show a lack of consensus, although from my research I suggest Abdel Hamid's perspective to represent the exception, an outlier. For Abdel Hamid, going to school or farming land are regular activities that should not be conflated into anything more – partly, because they are such commonplace ubiquitous acts and partly for fear of reducing Palestinians to their circumstance. For others like Abu Ayyash, these *are* acts of resistance and are a blatant message to the occupier that Palestinians *are* "staying put."

My last lingering thoughts have me questioning what kind of environment motivates a community to invent a saying for the act of existing. I am struck by this notion and suggest that, at its core, there is a need to hold onto something that can otherwise be taken from you. If going

to school is perceived by some as resistance, then there must be a potential for loss that motivates this sentiment. If farming land is considered resistance, what is the alternative that is feared? If anti-Occupation artworks are produced as a way to establish agency, what sort of agency does it represent? Freedom of expression, maybe? This would then imply that the ability to freely express oneself is in question. Hence, at the forefront of these routine acts is loss; it is loss that gives them meaning. A loss of the freedom to express oneself gives meaning to oral, visual, and intellectual protest. The absence of democratic and political freedom is reflected in the idea that mundane activities are perceived as forms of resistance. If existence is perceived as resistance, then one must identify as a resister, a protestor, and (*sometimes, always*) as shackled to their *need* to resist.

Acknowledging that there is no right or agreed upon answer to whether existence is resistance, this concept allowed me to solidify how, *if* existence is resistance, members of the Palestinian community use their bodies to remain present in their struggle for political and democratic freedom, and to create artworks that render sensible the need to resist. Furthermore, I see "staying put" as reclaiming place, reclaiming a land that has been stolen from Palestinians and yet been used to imprison them.

As a final thought on existence as resistance, I ask that you, the reader, bear in mind that my analysis of this idea is not meant to reduce Palestinians to their circumstances. Exploring "to exist is to resist" does not negate or invalidate how there is so much more to Palestinians than the Occupation. Just as it goes with any subjugated community, there is a fine line between speaking out against an aggressor/ settler colonizer and reducing members of a community to an event rooted in loss. Hence, although I speak on perseverance, this is not meant to imply that Palestinians

are *only and always* persevering. To exist is *not only* to persist or resist. Palestinians, like so many other communities under violent colonial rule, experience moments of beauty, suffering, and everything in between. I argue, *art that resists* can be a vessel to reconcile and reveal profound loss in concrete and tangible ways.

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