UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

The Next Generation: Shifting Notions of Time, Humor, and Criticality in Contemporary Palestinian Art

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Sascha Manya Crasnow

Committee in charge:

Professor Grant Kester, Chair
Professor Norman Bryson, Co-Chair
Professor Gary Fields
Professor Kuiyi Shen
Professor Alena Williams

2018

The Dissertation of Sascha Manya Crasnow is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Co-Chair

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2018

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There is an insanely long list of people who have helped me complete this project, through both scholarly and emotional support. Though it would take me a document as long as the dissertation to pay them the due gratitude they deserve, I'll do my best here in brief.

First, I would like to thank my advisor Dr. Grant Kester for his continued enthusiasm for and support of this project. His guidance and belief in the value of my project helped to push me to make the project what it is today, and to motivate to complete it. I would also like to thank my co-chair, Dr. Norman Bryson, especially for stepping in during my qualifying year when Dr. Kester was on sabbatical. Our weekly meetings kept me on track and made me confident that I would complete them on schedule. Thanks to Dr. Gary Fields, who has more of an artistic eye than I think he was first able to admit, who stepped out of his comfort zone to join my committee and provide insight that only someone else who had spent time in Palestine could have. Thanks to Dr. Alena Williams who joined my committee after the qualifying exams as new faculty to UCSD, and whose feedback on my chapters, on graduate life, and what comes next are the sort that could only be bestowed by a young, female faculty member. I am grateful to have had you and your perspective on my committee. I'd also like to thank Dr. Kuiyi Shen for stepping in months before my defense to replace an ill committee member without any hesitation. To my entire committee I thank you for helping me get through to the end.

This project would not have been possible without the financial support of an Artis Travel Grant, Russel Foundation Grant, UCSD Field Research Fellowship, UCSD Dissertation Completion Fellowship, and a Residency at the A.M. Qattan Foundation in Ramallah. I could not have completed my field research without the Arabic language education received via Critical Language Scholarships in 2012 (Morocco) and 2013 (Jordan). I am also grateful for all the

artists, curators, and cultural practitioners in Palestine and Israel who spoke with me, connected me with others, and linked me up with the Palestinian arts community during my field research. While the list is too long to thank everyone individually here, I'd like to pay special thanks to Jumana Emil Abboud, Yazid Anani, Anisa Ashkar, Tayseer Barakat, Tal Ben-Zvi, Leor Grady, Ashraf and Anoub Fawakhry, Dima Hourani, Khaled Hourani, Wafa Hourani, Khaled Jarrar, Yazan Khalili, Rula Khoury, Mohammad Musallam, Amer Shomali, Nida Sinnokrot, Sharif Waked, and Inass Yassin.

Finally, I want to thank my friends and family for supporting me throughout this long process. From watching Asterix while I traveled abroad, to reading drafts, to commiserating over drinks, I could not have done this without any of you. To the absolute best cohort of graduate students I could have asked to be a part of, I would not have gotten through this program if it weren't for you all. I feel lucky to have entered into this program at the same time as such a kind, generous, funny, intelligent, grounded group of graduate students that I think have ever existed. To the friends in years before, thanks for letting me bug you with questions and for telling me it would be okay. To my friends in the years after me, thanks for letting me feel like I had my shit together by asking me questions and letting me tell you it would be okay. To my MMW colleagues, thanks for being people I could hang out with at work all day and still want to hang out with afterwards. You made proctoring exams slightly less painful and grading papers a communal experience possible to survive. I'll meet you all at Tiger!Tiger! for a drink any day. To my Gulls Girls, thanks for giving me the realization that I actually did have some people who were "my people" here in San Diego. I'm excited to see where the future will take us, and sad to see us all disperse, but I am not concerned about us losing touch. To LXJ, thank you for supporting me from across the country over the past seven years, for not making it feel like I was

so far away by texting and emailing daily just like we said we would, and for sending me a pick-me-up whenever I needed it. Every struggle, every celebration, you were there with me. You're forever my tent poles. To my non-grad school friends, for continuing to support me in what seemed like a never-ending endeavor even though you didn't fully understand what it is that I was doing.

Special thanks to my mom, dad, and sibling for your undying support and for reading through things more times than I am sure you would care to remember. To my mom and step-dad for allowing me to live with them the first year of graduate school (and dealing with all the angst that went along with that), letting their home be the home-away-from-home for all of my graduate cronies throughout the years, and up until my defense party. To my mom for being the role model that likely led me to graduate school in the first place, and for still being the person with all the answers for all things graduate school and adulting. To my dad for always being an encouraging and sympathetic ear, for putting me and my friends up when we would come to LA for the Getty seminar (or any other art related event), and for always letting me turn into a little girl to be fed chocolate milk and cookies any time I come to town. To my sibling for being my best friend and commiserator-supreme, going through PhD programs at the same time. We're clearly insane, and despite being my younger sibling, you have been leading the way the entire time—you're my barometer for academic goals, and I look forward to continuing to try to keep up.

Thanks to each and every one of you who have been a part of my life over the past seven years in San Diego. I can honestly say I would not be here without any of you.

VITA

2005	Bachelor of Science, University of Washington
2009	Master of the Arts, City University of New York, Hunter College
2011-2018	Teaching Assistant, University of California, San Diego
2018	Doctor of Philosophy, University of California San Diego

PUBLICATIONS

"Geopolitical tensions and problematics of exhibiting: *Exterritory* Project," *Interventions*, Columbia University, January 2013. http://interventionsjournal.net/2013/01/29/geopolitical-tensions-and-problematics-of-exhibiting-the-exterritory-project/

"The Holocaust and Third Reich in Contemporary German Art: Joseph Beuys, Anselm Kiefer, and Gerhard Richter," unpublished MA thesis, Hunter College, 2009.

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: Visual Arts

Studies in Contemporary Art History, Middle Eastern Art History
Professors Grant Kester and Norman Bryson

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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by

Sascha Manya Crasnow

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

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My project examines the effect of the inter-Intifada period (1993-2000) on Palestinian art produced by artists living in Palestine and Israel. I argue that political disillusionment resulting from the failed Oslo Accords (1993) and outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000-2005), increased globalization, and the rise of the Internet during this period altered Palestinian mentality regarding the occupation, Palestinian government, and daily life. Moreover, I contend that this

shifting mentality is articulated in the art produced in the post-Second Intifada period. My chapters examine three thematics wherein this shift can be seen.

The first chapter investigates changing notions of Palestinian time from one of stagnant waiting in the hope of a return to an idealized past to a waiting wherein time gives the illusion of forward motion, while in reality events recur cyclically without any real progress. This is evident in post-Second Intifada Palestinian art in the use of repeated imagery in video and film, the insertion of historic imagery into a contemporary context, and the image of the circle. Chapter 2 examines the presence of humor in post-Second Intifada Palestinian art. While art had previously served to promote Palestinian nationalist ideology, disillusionment with the possibility for peace or progress in the wake of the failed Oslo Accords resulted in the rise of dark humor as a means of artistic critique and expression of frustrations with the realities of daily Palestinian life. The final chapter investigates the expansion of critique among Palestinian artists from one that focuses solely on the occupation, to a self-reflexive critique. This chapter consists of three parts, each of which investigates a different critique: political (the actions of Palestinian leaders and their use or sacrifice of the arts in service of the resistance), religious (the rise and influence of conservative Islam), and gender/sexuality (Arab masculinity and homosexuality). Each of the thematics discussed in my project interacts and overlaps in artists' works to reveal how Palestinian attitudes about their daily lives and the potential for the future have shifted after the failure of Oslo.

Introduction

In 2008, I traveled to Israel for the first time. The image that stands out most to me from that trip is the long, harsh, winding concrete wall cutting through the landscape, dividing the West Bank from the State of Israel. It was this image that started me down the path to this project. As I learned more about the nature of the formation of the Israeli state and the Zionist occupation, I began to wonder about how artists in the region were responding to the daily conditions of their lives. I discovered that, though there was a rising interest in art from the Middle East, there was little scholarship on contemporary Palestinian art. This was especially true for scholarship about those artists who were living and producing work in the region. Through continued conversations with artists and cultural practitioners in the region, and in consideration of context of Palestinian contemporary history, I identified the 1993 Oslo Accords as a defining moment of optimism in the so-called peace process. The lack of progress in the fulfillment of the promises of the Accords ultimately led to a disillusionment marked by the outbreak of the Second Intifada (2000). This period marked a decisive shift for the younger generation of Palestinians who were born after 1967, after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. For this generation, there was a shifting mentality with regards to the occupation, Palestinian government, and daily life. Moreover, this shift can be seen in the contemporary art produced in the post-Second Intifada period through three thematics: time, humor, and criticality.

Literature Review

There has been increased interest in art from the Middle East following the events of September 11, 2001 and subsequent U.S. involvement in the region. This is evidenced by the addition of specialized sales at auction houses; and the proliferation of exhibitions at American institutions such as the Guggenheim and New Museum in New York, and the Museum of Fine

Arts in Boston; as well as the opening of Middle Eastern outposts of major Western museums such as the Guggenheim and the Louvre, both in Abu Dhabi. In response, questions have arisen amongst scholars and artists about the representation of art from the Middle East; some have lamented the frequency with which the Middle East has been represented in art through depictions of warfare and conflict—the imagery prevalent in mass media. At the same time, a dearth of scholarship on modern and contemporary art from the region has left limited alternative representations of Middle Eastern art and art history from those presented in these exhibitions. When it comes to Palestinian artists, many scholars, institutions, and publications have therefore chosen to highlight those artists and works that overtly address the so-called Israeli-Palestinian conflict through recognizable imagery such as the checkpoints and apartheid wall. Some contemporary artists have pushed back against this characterization of them as needing to be representative of the conflicts that define them in mass media and the Western consciousness. It is in this vein that I have attempted to highlight works that, while certainly not apolitical, move away from the "expected" visual cues for the occupation of Palestine, rather asking viewers to dig a bit deeper into the realities of what the occupation means in the daily lives of Palestinians.

There are a few English-language publications that have produced broad surveys of the history of Palestinian art, both in Palestine and the diaspora, and in doing so, have begun to establish a foundational Palestinian art history. Palestinian artist and scholar Samia Halaby's independently published *Liberation Art of Palestine* (2001) utilizes artist interviews to trace stylistic trends in painting and sculpture prevalent in Palestinian art production in the second half of the twentieth century. Making clear the unique socio-political conditions under which these artists were working and responding, Halaby highlights direct artistic roles in and responses to political resistance while also tying these artists' works to the broader contexts of Arab art

history and the revolutionary stylings of Latin America. Halaby's book specifically examines two types of media—painting and sculpture—in the service of the liberation movement in Palestine in the twentieth century.

Gannit Ankori's *Palestinian Art* (2006) is the first English-language book-length examination of the broader history of Palestinian art. Ankori traces the history of Palestinian art from the late nineteenth century through to the end of the twentieth, including both artists living in the region and abroad. She begins her book with a discussion of Palestinian art and its influences around the Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe") in 1948 when the State of Israel was founded and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were sent into exile. In the following chapters, she focuses on one artist at a time—Sliman Mansour, Kamal Boullata, Mona Hatoum, and Khalil Rabah—as exemplary of various styles and themes addressed by Palestinian artists. The final chapter looks at a handful of artists who live within the State of Israel—including Druze, Bedouin, Christian, and Muslim artists. Ankori's aim, rather than surveying an expansive number of artists, was to bring in a number of artists from different perspectives and styles that could help to capture and demonstrate the breadth of Palestinian art production in the post-Nakba period. At the time of publication, Ankori's book was controversial due to accusations of plagiarism (later deemed unfounded) by artist and scholar Kamal Boullata, who was interviewed extensively for the book by Ankori. This was exacerbated by the fact that Ankori is herself a Jewish-Israeli scholar, while Boullata is Palestinian.

Kamal Boullata's own 2009 *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present* is an expansion of a number of articles he published beginning in 1970 with his article "Towards a Revolutionary

Arab Art," which was the first English-language article written on the subject of Palestinian art.[1] Throughout, Boullata's focus on place highlights the differing styles predominant among artists who remain living in the region versus those who are living and working in the diaspora. Boullata's book begins with a thorough stylistic examination of painting in the pre-1948 period and its move from a religious to a secular focus. He then discusses the differing styles of artists living as refugees in Beirut in the post-Nakba period and those who are born and raised in the newly formed State of Israel. He then turns his focus to art produced in the West Bank and Gaza after the occupation of those territories in 1967 until the first couple of years after the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000.[2] Boullata closes the book with a discussion of his own writing and painting practice, in particular in relation to his experience as an exile. While Boullata's tome is expansive, he notes in his introduction that he was unable to include the youngest generation of Palestinian artists, in particular those working in new media, in his publication.[3] One of the aims of this dissertation is to take on this younger generation of artists and include works that encompass the breadth of media, in particular new media, that Palestinian artists are working in today. Among the artists listed by Boullata from this younger generation that he would have liked to include are Sharif Waked and Raeda Saadeh, both of whom are included in this dissertation.

More recently, Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon's *The Origins of Palestinian Art* (2013) took on the task of analyzing contemporary Palestinian art production since 2000. Noting Ankori and Boullata's highlighting of Palestinian art history pre-dating the Nakba, Makhoul and Hon

[1] Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (New York: Reaktion Books, 2006), 16. Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: 1850 to the Present* (San Francisco: SAQI, 2009), 9.
[2] The latest produced works discussed in Boullata's book are from 2002.
[3] Boullata, 37.

assert that the importance of 1948 cannot be overlooked and that it in fact permeates practically all subsequent art production. Rather than a chronological recounting, the authors break up their discussion by looking at the different ways "origin" plays a role in Palestinian art production, including separate chapters devoted to the significance of Jerusalem and to Palestinians living and working in Israel. While Makhoul and Hon establish 1948 as the key turning point, my project asserts that the inter-Intifada period (1993-2000) created a shift after which there is perhaps a new origin point for this younger generation of artists. While I do not attempt to downplay the continued importance and significance of the Nakba, I assert, as will be discussed in more detail later, that the Oslo Accords and Second Intifada (1993 and 2000 respectively) mark important moments in national identity formation for the younger generations of Palestinians and that these too pervade the visual art production in the post-Second Intifada period.

Other publications have examined singular specific themes across all of Palestinian visual culture. Chrisoula Lionis's *Laughter in Occupied Palestine* (2016) argues that the failure of the peace process has resulted in a shift in Palestinian collective identity, which is in turn articulated through the employment of humor among Palestinian artists and filmmakers. This is an argument I pick up on in my Second Chapter, with some divergences from Lionis's argument, and centering exclusively on visual artists living and working in historic Palestine, rather than artists and filmmakers both in the region and diaspora. Other publications have focused exclusively on one type of medium among contemporary Palestinian artists. Bashir Makhoul's *Palestinian Video Art: Constellation of the Moving Image* (2013) surveys over sixty Palestinian artists using video. Organized thematically, Makhoul's comprehensive volume includes artists from the region and diaspora. Gil Hocbherg's *Visual Occupations* (2015) discusses the role of visuality in

the Israeli occupation of Palestine. She argues that the occupation asserts and maintains its control through what is made visible or hidden—through the exposure of Palestinian bodies at checkpoints, or the erasure of visible traces of Palestinian history in the land. Hochberg analyzes the works of Israeli and Palestinian artists who subvert the occupation's means of control in order to critique it. While the works discussed in my dissertation largely steer away from utilizing the specific imagery of the occupation in their work, in their use of humor and reflexive critique, they subvert elements not only of the occupation, but of the theater of the peace process, and of the empty gestures that their own representatives have claimed as triumphs of sovereignty.

In spite of a rising interest in art from the Middle East in recent years, there is still a need for more scholarship on the topic. There is a scarcity of scholarship that has thoroughly investigated the effect of the failure of the Oslo Accords (1993) on contemporary Palestinian art produced within historic Palestine (Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza). Additionally, much of the focus of existing publications has been on art produced prior to 2000—the point at which my dissertation project departs. Many of those publications that have discussed work after 2000 tend to focus on those contemporary artists living and working in the diaspora, largely due to their international exposure. At times, little distinction is made between those artists who are making work about their experience as exiles or about the conditions in Palestine from a distanced position, and those who are making work about their current contemporary daily life and producing and exhibiting work under occupation. My project departs in this manner by focusing entirely on artworks that were produced by Palestinian artists while they were living and working in Palestine and which directly respond to their daily lived conditions under those circumstances.

I also draw out, as relevant, the distinctions in these conditions and articulations of positionality among Palestinian artists living within the State of Israel, the West Bank, or Gaza.

Methodology

The preliminary research for this project was undertaken in Israel and the West Bank in 2013 funded by an Artis Travel Grant. The archival research and artist interviews which form the foundation of the argument made herein were conducted in Israel and the West Bank in 2015, funded by an A.M. Qattan Foundation Residency, Russell Foundation Grant, and UCSD Visual Arts Field Research Fellowship. Follow-up interviews with artists, when necessary, were conducted via Skype or email once I had returned to the United States. While on fellowship in 2015, I conducted interviews with over thirty artists based throughout Israel and Palestine (the West Bank and Gaza). Interviews were conducted in-person during studio visits, with the exception of the artists in Gaza and two artists who were traveling while I was in-country. Due to the difficulty of mobility in and out of Gaza and my inability to procure permission to gain access during the limited time I was in Palestine, interviews with Gaza-based artists were conducted over Skype. Interviews were frequently conducted in English or a combination of English and Arabic. One interview was conducted entirely in Arabic.

Archival research was conducted at institutions including the Al Ma'mal Foundation and the Al-Hoash Library in Jerusalem, the Digital Art Lab in Holon, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, and the A.M. Qattan Foundation in Ramallah in both English and Arabic. I also collected ephemera and exhibition publications from artists and cultural institutions in Israel and Palestine in English, French, and Arabic. From this research, I created the framework for my dissertation, and selected from those interviewed the artists for each chapter to serve as examples for the discussion of each thematic. Each chapter incorporates an interdisciplinary approach including

visual analysis of the work, a post-structuralist approach to address the varying audiences and potential receptions of the work (in particular in the chapter on humor), and a situating of these works and artists' production in the history of Palestine and their contemporary socio-political context. The writing of this dissertation took place during 2016 and 2017, funded during the 2016-2017 academic year by a UCSD Visual Arts Dissertation Completion Fellowship and a UCSD Dissertation Writing Workshop Grant.

My dissertation focuses specifically on works made by Palestinians at a time when they were living and working in Palestine. Since these works were made and field research conducted, some of these artists no longer live in Palestine. Some of them did not live in Palestine the whole time before they made the works discussed herein. Therefore, why focus exclusively on these artists? There are a number of reasons I chose to frame my research and argument in this fashion. Many discussions of Palestinian contemporary art have focused on diaspora artists because of their international exposure. While these artists most certainly articulate positions related to the ongoing occupation in Palestine, these largely have to do with exile and experiences of diaspora. What I was interested in examining in this research project was how the particular conditions of post-Oslo Palestine affected Palestinian mentality for those living under occupation in historic Palestine, and how those Palestinians experiencing this articulated that mentality via work produced under those conditions. As will be discussed in the conclusion, further research should examine whether the shifts noted in Palestinian contemporary art discussed in this project carry over to diaspora artists, whether Oslo serves as a pivotal moment for diaspora artists as well, and whether there are additional or alternative thematic shifts that exist for artists producing work in a diasporic context.

It should be acknowledged that my ability to move freely in, out, and between Israel and the West Bank is due to the privilege of my position as an American Jew. My U.S. passport and Russian name, which within Israel is virtually automatically associated with being Jewish due to the large Russian-Jewish populations that have immigrated over the years, have afforded me the privilege of limited questioning both upon arrival and departure at Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv, and when crossing in and out of the West Bank at the Qalandia checkpoint. This is a privilege not only withheld from Palestinians living within Israel, who are not permitted to travel to the West Bank and Gaza, or from those living in the Palestinian territories, who may not receive permits to enter Israel let alone travel to other countries, but also from those individuals of Palestinian descent living abroad. I have personally heard anecdotes from scholars, artists, and other individuals—both Arabs living in the diaspora and Americans and Europeans of Arab descent—who have been detained, questioned, barred, and even deported having been denied entry to Israel and Palestine because of their names and ethnicities. While the aspects of the Israeli occupation discussed in this project center on those to which Palestinians living in Israel and the territories are subject, the monitoring and restriction of movement of non-citizens of Arab descent, and even those who are not but are identified as "anti-Israel" by the Israeli state because of their anti-Zionist, pro-Palestinian activism, displays the extensive and pervasive reach of the occupation in service of its goals to preserve itself and the status quo.[4]

Historical Context[5]

[4] I also acknowledge that the longer I work in the field and write and publish about Palestine, the less likely I am to maintain the level of privilege I had during the research and writing of this project.

[5] My overview of Palestinian modern history has been drawn from the following sources: Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood*

In order to understand the effect of the inter-Intifada period on contemporary Palestinian art production, it is necessary to have a general understanding of the history of modern Palestine. While historians trace this history back to various points, including the establishment of the British Mandate after World War I or the Ottoman Empire and early Zionist movement around the turn of the 20th century, most scholars agree that one of the most definitive and important moments in the history of modern Palestine is the Nakba and formation of the State of Israel in 1948. In order to understand the events that led to this moment, however, there needs to be a brief discussion of the climate in Mandatory Palestine leading up to this point. The following brief overview of the history of modern Palestine serves to give some context to both the changes in the socio-political narrative of the region, as well as the progression of arts production, schooling, and support related to with these political shifts.

Mandatory Palestine (WWI-1948)

Before the First World War had ended, the Allied powers, specifically France and Britain, had already been plotting how they would divide up the Middle East once the Ottoman Empire was defeated and dismantled. In a series of letters sent in 1915 and 1916, known as the Husayn-McMahon correspondence, Sharif Husayn, head of the Hashemites who claim ties to the Prophet, promised to lead an Arab revolt against the Ottomans in 1916 (which he did) in exchange for Arab sovereignty in much of the post-war Middle East. However, this was not the only promise that was made. In the 1917 Balfour Declaration, the British also promised the Zionist movement a Jewish homeland in Palestine. In contradiction to both of these promises, the

(Boston: Beacon Press, 2006); and Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

British and French had also met clandestinely in 1916 and divided up the Middle East between the two of them in the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

Ultimately it was the desire to preserve white European imperial supremacy that won out at the end of the First World War, and the British established the Mandate in Palestine in 1920 after two years of military rule in the region. However, neither the Zionist nor Arab populations were satisfied with this result. Unrest and conflict, both between the Palestinians and Zionists and each of these groups and the British, characterized the Mandate period. While the British periodically tried to appease each side, this typically proved to generate further conflict, as in the Peel Commission of 1936. The commission sought to find a solution to the continued unrest in Palestine and suggested the division of the land between Zionists, Arabs (their territory would unite with Trans-Jordan), and mandatory zones administered by the British.[6] While the Zionists accepted this proposal as a move towards the establishment of sovereign Jewish territory, the Palestinians felt that their right to self-determination, as outlined by U.S. President Wilson's Fourteen Points, was being violated both by the Mandate and promises to give their land over to Zionist control. The British (despite having put together the commission) rejected the recommendation as well. Attempts like this by the British were met with boycotts, protests, and broad rebellion, such as the Great Revolt (1936-1939).

By the close of the Second World War, British fatigue at attempting to manage and govern the conflicting Zionist and Palestinian groups, combined with increased sympathy for the Jewish cause in the wake of the Holocaust and post-war British debt, led the British to pass along

[6] As Rashid Khalidi notes, at no point during the pre-Mandatory and Mandatory periods were the Palestinians considered or even named as a unified national group. Rather they were considered as an Arab population in the land, easily subsumed into other national entities and not distinct as the Jewish Zionist population was. Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 32-33.

the "Question of Palestine" to the newly formed United Nations in 1947. In Resolution 181, the UN Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) recommended a partition plan dividing Palestine into separate Jewish and Palestinian states. The resolution passed the UN General Assembly. Internal conflict began immediately, but on May 15, 1948 when the British left Palestine, Israel declared itself an independent Jewish state according to the partition plan leading to a broader Arab-Israeli war—the first of what would become many.

The Nakba, First Arab-Israeli War, and the Aftermath (1948-1967)

The aftermath of Israel's declaration and the subsequent war would end with Israel laying claim to 78% of the former Mandate, well beyond the borders delineated by partition. The remaining land, the West Bank and Gaza Strip, did not become an independent Palestinian state. Instead, it was ruled by other Arab countries as part of the armistice agreements that ended the war—Egypt controlling Gaza, and Jordan controlling the West Bank. The effect on the Palestinian population was devastating:

> Of an estimated total population of 1.4 million Palestinians, a little over half – about 720,000 became refugees. Anywhere from 65 percent to more than 85 percent of Palestinians living within the boundaries of Israel were forced into permanent exile, while upwards of another 25 percent of those who remained were uprooted and became internal refugees in Israel. Those Palestinians who remained in Israel were subject to martial law until 1966.[7]

[7] James L. Gelvin, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict: One Hundred Years of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 136.

In addition to those who were permanently exiled from their homes, over five hundred Palestinian villages were eradicated, at times accompanied by the massacre of their populations.[8]

In the meantime, the newly formed Israeli government made moves to solidify the nature of the new Jewish state. In order to increase Jewish immigration to Israel, the *Knesset* (Israeli parliament) passed the Law of Return in 1950 which allowed any Jew to immigrate to Israel. This law would continue to sit in marked contrast to the opposition the Israeli government would have in any future peace negotiations to the notion of a "Right of Return" held by Palestinians who had been forced into exile during the Nakba. New Jewish immigrants moved into the homes left behind by Palestinians who had either fled or been forced to leave.

The United Nations established the UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East) to deal with the refugee problem at the close of 1949. Today 1.5 million Palestinian refugees live in fifty-eight camps in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.[9] Over time, as Palestinians' lives in exile have persisted, the camps have taken on more permanent features of Arab towns and villages. The camps also became the sites of the formation of organized resistance movements. While the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) was formed in 1964 by the Arab League in an attempt to keep control of Palestinian issues in the hand of the other Arab countries, it was quickly dominated by the grassroots organizations that had formed in these camps including Fatah, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and others.[10] However, the territories that had been part of the Mandate not taken by Israel in the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 were still controlled by Egypt

[8] Some of the largest instances of ethnic cleansing at this time were Deir Yassin (100-250 killed), Saliha (70-80 killed), Lod (250 killed), Dawayima (hundreds killed). Gelvin, 72, 139.
[9] https://www.unrwa.org/palestine-refugees
[10] Khalidi, 138.

and Jordan, which, along with Syria, continued to have tensions with their Israeli neighbor. These tensions erupted in 1967 with the Six Day War.

The Six Day War and Occupied Territories (1967-1987)

On June 5, 1967 Israel launched what it claimed was a pre-emptive strike against Egypt, which was preventing Israeli use of the Straits of Tiran. Syria and Jordan joined in the fight, which ended up being a quick and decisive Israeli victory. At the end of six days, Israel had taken the Gaza Strip and all of the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt, the West Bank and East Jerusalem from Jordan, and the Golan Heights from Syria. The Six Day War became a crucial moment in the history of Palestine for a number of reasons. It began the policy of "land for peace" wherein Israel would exchange captured land for a peace agreement, as it did with Egypt in exchange for the return of the Sinai (1979). Secondly, it marked the start of the Israeli occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip which continues to this day. Additionally, in the aftermath of the war, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 242 which stated that the acquisition of new territory during war was inadmissible and that Israel should withdraw. While the vagaries of the language in the text allowed for Israel to justify its remaining on the land, the framing of the text around the pre-1967 borders as fixed Israeli sovereign land established these borders as the foundation for all peace negotiations going forward. This was significant as the setting of these borders as the starting point for negotiations ignored the issue of Palestinians who had been exiled from within the territory of Israel's borders

in 1948.[11] Finally, in the aftermath of the Six Day War, in 1968, Israel began the policy of settling the occupied territories in violation of the Geneva Convention.[12]

In the wake of the war, another 200,000 new Palestinian refugees were produced—Palestinians were exiled from the Jewish quarter of the Old City in recently captured East Jerusalem, as well as parts of the West Bank and Gaza.[13] All forms of Palestinian resistance were suppressed, including rallies, strikes, petitions, and the waving of the Palestinian flag.[14] Israel also began its policy of collective punishment—the policy of destroying houses in a town in response to the acts of rebellion from individuals from it, a procedure that continues to this day—as a means to punish resistance and deter future actions.[15] Much of the Palestinian military resistance was based in Jordan, though this was not without its own tensions. During "Black September," the PFLP and PDFLP (Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine), supported (perhaps reluctantly) by the PLO headed by Yasser Arafat, conducted a series of hijackings and other high-profile attacks and engaged in fighting with the Jordanian army. As a result, the PLO was exiled from Jordan to Lebanon, where it would remain until 1982 when fighting with Israel would force it to move again, this time to Tunisia. The persistent suppression and oppression of the Palestinian people under occupation and a sense of abandonment from

[11] The text of Resolution 242 calls for the "withdrawal of Israeli forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." The fact that the text does not say that "all" the Israeli forces must withdraw from "the" (again meaning all) territories provides the flexibility for Israelis to remain. Neil Caplan, *The Israel-Palestine Conflict* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 148.
[12] Again, a semantic ploy is utilized by the Israelis to claim they are not violating the Geneva Convention. The Israelis do not consider the territories occupied, but rather "disputed." Caplan, 150.
[13] Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 196.
[14] Ibid, 197.
[15] Ibid.

those outside forces who claimed to be working in their favor, in particular the greater Arab world, led to a resistance from within the occupied territories that broke out in 1987.

The First Intifada (1987-1993)

On December 8, 1987 an Israeli military vehicle hit a car containing Palestinian workers in Gaza, killing four. While it appears this was an accident, there were rumors at the time that this was revenge for the killing of an Israeli businessman days before.[16] Either way, the event sparked the First Intifada (literally meaning "shaking off" but often translated as "uprising"). The Intifada consisted of strikes, a tax revolt, riots, demonstrations, and violence. The international exposure that the Intifada received proved challenging to the image that Israeli had persistently projected—that of Israel as the underdog fighting the more numerous and presumably stronger Arab countries that surrounded it and sought its destruction. In images of Palestinian youths armed only with stones facing off against the well-equipped Israeli army, it became clear that Israel was indeed now the behemoth Goliath facing off against the Palestinian David.

While the youths manned the front lines, the adults adopted practices of "civil disobedience and organized boycotts of Israeli products and employers. They refused to cooperate with the civil administration or pay taxes, withdrew their money from Israeli banks, organized work gangs to help with the harvest, obeyed commercial and general strikes, and launched self-help initiatives to promote economic self-sufficiency."[17] International pressure on Israel increased in response to images of the brutal suppression of Palestinian resistance. At the

[16] Gelvin, 216-17.
[17] Ibid, 219. For an example of one such self-help initiative, see Amer Shomali's *The Wanted 18* an animated film about the purchase of eighteen cows by the town of Beit Sahour during the First Intifada to produce their own milk.

same time, the PLO's loss of major financial and political support due to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the dissatisfaction of the Gulf states with Arafat's backing of Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War led both sides to seek a resolution. After beginning talks without resolution at the Madrid Conference in 1991, the Oslo Accords were signed on the White House lawn in 1993.

Inter-Intifada Period: Oslo and its Aftermath (1993-2000)

While the Oslo Accords were heralded as a significant step towards a resolution of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and a great achievement towards peace in the Middle East, in reality what they largely set up was a timeline for the deferment of agreements that would ultimately not be fulfilled. The PLO recognized Israel's right to exist—effectively confirming the 1967 borders as the starting point for negotiations and sacrificing the land Israel had occupied prior to the point. In return, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative governing body of the Palestinians. The Accords set a timeline for the withdrawal of Israeli military forces from Gaza and parts of the West Bank and the formation of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Later negotiations (the opening of which would be at the discretion of the Israeli side) would address three of the most important issues: the status of Jerusalem, refugees and their right to return, and the settlements. While the original deadlines were not met, the PA was eventually established with Yasser Arafat elected as the first president. However, the West Bank was subsequently divided into three areas of varying degrees of control by the PA. Area A is fully administered by the PA, both in terms of civil affairs and security—this constitutes today about 18% of the West Bank. The civil administration of Area B, 22% of the West Bank, is done by the PA, while the

security is administered jointly by Israel and the PA. Area C, which was originally 74% of the West Bank but is now about 63%, is fully administered by Israel (Figure 1).[18]

One condition of the agreements was that neither side would do anything to change the conditions on the ground that would interfere with future negotiations. Israel violated this almost immediately through the building of additional settlements and border fences which delineated, at their discretion, where Israeli borders lay. The number of settlers doubled in the occupied territories between 1993 and the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000.[19] Additional roads, on which Palestinians are not permitted to drive, were built to link the settlements that populated the West Bank with each other and Israel—creating contiguous connections and access among Jewish land, but not Palestinian. The Gaza Strip was fenced in and guard towers erected, effectively turning it into a large prison camp.[20]

Frustration with the Oslo process was not limited to Israeli actions, but also that of the PLO, who were seen as corrupt. As the optimism of Oslo waned, the United States made a final effort to restart talks at Camp David in 2000. The talks stalled. Later that year, Israel opposition leader Ariel Sharon, accompanied by armed police and a delegation from his party, paid an uninvited visit to the Haram al Sheikh (known by Israelis as the Dome of the Rock), a site holy to both Jews and Muslims and administered by the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf, ostensibly to assert and demonstrate Jewish rights to pray on the site. Palestinian protests the following day were met with Israeli police resulting in seven Palestinian deaths and hundreds injured. The Second Intifada (also known as the Al Aqsa Intifada after the mosque that resides at the Haram) had begun.

[18] http://www.btselem.org/area_c/what_is_area_c
[19] Gelvin, 242.
[20] Pappé, 267.

Second Intifada to the Present (2000-2017)

In contrast to the First Intifada, which was characterized by civil disobedience as well as some violence, the Second Intifada is more frequently remarked on for its violence. The rise of Islamism brought with it the tactic of suicide bombing to Palestinian resistance. In response, the Israeli government began targeted assassinations, raids on Palestinian towns (including those in Area A), destruction Palestinian homes and agricultural lands, establishment of checkpoints, and the building of a "security barrier" (known also as the separation wall or apartheid wall) consisting of fences and, in portions, a concrete wall. However, this wall also served as another means for Israelis to change the realities on the ground. Rather than following the boundaries delineated by the 1949 Armistice Agreement (also known as the Green Line), the wall takes a circuitous route in order to incorporate lands that are desirable or contain settlers into the sovereignty of the Israeli state. In the wake of 9/11, Israel was able to assert these actions as part of the broader War on Terror.[21]

While 2005 typically marks the end of the Second Intifada, momentum slowed with the death of Yasser Arafat in 2004. The Sharm-al-Sheikh Summit and the Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005 are also sometimes noted as the official end to the Intifada. Since the end of the Intifada, elections brought Hamas the majority in the Palestinian parliament, ultimately leading to the severing of power between the Gaza Strip (Hamas) and the West Bank (Fatah)—the reunification of which is still shaky today. Yasser Arafat, who served as the leading figure of the Palestinian liberation movement virtually from its inception, has not had a comparable successor. The Israeli occupation continues, as do the expansion of settlements and the siege of

[21] Gelvin, 248.

Gaza. Many now question the feasibility of the seemingly once within reach two-state solution. The brief moment of optimism brought about by Oslo has been replaced by disillusionment with the pre-existing processes and political representatives. The most recent example of this is perhaps the acceptance of Palestine as a "Non-Member Observer State" to the UN General Assembly in 2012. In 2013, the Palestinian Authority declared itself the State of Palestine with Mahmoud Abbas as its first president; however, thus far there remains to be seen any real effects of this beyond the symbolic.[22] For the lives of Palestinians in exile, in refugee camps, or under the conditions of persistent occupation, these symbolic gestures of political theater are meaningless.

The History of Art in Modern Palestine[23]

Throughout this turbulent history, and at times as a result of it, art production and institutions in Palestine were developing and changing. At the start of the Mandate, Palestinian painting was undergoing a shift from purely religious icon painting to secular subjects, aided by the new innovation of photography and the colonial influence of European culture. Due to its position as a holy city to the three Abrahamic religions, Jerusalem became the site of the greatest Western cultural influence. Art education took place through artist studios, missionary, and local schools. The increased Jewish immigration to Palestine led to the formation of the first Jewish art institution in Palestine, the Bezalel School of Arts and Crafts, established in Jerusalem in 1906. The first Arab to study at Bezalel would enroll in 1941.[24] While many Palestinians underwent

[22] Ibid, 263.
[23] The history of Palestinian art outlined here is a summary of a much more detailed discussion in Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: 1850 to the Present* (San Francisco: Saqi, 2006).
[24] Ankori, 41.

apprentice-style training in workshops to learn traditional craft techniques, they often traveled abroad, frequently to the Art Academy in Cairo[25] for additional training where they became exposed to studio practices such as painting.

By the start of the Second World War, contemporary art exhibitions began to be a regular cultural event in Palestine taking place at institutions such as the Arab Orthodox Union Club and the YMCA in Jerusalem. Reflecting the importance of art in Zionist nation-forming, the Tel Aviv Museum of Art was established in 1932. Interestingly, it would be at this museum that David Ben Gurion would announce the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in 1948. In the wake of the war that followed this declaration, much of the art produced was left behind by Palestinians as they fled their homes, without realizing they were never to return.

After the *Nakba*, Beirut took on the role of cultural center for Palestinian artists. Much of their work in this period centered on the experience of displacement, exile, and nostalgia for their homeland. Artists created work both in the cities they now found themselves living, as well as the refugee camps which became their homes. Palestinian artist and scholar Kamal Boullata characterizes the work by Palestinian artists based in Lebanon:

> Generally speaking, the art produced by camp artists is figurative and often reflects the explicitly narrative imagery popularized by the nationalist rhetoric of the time. The art produced by urban refugees, on the other hand, is more experimental and personal, with any reference to the artist's political experience deeply buried. In terms of audience, the camp artists addressed themselves to the common people whose art appreciation was governed by their nationalist commitment; in contrast, the audience of the Ras Beirut artists [urban artists] was composed of the city's cultural elite who came from different social and political backgrounds.[26]

[25] Established 1908.
[26] Boullata, 123-4.

From 1952 until the 1982 Israeli invasion of southern Lebanon, Beirut was the cultural capital of the Arab world. It was also the home base of the PLO from 1970. Additionally, the PLO established its Arts Education Department in 1965 headed by Beirut-based artist Ismael Shammout. All of these factors combined to make Beirut the site of a growing Palestinian art community, both engaging with the broader cultural trends (among the Ras Beirut artists) and with nationalist expressions of the Palestinian cause (in the cases of the refugee artists).

After the Oslo Accords, Palestinian art production began to shift back into Palestine. The 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon had forced the PLO to Tunisia, and the optimism of the Accords had caused an influx of ex-pat and international money focused on creating NGOs to support local arts and culture. Jerusalem remains a center of the arts—particularly East Jerusalem for Palestinian artists. A number of Palestinian citizens of Israel study at Bezalel, and smaller art galleries and cultural institutions have opened in East Jerusalem as well, including Al-Hoash (2004) and Al Ma'mal Foundation (1998). Ramallah, which became the de facto capital of the Palestinian Authority, also became the new center of Palestinian art production. The Khalil Sakakini Cultural Center and A.M. Qattan Foundation were founded in Ramallah in 1996 and 1998 respectively. The International Academy of Art Palestine was established in 2006, interestingly in partnership with the Oslo National Academy of the Arts, and offers undergraduate degrees in art.[27] This new institution gave Palestinian artists who did not have the ability to study in Jerusalem or abroad the possibility of studying art in Palestine. Still many artists ultimately travel abroad for their arts education or to expand their art careers on the global scene. Meanwhile, the local art scene, especially in Ramallah, has continued to grow.

[27] http://www.artacademy.ps/new/about-us

Contemporary art galleries such as Gallery One, and Zawyeh Gallery, both founded in 2013, have sprung up. The Palestinian Museum of Art opened in 2016, devoid of exhibitions; however, in August of 2017, the first exhibition of international art was open to the public.

Palestinian art today aims to be a part of the global contemporary art scene. The introduction in 2012 of the Qalandia International, a biennial that takes place across historic Palestine (Israel and the Palestinian territories) serves as one such example of this. Additionally, the rise of the Internet has made the exhibition of digital works internationally possible with the click of a button, even if the artist cannot cross the transnational borders. In the same way, exposure to international work, cultural references, and audiences has increased because of the accessibility of media and sharing opportunities made possible by the Internet. Whether or not artists can travel in and out of Palestine, their accessibility to arts production around the globe is a greater possibility in the post-Oslo world than ever before. While many of those artists who have the opportunity to travel, study, or even live abroad have chosen it, many return to Palestine or split their time between Palestine and the diaspora. Many of these artists are using their work as a means to articulate their realities as Palestinians living in the diaspora, in exile, under occupation, or as second-class citizens within their homeland. Artists today are using all types of media including painting, sculpture, installation, photography, and video, with a particular emphasis on digital media due to its ease of transfer/transport.

Chapter Descriptions

My argument is divided into three chapters, each of which takes on one of the three thematics I have identified as indicative of this post-Second Intifada shift in contemporary art production: time, humor, and criticality. In the first chapter, "Occupied Time: Changing Notions

of Palestinian Time," I investigate shifting notions of "Palestinian time." I examine colonial notions of colonized time as one of stagnation, and critique colonial/Western conceptions of modernity and progress as singular and linear, while also acknowledging how this projection onto colonized peoples can result in creating real-life parameters and restrictions that make this a self-fulfilling prophecy. Using sociologist Amal Jamal's notion of Palestinian time as a foundation for the conception of Palestinian time as one of waiting, I expand on it in the context of post-Second Intifada Palestine. I argue that in the wake of the disillusionment caused by the failure of the Oslo Accords, post-Second Intifada Palestinian time is still characterized by waiting. However, unlike the previous conception of waiting where time was frozen in the hope of a return to an idealized pre-Nakba past, this is a waiting wherein time gives the illusion of forward motion, while in reality events recur cyclically without any progress. This can be seen in the daily lives of Palestinians forced to wait in lines at checkpoints, as well as in the repeated cycle of failed peace processes, settlement expansion, and violence. I then analyze how this changing notion of time is articulated in art produced since the Second Intifada. I begin with a discussion of how artists working in the period between the Nakba and the Oslo Accords embodied Jamal's notion of Palestinian time through an analysis of Ismael Shammout's *Whereto* (1953), Sliman Mansour's *Olive Picking* (1988), and 'Asim Abu Shakra's *Cactus* (1989). In these works, Jamal's conception of Palestinian time as one of waiting is evident in depictions of idealized, timeless figures in landscapes devoid of signs of the Israeli state, as well as iconic images, such as the cactus, a symbol of Palestinian patience, potted and sitting on a windowsill waiting for its return to the land. I then turn to an in-depth critical visual analysis of Ashraf Fawakhry's *Ben on the Beach 4* (2012), Dima Hourani's *Past Tense Continuous* (2014), and Nida Sinnokrot's *As In Those Brief Moments* (2014) as examples of works dealing with the new

conception of Palestinian time as cyclical in the post-Second Intifada period. Each of these works represents Palestinian time as one of stagnated waiting and a cyclical repetition of events through the use of repeated imagery in video and film, the insertion of historic imagery into a contemporary context, and the image of the circle.

Chapter 2, "Poking Fun: The Rise of Humor," begins by demonstrating, in the use of the tongue-in-cheek title of Fawakhry's work discussed in Chapter 1, *Ben on the Beach*, how artists are also incorporating humor into their work in the post-Second Intifada period. In the period from the Nakba until the Oslo Accords, humor did not play a significant role in the arts. In the decades immediately following the Nakba, artists focused on the tragedy of Palestinian exile and the resilience of the Palestinian people in their determination to connect with and return to their land. In 1965, when the PLO established its Art Education Department, art became a tool of nationalism and served the PLO's ideology. This was embodied most prominently by the proliferation of poster art production among visual artists. In an analysis of two posters from this period, I demonstrate how the influence of other revolutionary movements in the so-called Third World and the goal of rallying people around the Palestinian liberatory cause dominated the poster art production from the 1960s through the outbreak of the First Intifada in the late 1980s. I then go on to show how, after the start of the Second Intifada, the use of humor became prevalent among contemporary artists. I argue that this shift is a result of disillusionment with the possibility for peace or progress in the wake of the failed Oslo Accords. Through a critical visual analysis of Sharif Waked's *Chic Point* (2003), Raeda Saadeh's *Vacuum* (2007), and Mohammed Musallam's *A Great Value* (2008), I examine how artists have utilized a mix of local and broad (largely Western) humor in their works. These artist incorporate humor in order to bypass compassion fatigue for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to inform audiences about the oftentimes

absurd realities of life under occupation, to create local and international solidarity for the Palestinian cause, and to critique the false promises of progress made by Israeli and Arab governments.

The final chapter, "Looking in the Mirror: Palestinian Reflexive Critique," investigates the expansion of critique among Palestinian artists from one which focuses only on the occupation, to a self-reflexive critique that looks at Palestinian/Arab government, culture, and daily life. This chapter looks at three areas of criticality: political, religious, and gender/sexuality. In the section on political critique, I analyze Wafa Hourani's *Qalandia 2087* (2009) and *Cinema Dunia* (2015) and examine how the artist's creation of a futuristic "mirror party" asks Palestinians to take a look at themselves, their government, and the history of sacrificing Palestinian art and culture in the service of resistance. The section on religious critique looks at the rise of conservative Islam throughout Palestine, and particularly in previously Christian cities like Ramallah and Bethlehem. Inass Yassin's *Projection* (2010) serves as an example of an artist intervention in a space under transformation—the Al-Walid Cinema in Ramallah, which has been changed into a shopping center geared towards a conservative Muslim clientele. Yassin's work critiques the cultural and societal changes that cities like Ramallah are undergoing because of this demographic shift and capitalist neoliberal policies. In the final part, I examine works by Khaled Jarrar and Raafat Hattab in which the artists critique aspects of traditional notions of gender and sexuality that they find persisting in their contemporary Arab society. I analyze how Khaled Jarrar, a former soldier for the Palestinian Security Forces, engages with the interplay of masculinity and militarism in his series of *Butterfly* paintings from his performance in the exhibition *That thou canst not stir a flower without troubling of a star* (2015). Jarrar's combination of military weapons and traditionally feminine colors and imagery

serves as his way of challenging the Arab masculinity he sees as pervasive in the military and Arab culture in general. While Jarrar addresses issues of masculinity in Arab culture, Raafat Hattab articulates his position as a queer Palestinian living within Israel's borders. In an analysis of his video work *Ho(u)ria* (2010), I lay out how Hattab expresses his position of liminality as both a Palestinian living in Israel, and as a queer individual living within a traditional patriarchal Muslim/Arab society. Together, these three chapters demonstrate the shifts in Palestinian contemporary art that articulate a new post-Second Intifada Palestinian mentality.

Chapter 1: Occupied Time: Changing Notions of Palestinian Time

Introduction: Time Under Colonial Occupation

Palestinian time is one of waiting. It is spent waiting for a Palestinian State, for a return from exile, for a peace process to come to fruition, in lines at checkpoints, and for permits to travel. Both the overarching condition of the Palestinian people as well as the quotidian realities of their lives embody this state of waiting.

Sociologist Amal Jamal has discussed the formation of this notion of Palestinian time in detail in his essay for the catalogue for the 2009 exhibition *Men in the Sun* at the Herzliya Museum in Israel. The notion of Palestinian time as being stagnant in relation to that of Zionist time is indicative of a general sense of time and history adopted by the larger Eurocentric perception of "modernity" and "progress." This Western conception of the time of non-Westerners is certainly not unique to Palestinians, but rather has a long tradition in colonialist and imperialist projects. Anthropologist Johannes Fabian notes the link between his own field and colonialism stating that anthropology "gave to politics and economics—both concerned with human Time—a firm belief in 'natural,' i.e., evolutionary Time. It promoted a scheme in terms of which not only past cultures, but all living societies were irrevocably placed on a temporal slope, a stream of Time—some upstream, others downstream. […] *Primitive* being essentially a temporal concept, is a category, not an object, of Western thought."[28] It was based on this notion—that there was one evolutionary timeline on which all cultures and societies were placed, those Western firmly in the "now" while those non-Western in various stages of stunted progress—that colonial enterprises advanced their causes. It was through bringing Western

[28] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1983: 17.

"progress" to these other countries and cultures that colonial powers claimed to help advance the colonized closer to the contemporary. This was of course disingenuous, as the colonial powers perpetuated a dynamic that would indefinitely keep the colonized in a state of "not yet ready" for self-governance while profiting from indigenous resources and labor and eradicating entire populations.

This conception of a set chronology of time is intricately linked to notions of modernity, which, like time, is presented by colonial Western powers as a fixed state—some cultures having reached it, while others not. Fabian refers to this as "Typological Time" wherein time is broken into stages by which societies can be defined as either before or after the defining transitory moment—e.g, "preliterate vs. literate, traditional vs. modern, peasant vs. industrial."[29] Zionist settlers in Palestine, as the British before them (as well as a host of European countries throughout Asia and Africa, not to mention North America), justified their presence in part through an assertion of bringing modernity, defined in a singular Western fashion, to the region. As philosopher Peter Osborne explicates, "Indeed, the idea of modernization, through which the sociological concept of modernity was extended beyond its original reference to European and Northern American societies, in the context of the process of post-war decolonization, notoriously presumes a homogenous continuum of historical time across which comparative judgements about social development may be made in abstraction from all qualitative temporal differences."[30] Again, the blanket assumption and extrapolation of Western definitions of modernity to a universal ignores, as Osborne notes, the possibility of alternative modernities developed under different social circumstances.

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[29] Ibid, 21.
[30] Peter Osborne, *The Politics of Time: Modernity and Avant-Garde*, New York: Verso, 1995: 1.

Additionally, this mapping of a singular modernity, and lack of having achieved said modernity, onto non-Western cultures ignores the impact of colonial histories on these societies. The imposition of colonial notions of modernity onto these societies disrupted the existing cultures and social orders, frequently leading to a resistance of colonized societies to these conceptions of "modernity" that then self-fulfill the image of the culture as inherently and perpetually "backwards" in relation to a universalized Western modernity (if not continuing to move further in that direction). For example, some scholars have argued that the resurgence in the imposition of the veil in Arab cultures was a result of the exposure of Arab women's sexuality and the emasculation of Arab men embodied in Orientalism and Orientalist depictions and perceptions among Westerners about Arab women. Veiling was seen as a means by which Arab men could take control back—reasserting their masculine dominance and role as protectors of female sexuality.[31] The assumption of a universalized modernity embodied by the West that has simply not yet been achieved by non-Western societies assumes both that these non-Western societies do not embody their own modernity, rather asserting that their contemporary state and all its characteristics inherently define a lack of modernity, and that a Western modernity would be desired by these peoples.

The comparison between this history of 20th century colonialism and Zionist immigration and expansion in Palestine is particularly important to note as the Zionist project in Palestine is a settler colonial project akin to that of and perpetuated in large part through support by the United States. Unlike many of the colonial projects throughout Europe and Asia, in the United States, colonization occurred via the settlement of colonizers on the land, and the resultant expulsion and genocide of the indigenous people. The fact that in the early 1940s there was even a proposal

[31] Lalla Essaydi, "Disrupting the Odalisque," *World Literature Today*, 87 (2013), 65.

to establish the Jewish State in Palestine as a Commonwealth of the United States belies this intimate link between the U.S. and the Zionist project that continues to this day.[32] As in the U.S., the establishment of the Jewish state and continued expansion in Palestine is based on a process of settler colonialism wherein the indigenous people are exiled or eradicated to make way for the expansion of the colonizers' settlements. Israel's ability to continue this expansion and protect the existing settlements is due to its military force, which continues to be sustained by foreign aid from the United States, who justifies this "special relationship" as a means to keep a foothold in the Middle East, both militarily and "democratically." The latter of these claims is particularly hollow given the history of U.S. intervention to sustain undemocratic governments that maintained favorable U.S. relationships, and the intervention into democratically elected governments to install more favorable rulers both in the Middle East and elsewhere.[33] Therefore it is important to see the Israeli presence in Palestine as a settler colonial project and understand the conceptions of Palestinian time as projected upon Palestinians as part of this larger history.

From the start, the Zionist imposition of the perception of Palestinian time as static and "backwards" was a colonial project. As with the perception of other non-Western populations in the eyes of Westerners, Jamal notes that the Zionists saw the Palestinians as caught in the past without any movement towards "modernity."[34] Because of this, the Zionists viewed their arrival in Palestine as beneficial to the Palestinians, as they would bring their Western advancements and "modernizing" technologies to Palestine and the "primitive" peoples inhabiting it.[35]

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[32] The proposal was made at the Biltmore Conference at the Biltmore Hotel in New York City in 1942. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011.
[33] The CIA-backed coups in Iran in 1953 and Guatemala in 1954 serve as just two examples from the Cold War era.
[34] Jamal, E12-13
[35] Ibid.

Interestingly, however, this "backwardness" did not, for the Zionists, link the Palestinian people to a lengthy history with the land. Rather, looking further back to Biblical times, the Zionists saw their immigration to Palestine as a long-awaited return to a land to which they perceived themselves as having a historical claim.[36] By "returning" to the land, Zionists were coming back to the historical timeline intended for the Jews. The Palestinians therefore "continued to be constructed and perceived as a people frozen in time, waiting for an external redeemer to save them from themselves. Palestinian 'stasis' was thus gradually transformed into biological time, part of the land's natural order, together with the Palestinians, who supposedly lack any historical sense of their own."[37] In other words, the view of Palestinians as stagnant became attributed to their natural state of being—a state absent Western conceptions of modernization, and therefore progress. The Palestinian people were viewed by Zionists as unchanging elements of a landscape ripe for enrichment, much like the arid land itself. Therefore the Palestinians, and their relationship to the land, were perceived by the Zionists as waiting—waiting for the introduction to modernity, waiting for a re-insertion into history (in which they had been removed as evidenced by their anachronistic primitivism), and waiting for the savior of the Zionists who would bring prosperity to the land.

Once the State of Israel was established, resulting in what Palestinians refer to as the Nakba (Catastrophe in Arabic): the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homes into permanent exile, the Zionist/Israeli control of Palestinian time continued. As Jamal notes, by creating laws that allowed for historical links of any Jew to the land of Israel, while simultaneously requiring extensive documentation and proof from Palestinians to allow for their

[36] Ibid, E12.
[37] Ibid, E13.

presence in the land, the Palestinians were again severed from history and suspended in time, waiting for their own rights and acknowledgement of their links to the land, while Jewish immigrants were inserted into the lineage of a Biblical historical narrative.[38] These bureaucratic hoops, and later, physical roadblocks, all serve the purpose of suspending Palestinian time—placing Palestinians in a limbo of waiting outside of time and history—in the service of allowing for the supremacy and free movement of Israeli history and time.[39]

Post-Nakba: Nostalgic Time

While the preceding has centered on the imposed perception of Palestinian time on Palestinians by Zionists/Israelis, the physical conditions produced by the formation of the State of Israel—the expulsion of Palestinians into permanent exile and continued expansion of settler colonialism—have produced a lived reality of stagnation and limbo for Palestinians themselves. Conceptually, the context of Israeli settler colonialism places Palestinians in a state of suspended time. As Mark Rifkin, a scholar of English whose work focuses on the indigenous peoples of the U.S., has remarked with regards to indigenous people living under settler colonial rule and their relationship to time: "Either they are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined on non-native terms."[40] As these conceptions of Palestinian time held by the Israelis were utilized to excuse, explain, and justify actual policies on the ground and legal structures for implementing action, Palestinian lived reality became structured by the ideas laid out in the Zionist framework.

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[38] Ibid.
[39] Ibid, E13-15.
[40] Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017): vii.

Palestinians who were forcibly removed from their homes during the Nakba remained in waiting, oftentimes still in possession of the keys to their homes, unable to return, yet resilient in the hope that they one day would. Those Palestinians who remained living in the new Israeli state were faced with new laws and restrictions that prevented forward movement—restrictions on which professions they could occupy, building, renting, or squatters taking over homes, and the destruction of Palestinian homes in the name of national security or ecological preservation.

The Israeli government wasted little time in creating the legal framework in the new Jewish State for preventing the return of those Palestinians who had fled their homes and restricting the freedoms of those who remained. In the first years after the *Nakba*, the Israeli army continued to take over and expel the populations of Arab and Bedouin villages.[41] Legislation was passed in the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) as early as 1950 to prevent the repatriation of Palestinians and allow for the continued appropriation of Palestinian land in the name of governmental public works.[42] It was not only in issues of land that Palestinians living in Israel faced discrimination. Though never made official through legal channels, Palestinians were all but blocked from pursuing professions that required higher education such as law and medicine, in part due to the low acceptance rate of Palestinians in Israeli institutions of higher learning.[43] This served as another reason for the persistently widening economic gap between Palestinians in Israel and their Jewish counterparts.

However, the issue of land remained the primary site of contention and discrimination. It was through the assertion of ownership and "right" to increasing amounts of land that the Israeli

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[41] Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004): 146.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid, 181, 228.

government shored up its permanence. Bouts of land confiscating persisted well beyond the first post-*Nakba* years, for example, in the post-Six Day War (1967) period. In order to "Judaize the Galilee" (the official slogan of the Housing Ministry) "the emergency regulations from the British Mandate were used again to expropriate land without compensation or the right of protest. The land was used for new Jewish towns (no new Arab town has ever been built in Israel) and community centres [... and] for the Israeli army, which seemed to be in constant need of more training grounds."[44] Implementing pre-*Nakba* emergency regulations to justify their actions or making claims of need for the security of the country via military training grounds, the Israeli government maintained an enduring policy of land confiscation from Palestinians, preventing the ability for their own advancement within the Israeli state. The expansion of land takeover was not restricted to within Israel's borders after 1967: the newly occupied territories of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, Sinai, Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem (the latter two of which were annexed) were also populated with Jewish settlements.[45] In addition to settlement expansion and the appropriation of lands for military purposes, other land grabs have occurred in the name of environmental preservation to make national parks.[46]

It is not only land confiscation and limitations on professional betterment that are restricted for Palestinians living in Israel. The Israeli government has upheld racist rental and residence policies. Adalah: the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel has documented instances of discrimination against Palestinian renters by legally upheld "admissions committees," which regulate who may live in Israeli towns, and by Israeli car rental companies,

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[44] Ibid, 227.
[45] The West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Golan Heights continue to see settlement expansion to this day. Jewish settlements in Gaza were removed in 2005. The Sinai was completely returned to Egypt by 1989.
[46] One such example from 2016: http://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium-1.704255.

who have denied rentals to individuals based on their having "Arab-sounding" names.[47] These practices are frequently upheld in the name of ambiguous security concerns and prevent Palestinians living in Israel (as well as those living under military rule in the occupied territories) from forward progression.

Palestinian suspension in a period of waiting is additionally complicated by the conceptual concern among many Palestinians with moving forward. As Jamal notes, "Palestinian communities everywhere are divided between the desire to normalize their own lives and those of future generations and the desire not to accept the current situation because doing so would mean renouncing the return to their original condition of affiliation."[48] For Palestinians to accept the state of things as they are now, rather than waiting for the return to their nostalgic past, would mean to lose the possibility of achieving it. It is therefore not only the restrictions of Zionist time that places Palestinians in a state of waiting, but also Palestinians themselves. However, the younger generations of Palestinians do not have the same nostalgia for the pre-Nakba period that the older generations do, for the simple reason that they have no recollection of the time before. Those born after 1967 do not have any memory of a pre-occupied West Bank, and those who grew up after the First Intifada (1987) have an understanding of their quotidian and persistent reality based in the failed optimism of the 1990s (marked by the Oslo Accords [1993] and the Second Intifada [2000]), and the subsequent cyclicality of the "go-nowhere" peace talks. For this generation, and its artists (to be discussed later in this chapter), a nostalgia for the past has been replaced by a frustration for the repetitive cyclicality of their daily lives and the overall Palestinian condition under occupation.

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[47] See https://www.adalah.org/.
[48] Jamal, E20.

Nostalgic Time & Post-Nakba Art

This shifting notion of Palestinian time and waiting from one of nostalgia to cyclicality can be seen in Palestinian artists' works across generations. As Jamal has noted with regards to artists in the post-Nakba period, in addition to the "persistent themes of nostalgia and yearnings for the lost past" among refugees, "[n]ostalgia and the pain of loss with respect to the presence of Palestine in history have also found expression since the Nakba in the literature, art and poetry produced by the major Palestinian artists active in their homeland and abroad."[49] These themes can be seen prominently in the paintings of artists working in the post-Nakba period. These paintings depict the pristine untouched landscape of pre-Nakba Palestine as a nostalgic idealized homeland, with monumental figures standing in for the strength of Palestinians and Palestine, and resilient iconic symbols like the olive tree and the cactus.

Ismael Shammout (1930-2006) was one of the founders of the post-Nakba Palestinian art movement.[50] Eighteen when the Nakba occurred, Shammout and his family were forced out of their homes in Lydda, ending up in a refugee camp in Gaza.[51] Shammout's style was largely influenced by his teacher in Lydda, Daoud Zalatimo, who painted in a figurative and iconographic style.[52] Shammout utilized this style to address the events he had just experienced—his desire to engage with the political situation was influenced further by his studies in Cairo in the 1950s, at a time when it was the center of Arab anti-colonial activism.[53] Shammout's work, like much of the other paintings from this period, emphasized the plight and resilience of the Palestinian people. As Gannit Ankori has remarked, the work from this

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[49] Jamal, E19.
[50] Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2006), 20.
[51] Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present* (Berkeley: Saqi, 2009), 130.
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

movement aimed to create "a national collective identity" of perseverance around which the Palestinian people might be able to unite, as well as creating moving imagery that would bring attention and support to the cause of the Palestinian people.[54] In these portrayals, in canvases such as Shammout's, the moment of exile is perpetual. These figures appear eternally suspended in the moment of the Nakba, frozen in a Palestinian landscape not yet reshaped by Israeli establishments and their expansion, yet from which they are being expelled. These figures are depicted as stuck in a state of waiting for the moment of Palestinian return. While they remain in the land, determined in their resolve to not acquiesce and leave, their suffering is also persistent. These images are not romantic in their idealization of these individuals, but rather commemorations of the anguish those affected by the Nakba had to endure, and the reality that this torment continues, and will until a return is achieved.

Ismael Shammout's painting *Whereto?* (1953) (Figure 2) serves an example of this post-Nakba suspension of Palestinians in time and space. The painting depicts a man walking with three children. All four figures appear exhausted and devastated—at least two of the children are crying. They stand in an almost completely desolate landscape; the only tree visible is barren. In the distance, we can see the greenery and shadows of an Arab town—identifiable by its tall minaret piercing the sky.[55] The figures have been exiled from their home and now face an uncertain future. Despite this, the man clutches his walking stick and one of the children's hands with determination and resolve. The painting depicts the perseverance of the Palestinian people, in 1948, when they were exiled, and still in 1953, when this painting was completed. The notion of their lives as frozen in time is highlighted by the fact that the question, "whereto?" has still not

[54] Ankori, 48.
[55] Ibid, 49.

been answered for many. "Whereto?" is a continued state for Palestinians, as generation after generation remains suspended in this hanging question.

Sliman Mansour (b. 1947) is arguably the most famous artist from this post-Nakba generation, and continues to make work today. His art education, at Bezalel in Jerusalem, gave him technical skills, as well as a background in American, European and Israeli art history.[56] He sought to independently educate himself on Arab and Islamic art, through which he was exposed to artists such as Ismael Shammout, whose work would become influential for Mansour.[57] Like Shammout, Mansour's figures are monumental, and focus on the hardships of the Palestinian tragedy, but also on the persistence of Palestinian resistance. Perhaps more than Shammout, Mansour focuses on this latter aspect of the post-Nakba Palestinian experience in his paintings of Palestinians working the land. These paintings are timeless, in that they are devoid of any clear reference to a point in time. There is nothing identifying these moments as post-Nakba scenes. In this sense, they are simply portrayals linking Palestinians to this land, depicting these individuals' insistence on their tie to their homeland, and patient waiting for their return to unrestricted working of the land.[58] Mansour's portrayals of Palestinians working the land was seen as the visual embodiment of *sumud* or "steadfastness," a concept that began to be used by Palestinians as a national symbol in the 1960s, and referred to "a strong determination to stay in the country and on the land."[59] The olive tree in particular became a visual symbol of *sumud* due to its long history in Palestine and the fact that it only produced olives after a number of years.[60]

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[56] Ibid, 60, 65-66.
[57] Ibid, 67.
[58] Ibid, 72.
[59] Alexandra Rijke & Toine van Teeffelen, "To Exist Is To Resist: Sumud, Heroism, and the Everyday," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 59, 2014: 86.
[60] Ibid, 87.

Sliman Mansour's *Olive Picking* (1988) (Figure 3) is typical of the artist's figurative, *sumud* painting during this period. Mansour's figures are large and sturdy—monumental—taking up much of the canvas.[61] The coloring of their skin matches that of the land itself, visually tying them to the land they work.[62] The figures are dressed in traditional Palestinian garb, and are in the midst of working, picking olives from thick trees, which occupy the rest of the scene. The individuals' work with the land, with the olive trees that are indicative of Palestine, as well as their traditional clothing, make reference to their deep-rooted connection with this land. The man and woman in the image appear as the mother and father of Palestine and Palestinians—a modern Palestinian Adam and Eve. Despite the fact that this work was painted in the early years of the First Intifada, there is no indication of violence, turmoil, or Israeli occupation. Rather, these figures exist outside of time—in a nostalgic pre-Nakba Palestine of the past frozen in time—waiting for a return. By 1988, forty years after the Nakba, this nostalgia for a past where the scenes in Mansour's paintings could be a reality persisted.

'Asim Abu Shakra's (1961-1990) work is largely informed by his experiences as a Palestinian citizen of Israel. Abu Shakra was born in Umm El Fahem, an Arab city within the state of Israel that remains today one of the most prominent Arab cities within the Jewish state. It additionally serves as the center for Arab arts in Israel through the Umm El Fahem Gallery and forthcoming museum, organized and run by 'Asim's brother, Said.[63] Despite having been born thirty years after Shammout, Abu Shakra continued to articulate sentiments of persistent waiting for a return to the land of Palestine that appeared in the older artist's works. However, Abu Shakra's particular position as a Palestinian living in Israel led him to turn to a new choice of

[61] Ankori, 73.
[62] Ibid, 72.
[63] Boullata, 183.

iconography—the cactus—a plant that held conflicting meaning for Palestinians and Israelis. The Israelis had adopted the cactus or *sabra* as a symbol of the new Jew—hard and tough on the outside but sweet on the inside—the antithesis of the "weak Jew" that had "allowed" the Holocaust to happen to him.[64] The adoption of the cactus, something native to Palestine, rather than a symbol of Europe, where the Zionist immigrants had overwhelmingly come from, also tied this "new Jew" to the land in Palestine, and ultimately the new State of Israel. On the other hand, *sabr*, the Palestinian Arabic word for cactus, means patience. In this sense, the use of the cactus communicates the Palestinian resolve to wait for this return to their land, and the persistent patience of the Palestinian people.

In a quintessential painting from Abu Shakra's series, *Cactus* (1989) (Figure 4), the artist depicts a cactus in a potted plant, perched on a windowsill. The cactus itself was a symbol of Palestinian waiting. It had been uprooted from its native land, and placed in this artificial home, waiting for its return to the land just beyond the window. As a Palestinian citizen of Israel, Abu Shakra experienced this waiting through the continued denial of housing in Tel Aviv due to the fact that he was Arab, as well as the persistent lack of a Palestinian nation or state that spoke to his national interests.[65] Additionally, his position within the Israeli state makes the choice of the cactus a particularly interesting one. The symbol of the cactus has been uprooted from its land, and utilized as part of the new notion of Palestine as put forth by Zionists in the establishment of the State of Israel. Abu Shakra's cactus waits in the confines of the pot in which it has been

[64] Daniel Boyarin, "Outing Freud's Zionism, or, the Bitextuality of the Diaspora Jew," *Queer Diasporas*. Ed.s Cindy Patton and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000, 72.
[65] Ibid, 195.

placed, awaiting its return to its place of origin, its meaning of origin, the place it belongs—back in the land.

Time Between the Intifadas: Optimism and Disappointment

In the early 1990s, there began to be some hopefulness that some form of Palestinian sovereignty might be feasible. A combination of factors coalesced to make this possible. A new Israeli government elected in 1992 paved the way for possible negotiations on the withdrawal of Israelis from occupied land, and which was willing to recognize the PLO as representative of the Palestinian people and negotiate with them.[66] The PLO had also gained public support during the First Intifada, though it had also lost its primary superpower backer when the Soviet Union collapsed and suffered decreased financial support from Saudi Arabia in the wake of its support of Saddam Hussein in the Gulf War.[67] The governing forces representing both the Israelis and Palestinians appeared willing to negotiate on conditions that had previously been non-starters, such as the departure of Israelis from occupied lands and the right of return for all refugees.[68] These negotiations led to the Declaration of Principles (DoP, commonly referred to as the first of the Oslo Accords), which was signed in Washington on September 13, 1993.

The DoP outlined the parameters for an "interim period" after which final negotiations on three of the most contentious issues would be discussed: the status of Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, and the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories.[69] While these issues are arguably the most crucial, the interim period did appear to lay out improvements to be undertaken. During this period there would be "an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho, to be followed by a

[66] Pappe, 243.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Ibid, 242-243.
[69] Ibid, 243.

gradual transfer of certain civil functions from Israel to the PLO, and an eventual Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian towns and population centres."[70] Additionally, the Accords created the Palestinian Authority (PA), which asserted its sovereignty over the limited Palestinian areas that it was given through the formation of bureaucratic establishments and proliferation of the use of symbols such as the flag.[71] This appeared to be a path to the beginnings of Palestinian sovereignty on at least some of the lands occupied after the 1967 war, with the potential for further negotiations in the future. However, the DoP "stressed […] that Israel's participation in such negotiations was conditional on a 'successful and peaceful' implementation of the interim agreement, effectively an Israeli veto."[72] As the Israeli military was able to determine what did and did not satisfy the requirement of "successful and peaceful," it was at the discretion of the Israelis to suspend or put a halt on any elements of progress towards sovereignty and emancipation outlined in the accords.

Additionally, the Israelis immediately violated aspects of the agreement that would affect any future negotiations. For example, the DoP outlined that "Neither side shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations."[73] However, "[f]rom 1994 onwards, Israel began a construction effort, including building new settlements and expanding old ones, and erecting border fences that delineated the partition of the West Bank prior to negotiations. […] by 1996 the settler population had increased by 48 per cent in the West Bank and 62 per cent in the Gaza Strip."[74] This practice, which continues in the West Bank to this day, make the ultimate

[70] Ibid, 244.
[71] Ibid, 246.
[72] Ibid, 244.
[73] Quoted in Pappe, 245.
[74] Pappe, 245.

withdrawal of Jewish settlers much less viable as an option, and aims to set the framework for ultimate claims of the need for Israeli sovereignty over that land in any final negotiation.

The outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000 was the ultimate marker of the failure of Oslo. However, in looking at the specifics of the DoP, it is clear that despite the optimism surrounding the Accords, they were "doomed to fail."[75] In fact, "[a]s early as 1995, most Palestinians had labelled the Oslo process as yet another form of occupation, and most Israelis felt that it had failed to safeguard their personal security."[76] Only two short years after the Accords were signed, the optimism they had wrought was gone, and replaced with a disillusionment in the potential for this so-called "path to peace." The rise of fundamentalist religious parties among both Israeli and Palestinian governance and the position of Jerusalem at the center of both religious and political tension in the region meant that it was only a matter of time before another uprising was ignited. On September 28, 2000, then prime minister of Israel Ariel Sharon visited what Jews refer to as the Temple Mount (called Haram al-Sharif by Muslims) with a group of Israeli politicians surrounded by armed Israeli security forces. This site is holy for both Jews and Muslims and while Sharon claimed that his visit was intended to affirm Israeli rights to visit the site, it was seen as an assertion of Israeli sovereignty and sparked the Second Intifada, also known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada for the mosque that resides at the site of the Haram.

After the Intifada: Stuck in a State of Exception

While Jamal discusses how the suspension of Palestinian time allows for the dominance and freedom of Zionist time and the removal of Palestinians from the historical timeline, I argue

[75] Ibid, 254.
[76] Ibid.

that, in the period after the Second Intifada, a shift has occurred for Palestinians in relation to time and history. After the First Intifada and the optimism brought on by the potential of the Oslo Accords, the realization that they were not to come to fruition resulted in the frustration and anger that exploded in the Second Intifada. After the Second Intifada, increased restrictions on Palestinian movement manifested in the building of the separation wall and an increase in the number of checkpoints limiting Palestinian mobility. While checkpoints between Occupied Palestine and Israel had existed since the early 1990s, "[d]uring the second intifada, Israel established dozens of checkpoints and hundreds of physical obstructions inside the West Bank, including dirt mounts, concrete blocks, and trenches, and began construction of the Separation Barrier and its crossing gates. These restrictions [were] unprecedented in the history of the Israeli occupation in terms of the scope, duration, and severity of harm to the daily lives of Palestinians living in the West Bank."[77] In the early months of the Second Intifada, Israel implemented a complete closure on the West Bank, after which the number of checkpoints increased, including so-called "flying checkpoints" which would appear and disappear without notice.[78] These checkpoints aided in not only delaying Palestinian movement, but also blocking it entirely, preventing access to certain "forbidden roads" totally about 152 miles by 2004.[79] The plan for the apartheid wall (also known as the separation barrier) was approved by Prime Minister Ehud Barak in 2000, and building of the permanent barrier began in 2002.[80] By 2014, 62% of the barrier had been constructed and, though little progress has been made since, it continues to have

[77] http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement Accessed June 22, 2017.
[78] http://www.btselem.org/freedom_of_movement/closure Accessed June 22, 2017.
[79] http://www.btselem.org/download/200408_forbidden_roads_eng.pdf, 16, Accessed June 22, 2017.
[80] B'Tselem, *Behind the Barrier: Human Rights Violatiosn as a Result of Israel's Separation Barrier* (Jerusalem: B'Tselem, 2003): 6-7.
http://www.btselem.org/download/200304_behind_the_barrier_eng.pdf Accessed June 22, 2017.

a devastating impact on Palestinian daily life.[81] These constraints have made it more challenging for Palestinian individuals to travel to see family, to get to work, receive adequate health care, or just travel throughout their territories.

With these new and increased literal and figurative road blocks, Palestinian waiting became a quotidian activity made plain and visible. This waiting also became cyclical and repetitive, as individuals waited in the same checkpoints, day after day, repeating the same humiliations and frustrations in an attempt to go about their daily lives. In addition to these new physical obstacles, another cycle became apparent after this point—that of promises of peace processes, their failure, violence, and settler colonial expansion. Gaza wars occur regularly, almost every two years.[82] The state of Palestinian waiting became like that of someone standing at the center of a Merry-Go-Round: there is a semblance of things moving forward, however they are simply standing still while things repeat, over and over again. Iraqi-born artist Sadik Kwaish Alfraji describes this phenomenon another way. Speaking generally about the state of Middle Eastern politics since the Arab Spring, he likened it to the Greek myth of Sisyphus who was condemned to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll back down, repeating this cycle eternally. Alfraji uses this comparison to describe the "persistent, punitive cycle without a discernable conclusion" that he sees in contemporary Middle Eastern politics.[83] While Alfraji

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[81] http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Israel-to-re-authorize-security-barrier-route-near-West-Bank-historical-site-on-Sunday-375827 Accessed June 22, 2017.

[82] Excepting only 2012, there were wars in 2008, 2010, and 2014, since Israel's disengagement from the Strip in 2005.

[83] Siobhan Forshaw, "Many Rivers to Cross," *Reorient* Magazine, August 24, 2015, accessed September 16, 2015, http://www.reorientmag.com/2015/08/sadik-kwaish-alfraji/ Alfraji further stressed this comparison in his work *Sisyphus goes on demonstration* (2012), an animation consisting of rows of black figures walking eternally in place set to the sounds of protests during the Arab Spring.

relates this to a post-Arab Spring state, I contend that for Palestinians, this has been their political and quotidian reality since the Second Intifada—this is the new state of Palestinian waiting.

This new Palestinian time was still one of waiting, but rather than waiting for an idealized Palestine of the past, it was rather a waiting taken up by a cyclical routine of checkpoints, permits and violent Israeli aggression. The Oslo Accords, establishment of the Palestinian Authority, and expansion of the Separation Wall in the wake of the Second Intifada, created a new perspective on time. While the Oslo Accords and establishment of a Palestinian governing force ushered forth optimism with regards to the fulfillment of the establishment of a Palestinian state, the failure for the promises of the Accords to come to fruition, and the establishment of greater restriction on movement through checkpoints and the separation wall after the Second Intifada created new manifestations of Palestinian waiting, visible in their quotidian lives. Artists working in the period after the Second Intifada embody this shifting notion of time—rather than creating works that enunciate a desire for an idealized past frozen in time to which they are waiting to return, these artists are exposing the cyclical nature of events in contemporary Palestinian time. While their notion of Palestinian time is still one of waiting, it is one of waiting and watching events repeat themselves over and over, with no real progress going forward. This is embodied in images of the circle, repeated imagery or actions in video and film, and the re-insertion of historical imagery into a contemporary context to emphasize the lack of change that has occurred since the Nakba.

Art in a Circuitous State of Exception

Artists from the post-Nakba period who were still making work in the post-Second Intifada period, such as Sliman Mansour, continued (and in some cases, continue to this day) to produce paintings in the previous style, and with an expression of Palestinian time of nostalgic

waiting. However, after the hopefulness of the Oslo Accords, their ultimate failure and the outbreak of the Second Intifada, along with the resulting new restrictions on Palestinian movement discussed above, a new generation of artists for whom the idealized Palestine of the past was not something to which they could relate no longer considered waiting for a return to that time a reality, and instead addressed the new kind of Palestinian time that had resulted. This new notion of Palestinian time was still one of waiting; however rather than waiting for a return to a nostalgic past, this waiting is a cyclical one. The post-Second Intifada notion of Palestinian time is defined by a repetitive waiting, marking by daily routines in checkpoints, as well as the perpetual cycle of failed peace processes. In this waiting, there is an illusion of forward motion and claims of progress towards peace; however this is illusory as the Israeli occupation ensures the maintenance of the status quo.

Ashraf Fawakhry's (b. 1974) *Ben on the Beach 5* (2012) (Figure 5) demonstrates the circuitous nature of Palestinian time through repeated imagery and the impression of a circular motion. As an artist living and working in Haifa, in his work Fawakhry examines the complex position of Palestinian citizens of Israel, such as himself. One particular motif he has used to do this has been the symbol of the donkey. Fawakhry first began to use the donkey in his work for his graduation exhibition in 1996.[84] For this body of work, he made a rubber stamp of the donkey to create a series of small drawings. Since that exhibition, the donkey has become an integral part of the artist's work, appearing in paintings, sculptures, and drawings. The donkey has become a stand-in for Fawakhry himself.[85]

[84] Ashraf Fawakhry, in discussion with the author, May 13, 2015.
[85] Ibid.

The donkey, much like the cactus, olive tree, and hummus, among others, has had its cultural ownership and meaning disputed and coopted as part of Israeli settler colonialism.[86] In the same way that Zionists forged a narrative of Israeli history that painted the land as empty and established a biblical connection between Jews and the land while denying any alternative Palestinian links, they also produced an Israeli culture that appropriated Palestinian heritage to construct an indigeneity within the new Israeli state. Palestinian cuisine and cultural symbols like the donkey and cactus have been adopted and inserted into Israeli culture as its own. As Palestinian social scientist Ahmad H. Sa'di has remarked, "Palestinian culture has thus become a pool from which Israelis pick and choose in order to build an 'authentic' Israeli culture."[87] Zionists fashioned a new Israeli culture that left behind the symbols which recalled the old European Jews who were nearly obliterated during the Holocaust and established ties to their new homeland, while simultaneously erasing the originary Palestinian cultural identity of these symbols.

With regards to the donkey, early Jewish artists tended to depict the donkey as the ubiquitous companion to Arab villagers or a fixture of Arab towns.[88] The donkey, who is seen as stubborn, lazy, simple and submissive, was associated by these artists with the Arabs living in historic Palestine.[89] However, as Zionists aimed to forge greater ties with the land themselves in order to assert their longstanding connection with their biblical homeland, Jewish artists began to

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[86] Farid Abu Shakra, "Persona Non Grata", February 2015, exhibition ephemera, published in conjunction with the exhibition at The House of Culture and Art, Nazareth.
[87] Ahmad H. Sa'di, "Catastrophe, Memory and Identity: Al-Nakbah as a Component of Palestinian Identity," *Israel Studies* 7 (Summer 2002): 185.
[88] Drora Dekel, "Ashraf Fawakhry: Ibn hadha al-ārḍ," [Ashraf Fawkhry: Son of this Land], February 2014, exhibition ephemera, published in conjunction with the exhibition at Al-Kabri Gallery, Al-Kabri.
[89] Ibid.

create works that depicted the donkey in a positive light—admiring it for its hard work, determination, and ability to forge through seemingly impassable situations.[90] Much like other indigenous cultural symbols, Zionists began to adopt the donkey for their own. Zionists utilized the image of the donkey as symbolic of the narrative that they were aiming to construct about themselves—a narrative which pictured them as pioneers who had overcome great obstacles (in their attempted extermination during the Holocaust) and who would produce a fertile and prosperous state out of a barren desert in Palestine.

However, the donkey already held a meaningful position within Arab culture. Much like the attribution the Zionists gave to the donkey when associating it with the Arabs they came across in Palestine, the donkey is largely seen negatively within Arab culture—to call someone a donkey is an insult.[91] When Fawakhry first started using the donkey in his imagery, many people saw it as a derogatory visual representative of the Arab/Palestinian people generally, and some took offense.[92] Even in instances where Fawakhry indicates that he is using the donkey as a self-portrait, first made apparent in his 1997 exhibition "I am a Donkey," since Fawakhry uses the donkey in this manner to critique both Arab and Israeli politics and culture, it has continuously been read as an unsettling and controversial choice.[93] Given the fact that the donkey has been used as an insult for Arabs by both Zionists and Palestinians, Fawakhry's adoption of it as a symbol for himself may place an ownership of these negative qualities on Palestinians living in Israel that is distressing for other Palestinians living in Israel.

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ashraf Fawakhry, in discussion with the author, May 13, 2015.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Dekel.

However, in spite of its generally negative perception, the donkey has also held a special place in Arab culture, particularly literature. In Emile Habiby's famous novel *The Secret Life of Saeed: The Pessoptimist* (1974), Saeed, a Palestinian who lives within Israel's borders and encounters many of the difficulties that are a part of this particular condition, is saved when a donkey steps between him and an oncoming bullet.[94] Habiby's donkey is, albeit perhaps unwittingly, a protector and hero of the young Palestinian. A donkey is also the constant companion of Juha, a figure in humorous folk stories and fables told throughout the Islamic world.[95] While Juha's stories usually involve him demonstrating some level of stupidity, he is a beloved character and, as Fawakhry noted, "I like him because, on the one hand, he underestimates himself, but on the other hand, he takes a hard look at reality."[96] It is in honor of these literary donkeys, and in continuing with their tradition, that Fawakhry employs the figure of the donkey in his work. In particular, Fawakhry admires this scrutiny of reality that is identifiable in both Juha and the donkey. As the artist has remarked, "I choose to embrace the donkey, as my personal identity […] as the donkey accepts reality and recognizes the difficulties of life."[97] Because of the position of the donkey as a symbol caught between the use and interpretation of both Israeli and Palestinian cultures, and its ability to recognize the difficult nature of life but still continue on, the donkey, for Fawakhry, embodies the experience of Palestinian citizens of Israel, like the artist himself.

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[94] Santiago Nasar, "The Stuff of Dreams, the Stuff of Nightmares," *Made in Palestine*, exh. cat. (Houston, Texas: Ineri Publishing/Station Museum, 2003), 80.
[95] Dekel.
[96] Ibid, translated from the Arabic:
"احبه لانه يقلل من شأنِ نفسه من جهة, وينظر إلى الواقع نظرةً ثاقبةً من جهة أخرى."
[97] Ibid, translated from the Arabic:
"فقد أخترتُ احتضانه, شأنه شأنَ هُويتي الشخصية [...] فالحمار يتقبل الواقع ويُسلم بمصاعب الحياة."

The adaptability of donkeys—their ability to "make it work" regardless of the toughness of a situation—arose again in the visual consciousness of Palestinians in 2009. After the death of the zebras in the Gaza City zoo due to hunger during Operation Cast Lead (2008-9), zookeepers painted a pair of donkeys to look like zebras, attracting international attention.[98] Artists adopted the image of the donkey-as-zebra as a means of highlighting the absurdity of Palestinian reality under occupation in works such as Sharif Waked's *Bath Time* (2012), in which a donkey is washed clean of its stripes, presumably after a long day "playing zebra" and Khaled Hourani's *The Zebra Copy Card* (2009), a series of post-cards with the image of the "zebras" on them and the text from a Reuters report of the story of the Gaza zoo on the back. These works also interrogate the notion of entertainment, both in the reference to the Gaza zoo, as well as the response from the international community, which focused on the amusement of the painted donkeys rather than the enduring violence of the Israeli occupation that produced the circumstances out of which the innovation of the donkeys-as-zebras came.

Fawakhry's donkey, who, while not disguised as a zebra, is still a figure who adapts to his difficult situation, appears in *Ben on the Beach 5* in somewhat typical fashion for the artist. Rather than a realistic depiction of a donkey, Fawakhry's is flat, almost like a shadow, frequently (though not always) depicted in black, without any indication of sex or other defining features.[99] What is depicted is more the silhouette of a donkey, rather than an actual donkey—making clear its position as an avatar for Fawakhry rather than referencing a particular or real-life donkey. In *Ben on the Beach 5*, Fawakhry's donkey is not so much depicted as he is suggested with negative space. Rather than the flat black image of the donkey that appears in many of his works, in this

[98] Stories appeared via the Associated Press, NBC news, and the Guardian, among others, at the time.
[99] Ibid.

work, the donkey, or rather its head, appears in yellow, the same color as the background of the image, and is shaped from the space between the heads of the male figures that go around it. These figures, in fact, are not multiple men, but rather the same image of a man repeated five times. This man is David Ben Gurion, a founder and the first Prime Minister of Israel, and this particular image of him, doing a tripod headstand, is from a famous image taken by press photographer Paul Goldman on the beach of Herzliya (north of Tel Aviv) in 1957 (Figure 6).[100] The five Ben Gurions go around the donkey at the center, giving the visual impression of a pinwheel.[101]

This shape of the pinwheel, created with the repeated image of Ben Gurion around the donkey, suggests movement. The image of Ben Gurion, one after another, gives the impression of the Ben Gurions moving around the image of the donkey at the center. While, given that Ben Gurion faces to one side, there is an insinuation of forward motion, it is a momentum that, in reality goes nowhere. Ben Gurion goes around and around, but never actually makes any progress. Significantly, the donkey, positioned at the center of this pinwheel, stays stationary the

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[100] *Paul Goldman: press photographer, 1943-1961*, exh. cat. (Jerusalem: Keterpress Enterprises/Tel Aviv: Eretz Israel Museum, 2004), 25. Published in conjunction with the exhibition at the Migdal Gallery, Israel.

[101] An earlier version of the work included only four Ben Gurions, mimicking the four arms common on pinwheels; however, when this work was exhibited in Israel, many viewers perceived the shape created (particularly with Ben Gurion's bent legs) to be that of a swastika, and took offense. This was likely exacerbated by the use of the yellow color as the background, which is reminiscent of the yellow used for the stars Jews had to wear under Nazi German rule. Fawakhry had not intended this reference; the choice of four Ben Gurions mimicking typical pinwheels, and the choice of yellow was intended to express "power, attention, [and] truth." (Ashraf Fawakhry, Email to the author, September 27, 2015). This is not the first time that such a situation has occurred. When Mona Hatoum exhibited her work *Present Tense* in Jerusalem in 1996, viewers questioned her use of soap, linking it to rumors during the Holocaust that soap was produced out of the fat from exterminated Jews. Hatoum, like Fawakhry, had not thought of or even considered this connection—the soap she had used was from Nablus, a Palestinian city famous for its olive oil soap. For Hatoum this was simply a Palestinian connection.

entire time. In some ways, this seems to portray the notion of Palestinian time that Jamal discusses—the perception that Israelis move forward towards modernization while Palestinians are stuck and do not play a role in progress. However, if anything Fawakhry's work critiques this notion, as despite the stagnation of the donkey at the center, standing in for the artist specifically but also Palestinians more generally, Ben Gurion, acting as a figurehead representative of Israelis, moves forward but never actually gets anywhere. His direction of movement, in fact, is not always necessarily forward—pinwheels are at the whim of the wind, or the air blown upon them, shifting in whichever direction it blows.[102] Rather, Fawakhry's painting conveys a post-Second Intifada notion of Palestinian time—one where Palestinians are stuck waiting, while everything around them has the illusion of motion, but in fact is just a repetition of the same events over and over again. Unlike the timelessness visualized in paintings such as Sliman Mansour's *Olive Picking* or the serene persistent waiting of 'Asim Abu Shakra's *Cactus*, Fawakhry's image visualizes motion—a passage of time, but one inherently without progress. This passage of time is a futile waiting, which embodies the discouragement of a post-Second Intifada mentality.

In addition to the use of the pinwheel, Fawakhry's choice of Ben Gurion further emphasizes the illusion of forward progress, despite the reality of circuitous events. As Ben Gurion was the first prime minister of Israel, and is considered its main founder, he symbolizes the initial starting point in history for the current Palestinian condition.[103] To choose this image as the foundation for his pinwheel, Fawakhry utilizes a figure who was central in the foundation of the State of Israel, and therefore in Palestinian occupation, exile, refugee status, and second-

[102] Dekel.
[103] Ashraf Fawakhry, Email to the author, September 27, 2015.

class citizenship in their own land, to revolve around his donkey. Despite the fact that Ben Gurion is no longer prime minister, and is no longer alive (Ben Gurion died in 1973, a year before Fawakhry was born), the ideals he held and circumstances he created still repeat themselves today in the lives of Palestinians. There is still no Palestinian state, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians still live as refugees and in exile, and any attempts at peace agreements have failed.[104]

The choice of Ben Gurion is notable for another reason. Previous generations of Palestinian artists focused on depictions of Palestinians—suffering, heroic, and monumental. The inclusion of an Israeli figure, and a famous picture of the first prime minister of Israel at that, would have been unheard of among previous generations, and, as Fawakhry notes, was even quite shocking to the contemporary Palestinian audience that viewed it when he first exhibited it.[105] Fawakhry moves away from the iconic images of previous generations, adopting his own iconography in the symbol of the donkey, and utilizes it to take a hard look at the realities of the contemporary Palestinian situation. By incorporating the image of Ben Gurion, Fawakhry uses a famous image from the Israeli public consciousness to critique the lack of progress that has been made in eliciting anything other than a dejected stagnation within a cyclical repetitious history.

Stylistically, Fawakhry's work is influenced by his design background, and the American Pop artists, in particular Andy Warhol, that previously incorporated stylistic elements of commercial design into fine art.[106] The use of bright color in the background and the flattening of his images gives the works the sharp sheen of popular advertising. This reference to commercial

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[104] Interestingly, even the prime minister position seems to repeat. Benjamin Netanyahu, the current prime minister who was elected to his position in 2009, was previously the prime minister from 1996-1999.
[105] Ashraf Fawakhry, in discussion with the author, May 13, 2015.
[106] In addition to his art practice, Fawakhry works as a graphic designer. Ibid.

(re)production also serves to emphasize the cyclical nature of Palestinian time post-Second Intifada. References to mass production elicit images of factory production lines, constantly pumping out the same product, one after another. Fawakhry's donkey sits in the midst of mass-produced Ben Gurions going around him—another fabricated round of peace talks, another act of violence in claim of existential defense, another discriminatory law for Palestinian citizens of Israel—these events repeat over and over while the donkey awaits escape from this cycle.

Like Fawakhry, Dima Hourani, in her work *Past Tense Continuous* (2014), references the cyclical nature of events in Palestine. Hourani inserts visual references to the past into a contemporary context to highlight the lack of progress that has occurred between the two time periods. In *Past Tense Continuous*, an 8-minute video work, Hourani sought to explore the iconic images taken during the Nakba (Figures 7-9). These images are well-established in the collective memory of Palestinians. The images depict people, and the belongings they chose to take with them, on foot or in the beds of trucks leaving their homes, headed towards an uncertain future. Hourani sourced these images from the Internet and through friends.[107] She then selected particular "characters" from these images to use as models for the people in her video, choosing 18 individuals—men, women, and children of varying ages—to stand as visual descriptions of the three types of Palestinian families that were displaced: Bedouins, farmers, and city-dwellers.[108] She conducted research on the clothing of the time period, so that she could replicate it in dressing her characters, and also scoured markets for objects like those that the individuals

[107] Dima Hourani, in conversation with the author, June 7, 2015.
[108] Hourani cited in multiple local news sources: "'Al-fᶜal al-māḍī al-mustamir' yᶜaīd al-Nakba ilā al-dhākra (ṣuwar)" ["Past Tense Continuous" returns the Nakba to memory (pictures)], May 15, 2014, Accessed September 18, 2015. http://zamnpress.com/news/51029 :
"اخترت اليوم بتقديم هذا العمل الذي يشارك ١٨ شخصا يمثلون ثلاثة نماذج للعئلات الفلسطينية البدوية والفلاحة والمدينية..."

in the photographs brought with them when they were forced from their homes.[109] Hourani then painted all the objects and individuals in shades of grey watercolor, giving the impression that the figures and objects had come directly out of the black-and-white photographs on which they were modeled.[110] She also located an old truck like the ones that appeared in the photos, which was also painted in the same fashion.

The first part of the video is a fictional imagining of the figures in these Nakba-era pictures. In contemporary Palestine, they have become iconic symbols of the tragedy of the Nakba, but they have lost all their real humanity and individuality. Hourani allows them to leave the stillness of the photographs and breathes life into them, showing them on a truck with their belongings. Hourani is interested in the question of what people would bring with them in that situation and has given as much care to the objects her characters carry with them as she has to the details of her characters themselves.[111] The second part of the video consists of documentation from an intervention Hourani did with her truck of Nakba refugees. On March 15, 2014, a commemoration for the 66th anniversary of the Nakba was held throughout historic Palestine. This commemoration included a march in the heart of Ramallah. In the midst of this, Hourani's truckload of black-and-white Nakba refugees rode into Manara Square in Ramallah among the crowds of people (Figure 10). The film documents people taking pictures on their cell phones and reacting to the spectacle of this truck full of Nakba refugees that have jumped out of the archival photographs well-known to Palestinians and now appear in a contemporary context.

The video depicts the anachronistic and uncanny sight of the black-and-white truck and figures driving around Manara Square while being surrounded by contemporary Palestinians.

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[109] Dima Hourani, in conversation with the author, June 7, 2015.
[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.

The notion of the uncanny, or rather Freud's original German word *unheimlich*, is particularly potent in the Palestinian context. As Visual Culture scholar Irit Rogoff explains, "We have to remember that Freud's 'uncanny' is actually the 'unheimlich', the unhomed or that which is not at home."[112] The Palestinians who have been uprooted from their homes in the Nakba are as depicted through Hourani's figures are the spectres of those "unhomed" individuals. In their appearance in trucks loaded with their belongings in Manara Square, their status as lacking in a home is apparent. As Freud notes, "an uncanny effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes."[113] While the figures in the photographs were never imaginary, it can be argued that they had taken on a mythic status that meant they occupied the status much more of symbols rather than actual real figures in the broader Palestinian consciousness.[114] In the contemporary context in which the performance took place, the figures comes to life to serve as a reminder of the continued lack of home for many of the Palestinian people who have still not been able to return.

Hourani's black-and-white figures highlight the persistent un-home-like nature of Palestinian refugees. They are familiar figures in that they recall the individuals in photographs of many of the Palestinians who would have been in Manara Square at the time of the performance, but in the context of Hourani's performance, they haunt the square as a reminder

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[112] Irit Rogoff, *Terra Infirma: Geography's Visual Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2000): 7.
[113] Sigmind Freud, "The Uncanny," in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1947): 244.
[114] Obviously each family would have held very real connections to the family members depicted in these photographs, however these images seen as a whole and the broader collective consciousness surrounding images such as these may have taken on a mythic status.

that these people lived and perhaps have died still waiting for the fulfillment of a return to their home. As Gannit Ankori has noted regarding the sculptural works of diaspora Palestinian artist Mona Hatoum which transform household items into unsettling threatening objects, "[a]s Freud taught us, when the familiar objects of the home (*Heim*) become *unheimlich* (uncanny) they evoke a strong sense of insecurity, instability, disorientation and alienation from the home and disrupt one's very sense of self in the world."[115] For Hatoum, these objects represent the experience of the exile.[116] Hourani's figures, pulled from the sorts of images that exiled Palestinian families would have in their homes, functions to produce the same exilic experience in viewers of her film and those in Manara Square during the performance. In bringing these figures to life, Hourani removes them from their place in current Palestinian homes-in-exile and places them amidst the people commemorating the anniversary of the Nakba in an unfamiliar live-action presentation of the origination of exile. In spite of successes that have been achieved, return has still not been realized.

In bringing to life the figures from these archival images and placing them in a contemporary context, Hourani makes evident the continuous repetition of these events in Palestinian life. This is evident in her choice of title—*Past Tense Continuous*. These images of the past, which are seen as indicative of this particular historical moment, in reality, document events that continue through to today. As Hourani herself remarked, "This artwork is a spitting image of what happened in 1948 and still continues to go on to this day."[117] In placing these

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[115] Ankori, 142.
[116] Ibid.
[117] "Al-Nakba Al-Filisṭīnīa tᶜaūd fī 'Al-fᶜal al-māḍī al-mustamir'" [The Palestinian Nakba returns in "Past Tense Continuous"], May 16, 2014, Accessed September 18, 2015. http://www.middle-east-online.com/?id=176732
"إن هذا العمل الفني صورة طبق الأصل لما حدث في العام ١٩٤٨ و مازال فعله مستمر الى يونما هذا."

historical characters in the midst of the commemoration of the 66th anniversary of the Nakba, Hourani emphasizes the continued status of Palestinians (including many of those at the commemoration) as displaced people, still awaiting their return home. In doing so, the artist emphasizes the passage of time—66 years—in which, despite appearances of progress, the status of the Palestinian people displaced during the Nakba has not been resolved. Additionally, the intervention of these figures in Manara Square produces a visual reference to the cyclical nature of Palestinian time. Manara Square consists of a roundabout circling a central monument with four plinths each containing lion statues (Figure 11). As the truck made its way around Manara Square it mimicked the cyclical and repetitive nature of Palestinian time. For those Palestinians on the ground, they would have watched Hourani's symbols of history pass them only to come back around again.

Hourani draws attention to the fact that despite the symbolic weight these images have taken on, there has become a distancing in understanding between contemporary Palestinians and the realities the images depict. For contemporary Palestinians, the images will be familiar, but there is no real understanding of who the people in the images are—they have become simply symbols of the ongoing struggle rather than individuals whose stories have carried through to the present. They are seen as symbols of a past moment to be commemorated, and a past that is noted as a tragic day in Palestinian history, however they have become little more than distant symbols and the connection to contemporary quotidian struggles is seldom made clear. This is the same critique that could be made of much of the relationship of younger generations to the images in pre-Second Intifada art. Those images, much like the documentary photographs of the Nakba, captured the sadness and tragedy of the events of 1948 and their immediate aftermath. Later, they sought to glorify the monumental Palestinian figure who was resolute in his

connection to the land. However, these figures themselves have also all become symbols, losing much of their meaning in the contemporary context. They are all recognizable, but much in the same way other popular images are recognizable. Their connection to the actual sentiment of Palestinians at that time has become distant in the post-Second Intifada context. This was emphasized during Hourani's intervention in Ramallah, as many people took pictures, some of them posing in front of the truck or with the characters, much like one would a theme park character.

This critique of the symbolic image is also suggested in the objects Hourani's characters bring with them in the truck. As mentioned above, Hourani was interested in the question of what people would bring with them, and included, among other things, a painted portrait and a watermelon. While the connection between these two items is not immediately obvious, both, I suggest, reference the history of Palestinian art production. The inclusion of the large portrait makes clear the importance and significance of art throughout Palestinian history (including the pre-Nakba period) and in particular the role that it has played in responding to the status of Palestinians since the founding of the Israeli state. The watermelon holds a place in that lineage. In 1980, Israeli authorities banned the use of the colors of the Palestinian flag—red, white, green, and black—together (the flag itself had previously been banned after the Six Day War in 1967).[118] This meant, other than overt references to the Palestinian flag and Palestinian national colors in art, any object that contained those colors was forbidden as well. This included the watermelon. Because of this, the watermelon has since been used as a substitute for the flag and Palestinians have, in times of protest, cut watermelons in half and raised them above their heads

[118] Chrisoula Lionis, "Peasant, Revolutionary, Celebrity: The Subversion of Popular Iconography in Contemporary Palestinian Art," *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 8: 2015, 78.

in lieu of the flag. Further emphasizing this historic connection, when asked to create a new design for the Palestinian flag for the *Subjective Atlas for Palestine* project, artist Khaled Hourani's contribution depicted a wedge of watermelon (Figure 12).[119]

By placing these objects, which have connections to how images and symbols have been used in the 66 years since the Nakba, Dima Hourani's work points out the fissure that has arisen between these iconic symbolic images and their original source and meaning. With prolific images, there is always the risk that over time they will continue to be used as a symbol but their connection to their original meaning will be diminished. In using iconic images such as the figures and objects from archival images of the Nakba, traditional painting, and the watermelon, and placing them into a contemporary context commemorating the source of origination for the symbolic meaning they have taken on, Hourani asks Palestinians to reconsider the roots and meanings of these images, and to make meaningful connections between them to the realities of contemporary Palestine. By presenting the work through this public intervention, Hourani was able to engage not with the typical community in Ramallah that attends art events, but with the wider population who perhaps do not usually engage in discussions or questions of art and symbology.[120] She aims to push the broader Palestinian population, and in particular the younger generation which has a weaker connection to this history, to acknowledge and question the hollowness that many iconic symbols are imbued with today as well as the persistent relevance of the moments and sentiments they reference.[121] In doing so, Hourani points out the importance

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[119] Ibid, 77. Annelys de Vet, *Subjective Atlas of* Palestine, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2007: 144.
[120] Dima Hourani, in conversation with the author, June 7, 2015.
[121] Āḥmad Malḥum, "Ṣuwar.. fanāna filisṭīnīa tujasid al-Nakba wa tufāṣīlhā biʿamal fanī" [Pictures… Palestinian artist brings the Nakba and its details to life in an artwork], May 18, 2014, Accessed September 18, 2015. http://www.eremnews.com/others/arts-culture/215367:
"وأكدت حوراني أنها أرادت القيام بعمل شيء جديد في ذكرى النكبة هذا العام, بعيدا عن الأمور التقليدية من أجل تذكير الناس العاديين خاصة الجيل الجديد بأهلنا وأجدادنا الذين هجروا قسرا عن قراهم ومدنهم عام ١٩٤٨."

of these symbols' meanings for Palestinians today, as despite the optimism of the Oslo Accords, their failure results in the continued lack of a resolution, and persistence of a violent and oppressive occupation that restricts daily life of Palestinians, many of whom continue to live in a continued state of exile far from their homes or in makeshift refugee camps that have become permanent—a condition that began over six decades before. In reinserting this visual history into a contemporary context, Hourani emphasizes the cyclical and repetitive nature of contemporary Palestinian life.

Emphasizing the cyclical nature of events through the reinsertion of the historical into the contemporary can also be seen by another intervention, this one by Khaled Hourani. A Ramallah-based artist, curator, and writer, Khaled Hourani is also known for bringing a Picasso from the Van Abbemuseum in the Netherlands to the International Academy of Art Palestine, in Ramallah, of which he is the artistic director. Born in 1965, he is a generation older than Dima, and half a generation older than Fawakhry, and was in his 20s during the First Intifada. While not quite belonging to this younger generation of artists, he perhaps belongs to a bridge generation—one that has worked and been familiar both with the previous sentiments of the arts pre-Oslo, but also adapted some of the shifting styles of the post-Second Intifada period. This is exemplified in his enactment of a cyclical notion of Palestinian time in his 2014 intervention.

Khaled Hourani's intervention took place as part of the second iteration of the Qalandiya International, during a procession in Ramallah to commemorate the First Intifada.[122] During the march, two men wearing black and white *keffiyeh* handed out a pamphlet—a call to rally the

[122] Isabel Kershner, "Politics Mingles With Art at a Palestinian Cultural Festival," *New York Times*, November 11, 2014, Accessed September 19, 2015. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/12/world/politics-mingles-with-art-at-a-palestinian-cultural-festival.html

people to persist in their struggle against the occupation and seek an independent Palestinian state. The pamphlet was a reproduction of one that was originally printed during the First Intifada; however, as Khaled Hourani noted, many individuals did not realize that the sentiments expressed in the pamphlet were not referencing the current moment. It was only when they got to the end of the text and saw the date—1988—that they realized that this was a rallying call from the First Intifada, rather than the present.[123]

The language of the text itself repeats throughout the pamphlet, as many rally cries and motivational speeches do, and talks about the continued cycle of violence, martyrs, and resistance within which people live within and through which they must persist.[124] It also mentions meetings of the General Assembly of the United Nations to discuss the Palestinian cause, an organization that has consistently appeared throughout the history of the so-called Palestinian-Israeli conflict since the recommendation of a partition plan for Palestine in 1947—through peace negotiations, UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East), and recently granting non-member observer status to Palestine on the UN Security Council in 2012. The fact that discussions with the UN was placed in this pamphlet during the First Intifada, but could just as easily apply in 2014 again points to the cyclical nature of Palestinian time that Khaled Hourani aims to highlight. The use of *keffiyeh*-masked men to hand out the pamphlet, as well as people in cars, and by throwing the pages in the air, also mimicked the original dissemination of the text.[125] Much like Dima Hourani's piece, Khaled Hourani's intervention again draws attention to the lack of change between the original moment of the archival material, and the contemporary Palestinian context. The use of the First Intifada

[123] Khaled Hourani, in discussion with the author, May 21, 2015.
[124] Copy of the pamphlet, obtained from the artist.
[125] Khaled Hourani, in discussion with the author, May 21, 2015.

text stresses that in the 26 years since it was first produced, the rallying cry is still applicable—Palestinians are still waiting, and the rallies repeat, declarations are made, and lives are sacrificed over and over, without resolution.

While Fawakhry and both Dima and Khaled Hourani make reference to the cyclical repetitive nature of contemporary Palestinian time through direct references to Palestine's political history, other artists, such as Nida Sinnokrot, make reference to this notion of time without overt references to the Nakba, Occupation, or even Palestine. After growing up in a conservative family in Algeria, Sinnokrot's later exposure to the music, television and films through his education in the U.S., that he had lacked growing up provoked in him a fascination with these technologies.[126] When in school, Sinnokrot was introduced to the scholarship of Laura Mulvey and her discussions of the relationship between power and film, and became interested in the connection to colonialism.[127] Sinnokrot has explored these ideas in his own works.

In *As In Those Brief Moments* (2014) (Figure 13), Sinnokrot plays with the mechanics of film and projectors through what he calls "horizontal cinema."[128] The artist constructed an apparatus consisting of three still film cameras that he turned into projectors.[129] The projectors were placed on their sides—horizontally—and positioned so that the film surrounds you in the room in which it is exhibited.[130] When Sinnokrot recorded the film for the piece, he intentionally shot it at a ninety-degree angle—this way, despite the installation of the film and projectors horizontally, the images display in their traditional vertical form when projected onto the

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[126] Nida Sinnokrot, in discussion with the author, June 16, 2015.
[127] Ibid. Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema," *Screen* 16.3 Autumn, 1975: 6-18.
[128] Nida Sinnokrot, Artist Statement, *As In Those Brief Moments*, 2014.
[129] Nida Sinnokrot, in discussion with the author, June 16, 2015.
[130] Ibid.

walls.[131] As the projectors have no shutters, the frames of the film are visible, similar to Muybridge's photographs documenting people and animals in motion—further emphasized by the fact that multiple frames are visible simultaneously.[132] Movement is therefore suggested through a frame-by-frame narrative—a "'stepping' effect rather than through [an] intermittence of vision" that traditionally occurs in viewing film.[133] Additionally, the artist plays with the movement of the film. Rather than projecting these images at the typical rate of 24 frames per second, Sinnokrot's are projected at speeds of anywhere from 0-100 frames per second.[134] The speed with which the frames move is dependent on the viewers of the work. The projectors rest on an oscillator linked with sensors throughout the room; when viewers enter and walk through the space, the projectors respond by altering the pace of the projection.[135] The film itself, which simply depicts a woman crossing a room at a diagonal, has no audio, however the space fills with the mechanical noises of the projectors, which shriek and churn with the changes in the film's pacing.[136]

Sinnokrot describes the experience of *As In Those Brief Moments* as "inviting you to walk in the impossible place where the past, present and future exist simultaneously as a function of what Edward Said called contrapuntal consciousness."[137] In Said's "Reflections on Exile," he remarks on one of the unique positive experiences of exile. He states of exiles, "[s]eeing 'the entire world as a foreign land' makes possible originality of vision. Most people are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of

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[131] Nida Sinnokrot, Artist Statement, *As In Those Brief Moments*, 2014.
[132] Ibid.
[133] Ibid.
[134] Ibid.
[135] Nida Sinnokrot, in discussion with the author, June 16, 2015.
[136] Ibid.
[137] Nida Sinnokrot, Artist Statement, *As In Those Brief Moments*, 2014.

vision gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions, an awareness that—to borrow a phrase from music—is *contrapuntal*."[138] While Said focuses on the simultaneity of place that occurs for the exile, this is inherently linked to a simultaneity of time—the time where the exile was in their homeland, for example, and the current time, when the exile is in an adopted home. In projecting his film in a way where multiple frames are visible at the same time, the past, present, and future are all visible and "present" at the same moment. In this way, there is a convergence of past, present, and future in a way that can refer to the cyclical and repetitive nature of Palestinian time.

In addition to the simultaneity of past, present, and future as manifest in the multiple frames of the projection, Sinnokrot's apparatus itself refers to the circuity of repetitious Palestinian time. The film threads through and between the complex system of projectors, placed on a Middle Eastern-looking carpet, creating a loop which cycles through, at varying speeds, seemingly endlessly. As the content of the film does not make any clear reference to Palestine, or any particular space or place at all, the carpet is the only visual cue as to the particular sitedness of his work. The choice of a rug that would be broadly perceived by viewers as "Middle Eastern" caters to an international audience that may not have many specific reference points for that part of the region, but who would likely be able to make the connection simply from the rug and the association with the Middle East and tapestries, as well as the fantastical trope of the magic carpet.

Much like Fawakhry's pinwheel and Dima Hourani's truck's route around Manara Square, the circular motion of the film through the series of projectors references the repetitive

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[138] Edward Said, "Reflections on Exile," *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), http://www.dartmouth.edu/~germ43/pdfs/said_reflections.pdf

cycle of Palestinian time. Driving the link to Palestinian time home even further, Sinnokrot used the timing intervals between bombs falling on Gaza during the war in 2014 to determine the pauses between film shots.[139] Despite a lack of any overt reference to Palestine in the film, the audio also elicits the cycle of Palestinian time. The sounds made by the projection system alternately sound like a construction site, screams, bombs falling before they detonate, army noises, and the churning of gates at a checkpoint. Sinnokrot's work places the viewer at the center of this never-ending cycle—as the viewers enter the room, their shadows are cast onto the projected film. The viewer becomes a part of the experience—implicated in it. The viewer becomes Fawakhry's donkey—a stagnant silhouette in the center of an endless rotation of cyclical events.

Conclusion

These works by Ashraf Fawakhry, Dima Hourani, Khaled Hourani, and Nida Sinnokrot convey the post-Second Intifada notion of Palestinian time—one of waiting while events repeat cyclically. In the wake of the Second Intifada, marking the failure of the Oslo Accords, and the subsequent construction of the separation wall and checkpoints throughout the West Bank, and cycle of wars in Gaza after disengagement in 2005, Palestinians of the younger generation no longer visualized an idealized pre-Nakba Palestine as the homeland they were waiting for, or even as something realistic. Rather, their disillusionment with the potential for a successful peace process, combined with the persistent monotonous waiting that became an element of Palestinian daily life, led to a conception of Palestinian time as one of stagnated waiting, surrounded by the illusion of progress with no real forward motion. In utilizing circular or cyclical motifs and the

[139] Nida Sinnokrot, in discussion with the author, June 16, 2015.

reinsertion of historical imagery into a contemporary context, these artists embody this new shifted notion of Palestinian time in their work.

It is important to note that this is not to say that a disillusionment with the peace process and an endless frustration with the circularity of quotidian life imposed by the restrictions of occupation have meant that Palestinians lack agency or that they have given up on their fight or resistance against the occupation. Rather, the structures of the occupation in place have created a stagnancy in the peace process and imposed this repetitiveness on their daily lives. In spite of this, Palestinians continue to resist in various forms: in daily acts, through the international Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) Movement, and through prisoner hunger strikes, such as the most recent one in the spring of 2017 to name just a few examples. While Palestinians see and acknowledge the circuitous nature of their status under occupation, imposed upon them by the structures of that occupation, this does not mean that they accept them.

One way in which Palestinian artists have expressed their opposition and dissatisfaction to the impotent repetitive cycle of the peace process is through humor. As will be discussed in the next chapter, some artists are turning to humor as a means to acknowledge compassion fatigue the international community may have for the ongoing "Palestinian-Israeli conflict," as a means to acknowledge the ridicule the absurdity of the situation, and as a means to forge solidarity. The repetitive nature of Palestinian time in the post-Second Intifada period was often a site of humorous intervention for artists highlighting the absurdity of the contemporary circumstances under which they live in occupation, in a merry-go-round of peace process lauded as progress in spite of any real improvement towards Palestinian nationhood. Much as with shifting notions of Palestinian time, it is the inter-Intifada period's optimism after the Oslo

Accords and disappointment in their failure that triggers a rise in the humor among Palestinian contemporary artists.

Chapter 2: Poking Fun: The Rise of Humor

Introduction

Ashraf Fawakhry's *Ben on the Beach 5* (2012), discussed in the previous chapter, not only expresses the cyclical nature of contemporary Palestinian time, but, in its title, makes a joke about former Israeli prime minister David Ben Gurion whose repeated figure forms the shape of the pinwheel in the work. The "Ben" in the title refers to Ben Gurion's name, but also to the Hebrew word *ben* (בן), which means "son." The English word "beach," when pronounced with the Israeli accent, is frequently heard as "bitch."[140] Fawakhry's title then doubles both as a reference to Ben Gurion's image on the beach, as well as a subversive derogative—referring to Ben Gurion as a "son of a bitch."[141] This humorous play on words is geared towards a specifically Israel-based audience, one which would be familiar both with the dual meaning of "ben," as well as the idiosyncrasies of the Israeli pronunciation of the English word "beach."[142] Given that Fawakhry first exhibited this work within Israel, his audience, both Jewish-Israelis and Palestinian citizens of Israel like the artist himself, would have been able to recognize this joke.

Fawakhry uses humor as a means of critical commentary against Ben Gurion, who stands in for the state of Israel as the first prime minister of the Jewish State. As such, Ben Gurion signifies not just the starting point of the tragedies that have befallen Palestinians at the hands of the occupation, but, in the repetition of his image, also suggests the continued and persistent oppression which this originary moment caused. In the context of Fawakhry and Palestinian

[140] Given the predilection of tourists to Israel to visit the beach, this has become a commonly commented upon mispronunciation.
[141] Ashraf Fawakhry, email to the author, November 17, 2015.
[142] Or at the least, an Israel-familiar audience.

citizens of Israel like him, Ben Gurion represents the particular injustices of second class citizenship in Israel—from restrictions on where they or their non-citizen Palestinian spouses can live, to the subordination of their rights if they are deemed a threat to the Jewish nature of the state of Israel.

Fawakhry's use of humor to critique the hegemonic power which oppresses him is indicative of a relatively recent trend among Palestinian artists. Prior to the inter-Intifada period, art as resistance was serious business. As discussed in the previous chapter, immediately following the *Nakba*, artwork expressed the sorrow of tragedy, or embodied *sumud*—a determination to remain connected to the land. This was not a time for laughing about the *Nakba*. However, in the post-Second Intifada period, artists have begun to incorporate humor into their works. These artist have utilized humor as a means to bypass compassion fatigue to forge unity among Palestinians based in their common plight and international audiences in solidarity, and to demonstrate the absurdity of the realities of living under a persistent occupation. While these three categories are not mutually exclusive in the works by contemporary Palestinian artists, in the following, I highlight a few works as exemplary of how artists are using humor in each of these ways. However, before investigating the shifts that have occurred in the post-Second Intifada period, it is important to trace the lack of humor in art production in the post-Nakba period.

Art in Service of the Resistance: Palestinian Political Posters

As discussed in the previous chapter, artists in the post-Nakba period like Shammout, Mansour, and Abu Shakra created works that embodied *sumud* or steadfastness—a perseverance, and dedication to the land. This was articulated through paintings such as those depicting resilient families in post-exile despair but determination, timeless classical figures of traditional

Palestinians working the land, and images of the potted cactus, eternally waiting for its return to the land. These works aimed to forge a national unity and solidarity among a now dispersed population through presenting strong relatable and aspirational images—drumming up feelings of hardiness and determination in the face of catastrophe. In the wake of such a tragedy, humor, it would seem, would not have been an appropriate response.

Additionally, many of these artists would take their talents beyond the fine arts realm to the service of the rising resistance movements in the post-Nakba period in the form of political poster production. Typically the posters were produced in one location, such as the PLO offices in Beirut, and then distributed as hard copies.[143] The posters created by Palestinian artists, much like their fine art work, also served to create a unified Palestinian identity for the purpose of rising together in resistance. However, these works varied in style from the fine arts production of the time by these artists, having been influenced particularly by the graphic works coming out of Cuba and Latin America.[144] This influence came about through the Tricontinental Conference in Havana and formation of the OSPAAAL (Organization of Solidarity of the People of Asia, Africa, & Latin America) in 1966, at which delegates from the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) were present.[145] This conference brought together representatives from countries across Asia, Africa, and Latin America with leftist, anti-imperialist views to collaborate, discuss means of solidarity, and continue to establish the presence of a network in opposition to those colonial and neo-colonial powers that dominate on the global scene. The

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[143] Rochelle Davis and Dan Walsh, "'Visit Palestine': A Brief Study of Palestine Posters," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 61 (2015): 43.
[144] Zeina Maasri, *Off the Wall: Political Posters of the Lebanese Civil War* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 44.
[145] Thanks to Dr. Anneka Lenssen for suggesting I look into the Tricontinental Conference and the clarification between the roles of the fine art production and poster production among Palestinian artists at the time.

influence of OSPAAAL can be seen in both the style and content of the imagery prominent in Palestinian posters of the time, as graphic design scholar Zeina Maasri has noted:

> Not only did the visual language of a number of Palestinian resistance posters respond to the Cuban graphics of the time, they are equally homologous in the iconographic representations pertaining to armed struggle, popular resistance and revolutionary discourse – heroic guerilla, weapons (AK-47), clenched fist and depictions of imperial powers. This aesthetic, which was equally prevalent among the Lebanese posters, held the connotations of leftist politics of that era.[146]

The imagery of armed guerilla fighters described above was prominent in the Palestinian resistance posters put out by the PLO and other Palestinian resistance groups in the 60s and 70s, as will be seen in the examples discussed later.

While poster production was seen as separate from the fine arts production of these artists, it did become a pervasive practice among not just Palestinian artists, but Arab artists in general. This expansive participation produced heightened regard for poster production as evidenced by exhibitions like the *International Exhibition for Palestine* and the *Exhibition of Palestinian Posters 1967-1979*, organized by the PLO in Beirut in 1978 and 1979 respectively.[147] The domination of poster production at the time both in the public eye, as these posters were typically displayed on city walls, and in the lives and practices of the artists involved make it a worthwhile subject for consideration in the context of art, national identity formation, and humor in Palestine.

With the founding of the PLO in 1964 and the creation of its Beirut-based Arts Education Department in 1965, which Ismael Shammout directed, art became an official tool of

[146] Maasri, 45.
[147] Ibid, 39.

nationalism. Both plastic arts and political posters promoted the PLO's ideology in an attempt to mobilize Palestinians for a common cause. The PLO identified the potential for art to serve as a device of the resistance early on, as it only took a year after its founding for it to establish its Arts Education Department.[148] This acknowledgement of the potential of art to serve in the revolutionary cause was perhaps most apparent in the mass production of poster art at the time. During this period, art in general was largely limited to the production of the types of images Maasri describes above: resistance fighters, guerillas, and individuals engaged in the struggle, in service of the formation, perpetuation, and growing strength of the Palestinian political resistance. Suleiman Mansour recounted in an interview that "it was his job to paint these nationalist icons [like his most famous image, *Jamal al Mohamel (Camel of Burdens)*, which depicts an older Palestinian man carrying the city of Jerusalem on his back]: the only commissions and audience available to him were the PLO and its followers."[149] With Palestinians scattered globally and no state to organize and support the arts, the PLO became the source for arts education and production. The work produced aimed to serve the PLO's agenda of evoking the possibility of the nation of Palestine in the minds of Palestinians and inspiring and rallying Palestinians and sympathizers to the nationalist movement.

A poster published by Fatah (previously the Palestinian National Liberation Movement), the largest faction of the PLO, exemplifies the iconography typical of these posters. Published in 1970, the black-and-white poster is dominated by Arabic text, with the exception of a figure that

[148] Ankori, 51; Chrisoula Lionis, *Laughter in Occupied Palestine: Comedy and Identity in Art and Film* (New York: I.B. Tauis, 2016), 35.
[149] Makhoul and Hon, 116.

takes up the left-hand side (Figure 1). Masked in a *keffiyeh*[150] and holding a large gun (likely an AK-47), the figure advances toward the viewer, his gaze drifting to his left, presumably to scan the landscape for his enemies. Figures of *fedayeen*[151] proliferated in these posters, much like the guerilla fighters which dominated in the Latin American posters which influenced them. These images were aimed at rallying the Palestinian people together behind the liberation cause and motivating them to join the fight. The Arabic text on the right reads: "Palestine/Fatah/Revolution until victory" followed by a poem in smaller text which reads: "If I fall, take my place, my comrade in the struggle,/Carry my weapon, and do not be afraid of my blood that is leaking on my weapon/I did not die… I am still calling on you from behind my wounds."[152] The poster seeks to glorify the fight for Palestinian liberation and encourage others to join. It is, as stated in the final line of the poem, a call to arms, and an evocation of solidarity with those who have already given their lives for the cause.[153]

Other posters incorporated a more flattened, geometric style, as well as the colors of the Palestinian flag. In another example from the same year by Ghassan Kanafani, a prominent

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[150] A traditional Arab scarf, the Palestinian version of which is checkered black-and-white and has been worn frequently by Palestinian nationalists, revolutionaries and fighters, perhaps most recognizably by Yasser Arafat.

[151] Guerilla fighters.

[152] Translation courtesy of the Palestinian Poster Project Archives, http://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/i-did-not-die Interestingly, an English language version of this poster was also produced, with the same image but different text. The following text replaced the poem from the Arabic version: "We are fighting today to create the new Palestine of tomorrow. A unified & democratic nonsectarian Palestine in which Christian, Moslem & Jew worship, work & enjoy equal rights. This is no utopian promise. For the Palestinians have always lived in Peace. Moslems, Christians and Jews in the Holy Land." Unlike the call to arms of the Arabic version and acknowledgement, even celebration of the violence that will result, the English version presents an idealistic vision of peace that is the end goal of the fighting. The different audiences intended for each of these posters is likely the reason for the change—the Arabic serves as a call to arms, while the English explains and justifies the fighting they are undertaking.

[153] Thanks to Dr. Grant Kester for suggesting this additional reading.

member of the second largest faction of the PLO, the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), which published the work, an armed figure dressed in green wearing a white *keffiyeh* raises his weapon up into the air (Figure 2). The figure stands on a map of historic Palestine in black in the demarcated area of the Gaza strip, which is highlighted in red. Behind the figure stands a tall brown tree against a white background with a red orb indicating the sun. The use of the colors of the Palestinian flag (red, green, black, and white) is significant as Israeli authorities banned the flag itself in 1967. Kanafani references the flag without actually using an image of one.[154]

The accompanying text appears in three different languages: Arabic, French, and English, with slight variations. The Arabic reads: "support the steadfastness of Gaza"; the English "support the heroic struggle of the Palestinian people in Gaza against Israeli repression"; and the French "support the struggle of the Palestinian people in Gaza against the Zionist occupation."[155] The inclusion of "steadfastness" or *sumud* in the Arabic version ties into the notion of determination and unwavering rootedness to the land, echoed in the green figure of the poster against the tall tree; both sink their roots deeper into the land and rise up in defiance of opposition. The lack of the word "steadfastness" in the English and French versions indicates the specificity of meaning of that word in the Palestinian-Arabic context. The variations between the French and English versions may well indicate the relationship of these populations to the Israeli State and Palestinian cause, though it may also be a result of the translator's knowledge of

[154] These creative work-arounds by artists and other supporters of the resistance may have contributed to Israeli authorities banning the use of the colors of the flag in 1980.
[155] Translations courtesy of the Palestinian Poster Project Archives, http://www.palestineposterproject.org/poster/support-the-steadfastness-of-gaza

languages.[156] Many of the posters were produced in languages other than or in addition to Arabic, so that they could not only serve to rally and promote the ideals of the PLO among Palestinians, but also to garner support for the Palestinian cause abroad.[157]

Palestinian Posters After Oslo

In looking at the *Palestine Poster Project Archives*[158], a digital archive of posters about historic Palestine, one can note a high number of posters published beginning in the 1960s, with particularly high numbers in the 70s and 80s, and then a significant decline in the early 1990s.[159] With the signing of the first Oslo Accords in 1993, there seemed to be hope that the resistance had, at least in part, succeeded and that progress was being made towards the formation of a Palestinian state. As part of the Accords, the Palestinian Authority was established, led by Yasser Arafat and Fatah, and became the representative body of the Palestinian people—leading to the decline of the PLO, which had already begun to be less effective after being forced to relocate

[156] My thanks to Dan Walsh and Rochelle Davis at the Palestinian Poster Project Archives for their assistance in better understanding the conditions under which these posters were produced and the possible reasons for variations among the translations. Dan Walsh and Rochelle Davis, emails to the author, April 20 and 21, 2016.
[157] Charles Tripp, "The Art of Resistance in the Middle East," *Asian Affairs* 43:3 (2012): 397.
[158] The Palestine Poster project can be found online here: http://www.palestineposterproject.org/ The archive was created as part of a master's thesis project conducted by Dan Walsh for Georgetown University in 2009. What started from Walsh's personal collection, now includes over "5,000 Palestine posters from myriad sources making it what many library science specialists say is the largest such archives in the world." http://www.palestineposterproject.org/content/about-the-palestine-poster-project-archives-0
[159] While the archive includes both Palestinian and Israeli/Zionist posters, as well as those published outside of Palestine and its refugee camps, when looking specifically at Palestinian revolutionary posters, the trend holds. Dan Walsh, Curator of the Palestinian Poster Project Archives makes a point to note that his archive is just a snapshot of poster production, and so may not be necessarily indicative of the realities of poster production at the time. That said, given other historical trends surrounding the post-Oslo period, there seems to be evidence to support this reading of the decline in poster production.

from Beirut to Tunis in 1982 during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Both the organization and its messages, as expressed through poster art, no longer seemed relevant after Oslo.

Additionally, the post-Oslo shifts from grassroots activism to a proliferation of NGOs virtually extinguished local organizing and activism in which poster production proliferated in favor of funding for specific program-based work and grant-writing backed by international funding which did not take poster production as its focus.[160] This shift in focus and funding among organizations was coupled with the increasing costs to mass-produce posters as compared with the relative ease of mass distribution of imagery that the rise of the Internet provided. These changes "shift[ed] production away from large centralized printing operations to a system controlled more by small end-users in multiple and global locations."[161] While posters had originally been used because they were "lightweight, cost-efficient, easy to disseminate and fantastically communicative," this was no longer the case.[162] Thus, the centralized production power of the PLO Arts Education Department was eliminated both by politics and technology. While these posters did, and in some cases still do, remain hanging on the walls of Palestinian homes and business, there began to be a shift away from the poster as the means of articulating the Palestinian national agenda through visual culture. The images that remained began to age and get stagnant alongside the peace processes that aimed to achieve the goals for which the posters were rallying.

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[160] Haneen Maikey, "Queer Organizing in Palestine Today," Nicholas Papadopoulos endowed lecture on gay & lesbian studies, Tuesday April 19, 2016, University of California San Diego. While Maikey was talking specifically about queer activism, the same applies to nationalist and revolutionary activist movements.
[161] Davis and Walsh, 43.
[162] Rasha Salti, "Of Dreamers, Ezzeddine Qalaq and Palestine's Revolutionary Posters," *Manifesta Journal* 16 (2013): 88.

While poster production did increase again around 2000, the style and aim of these posters had changed. "Martyr" posters—which depict the image of a specific deceased individual—proliferate among those seen after 2000. Rather than the abstract figures meant to stand in for the Palestinian people as a whole, the individuals depicted in these posters are largely identified, named and noted for the incident of their death.[163] On one level, these posters function simply as obituaries, which were commonly made public, posted in the neighborhoods of the deceased.[164] As Maasri notes, "As a continuation of this practice, the martyr poster is issued by a political party acting as the 'family' of the deceased, to inform their community about the loss of one of its members and to honour them as a martyr."[165] Palestinian organizations such as Fatah and Hamas may publish posters that include an image of the martyr, his or her name, the date of death, and perhaps some praise for the martyr or some information about the circumstances of his or her death.[166] The association with the related party is also made clear, through names, iconography, or even images of prominent leaders such as Yasser Arafat (Fatah) or Sheikh Ahmed Yassin (Hamas). In this way, the martyr posters not only valorize and mourn the fallen martyr, but also, as Maasri notes, position the political party as the "family" mourning the loss of the martyr, sometimes even placing him or her within the context of other notable martyrs of the party.

Historian Charles Tripp has suggested that the shift in poster production towards a focus on martyr posters is about "memorialising individuals and the sacrifice they had made for the cause of Islamic Palestine and of Palestine itself. They seek to emphasise that this is what

[163] Tripp, 397.
[164] Maasri, 88.
[165] Ibid.
[166] Ibid, 89.

resistance is about, and this is the cost it carries with it."[167] This speaks to the translation of the standard public obituary to something inherently connected with the resistance organizations—taking ownership over the martyr as a sort of extended family member. Tripp's analysis presents these posters as a warning about the potential result from resistance. However, while the posters certainly memorialize the individuals and their sacrifices, I argue that they also highlight the pervasive violence of the Israeli occupation, elevating these individuals as heroes who have valiantly fought for the cause, resulting in the only appropriate end other than victory—meeting their death. Not only do these posters seek to hold these individuals up as fallen members of the cause, but they also celebrate them as individuals willing to sacrifice their lives for the cause or whose resistance to the occupation inevitably landed them in its destructive path.

This memorialization and celebration of the individual martyr, rather than an iconographic representation of a generalizable *fedayee* in the 1990s and 2000s may be in part linked to the rise of new tactics among some of the resistance movements. Suicide bombings began in Israel in 1992, with over 135 suicide attacks taking place between 1993 and 2002.[168] With the rise in these attacks, the focus shifted to the individual's sacrifice for the cause. The martyr posters, as well as videos which were aired on local television, were seen as banners of honor for those who had made the sacrifice, and showed the support the affiliated resistance organization would provide to those who were willing to make this sacrifice. In this way, this visual media served as a recruiting tool for those young individuals seeking honor, especially

[167] Tripp, 397.
[168] Mali Soibelman, "Palestine Suicide Bombers," *Journal of Investigative Psychology and Offender Profiling* 1, no. 3 (June 2004): 175, 177.

young unemployed men with little other opportunities.[169] The importance placed on this media is evident in the advanced preparation that would be made for them.

Artist Rabih Mroué investigates the contrived elements of the advanced preparation of martyrdom media in his work *Three Posters*. The work centers on the unedited martyrdom video of Jamal al-Sati, a Lebanese resistance fighter. The video reveals three takes of al-Sati recording his message to be played on Lebanese media after he completed his mission. The multiple takes expose the lack of pure documentary that the video appears to depict initially—rather the video reveals the cultivation of an ideal portrayal, through multiple attempts.[170] The recording of these types of videos were, at times, accompanied by photographs for later use on the martyrdom posters. These efforts all coalesce to create a particular image of the fighter: strong and assured in his or her sacrifice for the cause.

Martyr posters were not limited to those who carried out acts of suicide bombings, or even to Palestinians for that matter. Rachel Corrie, an American activist who was killed when an Israeli bulldozer she was attempting to block from destroying a Palestinian home in Gaza ran her over, has been featured on martyr posters, as have other Palestinians whose acts of peaceful resistance or the circumstances of their daily lives under occupation resulted in their deaths. This speaks to the broader meaning of the word for martyr in Arabic, *shahid*, which also means witness. As historian Faisal Devji notes, "The original legal term *shahadat*, to bear witness or to testify, is transformed into the word for martyrdom by fixing on the momentary act of witnessing whose subject is annihilated with the accomplishment of this testimony. There is a close link between seeing and dying in the etymology of martyrdom[.]"[171] The individual becomes witness

[169] Maasri, 88
[170] http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/rabih-mroue-on-three-posters
[171] Faisal Devji, *Landscapes of the Jihad* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 94.

to the occupation, to their path to resistance, to their history-in-the-making, which is tied to their death. Subsequently, those who pass by martyr posters are in turn witness to these individuals' deaths, and the occupation and resistance that resulted in them.

Oslo's Failure and the Rise of Humor

It was in the period between the Intifadas that a shift began to occur within contemporary Palestinian art. With the rise of NGO funding in the post-Oslo period, arts and cultural organizations were founded within the newly established Palestinian Authority, such as the Khalil Sakakini Cultural Centre in 1996 and the A.M. Qattan Foundation in 1998.[172] These organizations began to be sites for the promotion of fine arts production, and were situated within Palestine, superseding the supremacy of poster production and the PLO, whose largest faction Fatah now had the task of attempting to govern the Palestinian Authority within the parameters laid out by the Accords.

The optimism spurred by the Oslo Accords in 1993 led to anger and disillusionment resulting from their failure, expressed in the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000, and articulated in the shift in contemporary art towards a use of humor as a means to bypass compassion fatigue to instruct, to forge solidarity, and to comment on the absurdity of Palestinian contemporary reality. Visual culture scholar Chrisoula Lionis outlines the reason why this particular moment was so ripe for the development of humor in art,

> The failure of Oslo delivered a cruel blow to Palestinians by effectively destroying any hope of a sovereign state in the foreseeable future and thus is a moment that can retrospectively be understood as signifying tragedy in excess. It is for this reason that humour enters Palestinian cultural output at the time of the failure of the peace process.

[172] The U.K. branch of the Qattan Foundation was established in 1993, but the Palestinian brand was only founded in 1998.

> The kinship between laughter and tears, or humour and trauma, is characteristic of humour in Palestinian art and film.[173]

In the aftermath of the inter-Intifada period, Palestinian artists produced humorous works—given the persistent trauma, failure of the most promising hope at progress, and seemingly endless array of insults to injury they were faced with, Palestinians were faced with the choice of tears or laughter. Many Palestinian artists chose laughter. However, they were not creating humorous works to bypass, ignore, or even assuage the trauma of what had occurred. On the contrary, these artists used humor to highlight the important realities of the trauma to audiences that had perhaps grown tired of the stagnant situation, to create solidarity among Palestinians in suffering through their common experiences as well as unify international audiences via compassion for their plight, and to draw attention to the absurdity in the lived realities of daily life under occupation.

The disillusionment that the failure of the Accords touched off resulted in a shift among artists away from creating work meant to rally Palestinians together as an idealized national force. The Accords themselves had sought to realize this national unification through the Palestinian Authority, and the result had been disappointing. Instead, artists produced work that acknowledged the realities of the stagnation of their situation and a turned towards laughter in lieu of despair. Rather than connecting Palestinians through a fight for a nation, these works focused on creating solidarity among Palestinian individuals in their common experience under occupation, as well as drawing attention for international audiences to those realities, and the absurdity of life under these persistent conditions.[174]

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[173] Lionis, 75.

[174] Interestingly, given the influence of Latin American art on Palestinian poster production, there was also a rise in humor among some Latin American art in the 1980s and 90s. This is particularly notable among Cuban artists. See "Laughing" in Rachel Weiss, *To and From Utopia*

Humor as Instructive

One way that Palestinian artists are utilizing humor in their work in the post-Second Intifada period is as didactic: as a means to bring information about the realities of the conflict to an audience that may be less receptive due to an overexposure to the repetitious and seemingly-unending conflict. In my usage, I define a work to be didactic if it serves the purpose of (at least potentially) informing a viewer about some aspect of Palestinian history and/or contemporary life. These works may not be aiming to rally people around the Palestinian liberation cause in the same way that the revolutionary posters did; however, they are still attempting to stir compassion and greater understanding, particularly among an international audience, in the face of rising fatigue with the ongoing occupation.

Lionis, in her examination of humor in Palestinian art, finds that the introduction of humor into contemporary art moved art production away from a didactic function. While she does not clearly define her use of didactic, her argument stems from delineating the difference between the revolutionary art of the pre-Second Intifada period and that which came after. As discussed above, pre-Second Intifada art, particularly that of posters, featured particular iconography and messages aimed towards rallying both other Palestinians and the international community to the Palestinian liberation cause.[175] It is this aim to both inform the population about the struggle and elicit moral compassion from the audience that appears to be the source of Lionis' labelling of this art as didactic as compared with post-Second Intifada art production. In contrast, in Lionis' understanding the art produced after the Second Intifada utilizes the fact that a pre-existing knowledge of Palestinian history referenced in the work is required for the

in the New Cuban Art (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001) for a discussion of the use of humor in Cuban art. Thanks to Dr. Anneka Lenssen for the recommendation.

[175] Lionis, 38.

audience to "get the joke," and that an international viewing audience will either get the joke and laugh (because they are already informed) or that the viewing of a joke that they do not get will prompt further investigation on their own.[176] Implied but not discussed is the potential third option, that a viewer would see the work, not get it (or think they get it incorrectly) and yet not be prompted to learn more.

While the revolutionary posters produced in the pre-Second Intifada period had a more direct and clear message to their audience, I disagree with Lionis' idea that the humorous works of the post-Second Intifada period have completely eliminated their instructional element. Rather, as stated above, I argue that it is through the use of humor that artists have found a new means to approach a broad audience and bypass "compassion fatigue" for the Palestinian cause, which an oversaturation in mass media and the longevity of the occupation may have produced. Additionally, the use of wide-ranging references and broadly accessible humor in many of the works makes them accessible on some level regardless of whether the viewer has a knowledge of Palestinian history or not. While the level or depth of which they "get the joke" may vary depending on that knowledge, some of the elements that artists are using in order to access an international audience are humorous elements such as broadly recognizable musical references that appear to be specifically aimed at that audience. While I agree that the use of humor may spur audience members who don't understand the joke (or the entirety of it) to do some of their own investigating, I argue that it is the particular use of a mix of broadly accessible elements and specific aspects of Palestinian history and contemporary life that are the means used in these works to serve the function of informing their audiences about aspects of Palestinian life. While this didactic function, as I have defined earlier, is perhaps less direct and inherently morally

[176] Ibid, 76.

connected as the revolutionary posters, it still aims to develop an affinity, compassion, and connection between an international audience and the Palestinian plight.

While I agree that those with a more thorough understanding of Palestinian history may read greater nuance into the humor presented in some of these works (though it is difficult to see how this would not be the case to a degree for any work of art, regardless of subject matter or the inclusion of humor), I contend that the humor in the works is still able to reach those international audiences, and is in fact, at least in part, directed at them in a way that serves a didactic purpose. Particularly for those artists acutely aware of the media representations of the conflict and subsequent "trauma fatigue," the use of humor serves as a means to bypass this fatigue for the sake of overcoming oversaturated imagery and commonly understood tropes about the conflict and Palestinians. For some artists, humor has become a subversive and alternative way to remind viewers about the Palestinian predicament, as well as enhance their understanding of the lived realities of the Palestinian people.

Through the use of humor, these artists are able to portray the absurdist realities under which they live in a new way that is disarming, and thereby accessible and appealing to international audiences. Imagery and stories of suffering and trauma will eventually produce resistance in the viewer or listener because of the wear this can create on the viewer. For these viewers who do not experience the daily lived realities of Palestinians, there develops a "fatigue" over the seemingly unending failed peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians. Political scientists Deborah J. Gerner and Philip A. Schrodt have demonstrated that the Palestinian-Israeli conflict elicits "media fatigue."[177] Their confirmed hypothesis is that "the coverage of a

[177] Gerner and Schrodt compared "reports of uses of force" from Reuters and the New York Times with the data from an "independently-collected data set from a human rights data center." Deborah J. Gerner and Philip A. Schrodt, "The Effects of Media Coverage on Crisis Assessment

protracted conflict may be high when hostilities first break out, then decline steadily as reporters, editors, and readers become bored with the issue."[178] Over the course of the ongoing conflict, viewers become oversaturated with the story, and the news organizations eventually move on to something "new."[179] In studies on moderating compassion fatigue (also referred to as secondary trauma syndrome), scholars have found that in instances where individuals are continuously faced with trauma, such as emergency workers and mental health professionals dealing with sexual violence, a means of moderating the effects of stress, anxiety, depression, and a fatigue for seeing and listening to stories of trauma is necessary for the professional's well-being.[180] These scholars have found that lighthearted humor can serve as a coping mechanism for these individuals, and that it both reduces stress and can create group cohesion among those who are undergoing similar experiences.[181] While viewers of mass media representations of the

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and Early Warning in the Middle East," in *Early Warning and Early Response*, Susanne Schmeidt and Howard Adelman, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press-Columbia International Affairs Online, 1998), PDF at https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Philip_Schrodt/publication/228609490_The_effects_of_media_coverage_on_crisis_assessment_and_early_warning_in_the_Middle_East/links/543fc29e0cf21227a11b77b6.pdf

[178] Ibid. Gerner and Schrodt have conducted a secondary study on the Second Intifada with comparable results in terms of media fatigue.

[179] There are debates about whether viewers in fact have "compassion fatigue" in response to the media coverage of a story, or whether the news organizations believe that this will happen and therefore have created a situation to avoid it, which then produces an expectation of "new" news in the viewers who would not have had the fatigue otherwise. For a discussion of these debates see Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Keith Tester, *Compassion, Morality and the Media* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2001). Regardless of whether the media has produced this fatigue/expectation in viewers or not, the result is, particularly in the wake of the Internet age of instant gratification and short attention spans, an expectation among viewers for "new news".

[180] See Carmen C. Moran, "Humor as a Moderator of Compassion Fatigue," in *Treating Compassion Fatigue* ed. Charles R. Figley (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2002) and Sarah W. Craun & Michael L. Bourke, "The Use of Humor to Cope with Secondary Traumatic Stress," *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse* 23:7 (2014): 840-852 for example.

[181] Craun & Bourke, 849.

occupation in Palestine are not inundated by this stimuli at the same level as those working in emergency settings or in the mental health profession, they may still experience some fatigue over the repetitiousness of the imagery related to the occupation and the stress that it produces can cause a fatigue for the plight of Palestinians. The use of a lighthearted humor in the works by Palestinian artists not only allows for a release of the stress produced by imagery typically associated with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but then in turn allows for the viewer to then go back and take on more of the stressors associated with that release—in this case, the viewer is more open to seeing or hearing about the trauma of the Palestinian people.

Additionally, it is possible that the group cohesion produced among co-workers and peers in the studies cited above could be extended to the viewers of contemporary Palestinian art. In laughing together with the Palestinian artists, the works create a connection between the international viewers, the Palestinian artist, and the cause of the Palestinian people. There is certainly, however, the fear that this normalizes the Palestinian experience for the viewer. In the case of emergency professionals and mental health professionals (and those in similar professional circumstances), this normalization may be necessary to avoid professional burnout. However, in the case of Palestinian art, there can be the concern that the circumstances of Palestinians under occupation become normalized, or simply a joke. However, I argue that in the works discussed below, the incorporation of both a lighthearted humor with references to the trauma of Palestinian life under occupation is utilized in a way that makes this trauma more accessible, rather than normalized for the viewer.

In addition to bypassing compassion fatigue, these humorous works present an alternative image of Palestinians—one of a people who are able to make jokes and laugh about their situation, rather than simply the dichotomous images of the aggressive *keffiyah*-clad "terrorist"

or helpless victim which are frequently depicted in international mass media. Stereotypes of Arabs in general as violent Islamic fundamentalists have proliferated in mass popular culture coming out of Hollywood movies since the turn of the 20th century.[182] The repetition of these images of Arabs in Western cinema, which has a broad global audience and influence, has been traced extensively by communication scholar Jack Shaheen. Shaheen's analysis of Hollywood's entire oeuvre of films involving Arabs has made clear that there has been a persistent and recurrent image of the Arab presented to international (especially Western, American) audiences, which shapes these audiences' perception of this diverse group of people.[183] From childhood cartoons to blockbuster movies, the image of the Arab villain as a religious zealot bent on violence against the West has permeated the consciousness of American audiences and the global consumers of American popular culture.

In contemporary culture, the word terrorist has become almost synonymous with violent Islamic fundamentalists. In particular, in a post-9/11 climate, the term is almost exclusively used in this context, regardless of any other similarities in similar violent attacks committed by non-Muslims.[184] In spite of this contemporary equivocation of terrorism with Arabs/Muslims, the term can actually be traced back to the Western world. The word was first used during the French Revolution during the Reign of Terror (*la Terreur*) and has historically been used to refer to any group that utilizes terror as a means to achieve or bring attention to their cause regardless

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[182] Jack Shaheen, "Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People," *The Annals of the American Academy* 588 (July 2003): 172.

[183] See Jack Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2012) and *Guilty: Hollywood's Verdict on Arabs After 9/11* (Northampton, MA: Olive Branch Press, 2012).

[184] For example, the men who committed shootings and suicide bombings at concerts and nightclubs in Paris (2015), Istanbul (2017), and Manchester (2017), all Muslims, were labeled as terrorists, whereas a when a white non-Muslim man committed a similar shooting at a concert in Las Vegas, he was labeled simply as a gunman.

of race, racial affiliation, or political leaning.[185] Political Scientist David C. Rapoport has delineated four waves of modern terrorism: Anarchist, Anti-Colonial, New Left, and Religious, the final of which began in 1979 and is the wave in which we are currently.[186] As Rapoport acknowledges, while there have been incidences of Christian and Jewish terrorist violence in this period, the majority of religious terrorism attacks that have occurred since 1979 have been done in the name of Islam.[187] According to Rapaport, this is due to three particular events that occurred in 1979: the Iranian Revolution and creation of an Islamic state in Iran, the start of a new Islamic century, and the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia.[188]

Inherently connected with this is the Western interest in and response to these events. The continued and persistent involvement—and indeed meddling—of the West in the affairs of the Middle East provoked conflict between the Islamic and Western worlds. The Iranian Revolution served as evidence of success of Islamic rule over an American-installed power. Additionally, there is frequently a differentiation between state-sponsored violence (often not labeled terror if committed by Western militaries) and terrorism at large. In the context of Israel and Palestine, this can be seen in acts of groups such as Hamas, which is labelled a terrorist organization despite being the elected government of Gaza, termed terrorist attacks, whereas retaliations or targeting of Palestinians by the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces, the Israeli military) are labeled as sanctioned military actions in defense of the nation—any civilians caught in the crossfire simply marked as a casualty of war.

[185] John Richard Thackrah, *Dictionary of Terrorism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 114.
[186] David C. Rapoport, ed., *Terrorism: The Fourth or religious wave* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2006), 4.
[187] Ibid, 17.
[188] Ibid, 18.

A greater rise of Islamophobia—enhanced by both popular and news media sources, in particular post-9/11—accentuated the term's association with Arabs and Muslims in particular. The stereotypes portrayed in popular media impact in turn news reports (both written and televised). The choice of what is reported from the Arab world and of Arabs in the (Western) diaspora is based in these conceptions of Arabs from popular media. Given the predominance and influence of the media on politicians and their constituents, these stereotypes and the selectivity in portrayal in news media can affect foreign policy—a phenomenon referred to as "the CNN effect" in the age of the 24-hour news cycle.[189] In the case of Palestinians specifically, news reports and images tend to feature more images of Israeli victims of Palestinian violence, showing fewer depictions of Palestinian victims of Israeli attacks.[190] The word choice used in combination with these images—Palestinians as "targets" and "terrorists"—perpetuates the stereotypes of popular media into journalistic reporting.[191] In the mass media to which most Americans and audiences consuming American popular culture are exposed, Palestinians are only portrayed in this fashion—as violent terrorists (in contrast to Israeli violence, which is military force and therefore backed by the sanctioning of a state and the parameters of warfare)

[189] Jack Shaheen, "Media Coverage of the Middle East: Perception and Foreign Policy," *The Annals of the American Academy* 482 (November 1985): 167. While this study was completed in 1985, subsequent studies have supported the presence of pro-Israel bias in American media. See Barbie Zelizer, David Park, and David Gudelunas, "How bias shapes the news," 3:3 (2002): 283-307; Matt Viser, "Attempted Objectivity: An Analysis of the *New York Times* and *Ha'aretz* and Their Portrayals of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict," *Press/Politics* 8:4 (2003): 114-120, which also showed bias in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz*, though to a lesser degree than the *Times*; and Michael Neureiter, "Sources of media bias in coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the 2010 Gaza flotilla raid in German, British, and US newspapers," *Israel Affairs* 23:1 (2017): 66-86 for example. For more information about the CNN Effect, see Steven Livingston, "Clarifying the CNN Effect: An Examination of Media Effects According to Type of Military Intervention," Research Paper R-18, The Joan Shorenstein Center, Harvard University, June 1997.
[190] Shaheen, 167.
[191] Ibid.

or, on the less frequent occasions when they are portrayed in the context of Israeli violence, victims. As a 2011 study found, these portrayals are also saturated in our media, as the so-called Palestinian-Israeli conflict receives vastly more media coverage than any other global conflict.[192] These pervasive portrayals are devoid of depth and nuance, and (understandably in the cases of news media) certainly of humor.

Returning to the notion that a thorough understanding of Palestinian history is required to understand the humor of these Palestinian artists' works, I argue that rather than certain audiences being precluded from understanding the humor of these jokes, it becomes clear that the meaning of each work is multivalent and polysemic such that different humorous aspects of the works are directed at and appreciated by specific audiences. These works should be understood from a post-structuralist perspective—that there is not one overarching joke or meaning to "get," but rather that, depending on the viewer, there will be different aspects of the work/joke that they will understand and to which they will respond. The artists of these works created them with such intent in mind—be it an understanding of broader Western film culture, an educator's knowledge and appreciation of the Western art historical canon, or the generalizability of an absurd act—each of the following artists has incorporated both specific references to Palestinian history and more widely recognizable (especially by Western audiences) elements, in order to create access points for a broad audience. The multiple entry points for viewers of these works allows for an accessibility rooted in various modes of humor—some levels of which are more accessible to some audiences over others, but with a breadth of audiences given a point of entry to the work.

[192] The study, completed in 2011, examined coverage in 2009. Virgil Hawkins, "Media selectivity and the other side of the CNN effect: the consequences of not paying attention to conflict," *Media, War & Conflict* 4:1 (2011): 57.

Sharif Waked's *Beace Brocess* (2010), for example, articulates the post-2000 status of Palestinians by way of well-known imagery associated with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict (Figure 3). The 2-minute and 47-second looped video work employs footage from the notorious moment at the Camp David Summit in 2000 when Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat and Prime Minister of Israel Ehud Barak engaged in a circuitous wrestling match/dance over who would enter the negotiating room first (Figure 4). This seemingly playful battle of etiquette, each wanting the other to enter ahead of himself, was also viewed in the international media as exemplary of the stubbornness of the two individuals who were meant to be ironing out a peace deal.[193]. In the looping of the video, Arafat and Barak, reduced to black and blue forms, dance around in one direction and then reverse, repeating these moves back and forth ad infinitum. Waked manipulated the footage to isolate the two figures alone in a white circle set against a black backdrop—creating a result reminiscent of the iris effect in silent films, which is accentuated by the addition of whimsical piano music indicative of those films.[194] These visual and auditory references to silent film and the upbeat tone of the music reference the comical slapstick absurdity from that medium. The choice of music, a silent film-inspired piece by Kevin MacLeod, a composer who releases royalty-free music on the internet, reveals Waked's aim at presenting a broad, widely recognizable audio that would clearly accentuate the comical and absurd in the exchange between the two former leaders.

The incorporation of Western cultural elements into humorous works about Palestinian social/political/cultural life serves as a means to ensure that a broad range of viewers have an access point to the work. Cultural scholar Nikos Papastergiadis identifies this mixing of

[193] Shaheen, 130-131.
[194] Ibid, 131.

indigenous and non-indigenous elements in contemporary artwork as one type of "hybridity" evidenced in particular among non-Western artists. This hybridity is specifically identified among diasporic artists who mix elements of their indigenous and diasporic identities.[195] While the artists I discuss here are not diasporic (or at least were not living in the diaspora at the time the works were made), the accessibility of Western culture via their travels, the Internet, and the diasporic nature of their traveling artworks means that the works they create exist in a diasporic state of engagement, even if the artists themselves physically do not. These artists are aware of the different contexts in which they may be displaying their works, and the different audiences who may be viewing them. In somewhat similar fashion to the use of multiple languages on the PFLP poster discussed earlier, the use of a breadth of cultural references allows for a greater accessibility of the work to broader audiences, though the Western cultural references are not, in the cases of the contemporary works, direct cultural translations of the Palestinian references.

However, the Western cultural reference points do function as an access point for Western audiences who may experience compassion fatigue for issues surrounding the Palestinian occupation. Western audiences, and those familiar with the Western referents who may not understand the Palestinian ones, are able to gain access to one layer of the humorous element via these cultural referents. Through this, they can then begin to paint this reference onto the Palestinian elements. In the example of *Beace Brocess*, the slapstick silent film music used in the work may serve as an entry point for Western audiences, making them aware that the repetitive dance the two figures are engaged in is meant to be seen as silly. Even if these audiences are not yet sure who those figures are, perhaps they will be motivated to learn more

[195] Nikos Papastergiadis, "Hybridity an Ambivalence: Places and Flows in Contemporary Art and Culture," *Theory, Culture & Society* 22 (August, 2005): 40.

information (from wall text or their own investigations), since there was a point of engagement. In this sense, this hybridity serves as a didactic tool. For audiences that do recognize the figures or scene to which this is referring, or for those who are able to learn this information, they are then able to begin to try to understand why a Palestinian artist might be poking fun at this exchange between the Israeli and Palestinian leaders. The use of Western cultural elements provides an access point for cultural relativism—for the viewer to begin to understand the humor from the Palestinian perspective. This can unpack other layers of humor in the work, as well as provide the viewer with an understanding of the frustration and futility that contemporary Palestinians feel towards their situation. The meaning of the work may start from a simple understood reference to Western silent films, but it is then differentiated as the viewer begins to access the other layers of humor—considering the Palestinian artist's perspective and motives for attaching this sort of humorous sentiment to a particularly (im)potent political moment.

In *Beace Brocess*, the looping of this particular exchange between Arafat and Barak also highlights the significance of this moment in the state of perpetual limbo, or cyclical Palestinian time that characterizes contemporary Palestinian existence. As discussed in Chapter 1, Palestinian time since the inter-Intifada period can be described as one of recurring events with no real forward progression. This moment between Arafat and Barak, the failure of the Camp David Accords in 2000, and the subsequent outbreak of the Second Intifada later that year, mark the starting point of this cyclicality coming into full effect (having developed during the inter-Intifada period). More significantly, it marks the consciousness among Palestinians of this new state of Palestinian existence after the optimism that Oslo had brought forth. While Waked's video is initially simply humorous, it in fact reveals the futile loop in which Palestinians have been trapped since this moment occurred due to the persistent expansion of the Israeli occupation

and the impotency—due in part both to Israeli restrictions and internal bureaucratic power struggles—of the Palestinian Authority.

While the laughing at the futility of the two leaders together may appear to place an equal level of obstinacy or blame on both Israelis and Palestinians, and to laugh at the ineffectuality created by "both sides," this equivalency is undermined by the humor in the title of the work. The title, *Beace Brocess*, reflects a distinctly Palestinian perspective—it comments on the joke the Israelis made of the peace process at the Palestinians' expense. For the Palestinians, there was and never could be a 'peace process': Arabic speakers frequently struggle to pronounce words using the letter "p"—as there is no comparable 'p' sound in the Arabic alphabet—oftentimes replacing it with a "b" sound.[196] Art critics have also suggested that the title could be a reference to the Palestinian criticism of Arafat, due to the fact that "the failure of past resolutions have often been argued to have come in the legal wording of documents, [and] Arafat's failure to understand the ramifications of his approval of the documents may be highlighted in his inability to even enunciate the words 'peace process' correctly."[197] In other words, the failure of the negotiations—which were theoretically aimed at achieving peace and Palestinian sovereignty—were a foregone conclusion.

The play with pronunciation in the title also mirrors the caricaturing of Israeli pronunciation in Fawakhry's title *Ben on the Beach*, discussed in the introduction to this chapter. While Fawakhry's is a play on Israeli pronunciation and Waked's on Palestinian, in both these

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[196] As recently as 2016, conservative Israeli politicians have even argued against the existence of Palestine on the basis that there is no 'p' sound in Arabic. The word for Palestine in Arabic is "Filisteen." On social media, some noted (to emphasize the absurdity of the argument) that there is no 'j" sound in the Hebrew alphabet, wondering if that meant there are not really any Jews. The Hebrew word for Jew is 'yehudee.'
http://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/12/world/middleeast/israel-anat-berko-palestine.html?_r=0

[197] Lionis, 131.

instances, the artists utilize humorous (mis)pronunciations made for words spoken in English. This could signify the role the Western world, and particularly the United States, has had in the failure of peace negotiations and the continued occupation of Palestine. The fact that all attempts to make peace or progress are mediated through a language that neither party can completely pronounce correctly—and perhaps not articulate their needs, wants, and intentions through properly, may account for the inability for a resolution to be achieved. While English-speaking individuals who have traveled extensively in the region might be familiar with these common pronunciation mishaps, these references appear to be directed much more towards a local audience. In that respect, they could be interpreted as in-jokes about the interfering other—the United States.

Waked's self-deprecating title of the work, which directly refers to the "faulty" Arabic pronunciation of English words critical to Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and the humor with which the artist portrays such a vital moment to the status of contemporary Palestinian stagnancy challenges the polarized, yet common portrayals of Palestinians as either helpless victims or aggressive terrorists. Instead, he presents them as acutely aware of their situation and cognizant of the seeming futility of the repeated talks. Waked's portrayal complicates these perceptions of Palestinians as portrayed overwhelmingly through popular media and news reports. That said, Palestinians are also fatigued over the portrayal and hollow ceremony of the process, but their realities of their situation are subject to these processes as well. In the ceremony of promises unfulfilled, they are subject to unfinished and ever-changing bureaucratic rules, an expectation to hold up their end of the bargain (largely in avoiding violence and resistance) in spite of Israeli settler expansion in violation of agreements (and international law), and to limitations in their democratic processes to cater to what the hegemonic powers (Israel and the U.S.) deem

palatable.[198] In disarming the audience through laughter, Waked also reveals that, as a Palestinian, he too is sick of the ongoing conflict in its current form, and he is able to make this reality more accessible to an audience oversaturated with typical news stories on the plight and anger of the Palestinian cause. Waked asks the audience to laugh with him—joining Palestinians in solidarity (a point which will be discussed further later) and making an understanding of the contemporary Palestinian existence more accessible. In changing perceptions and making clear that Palestinians are frustrated with the stagnation that has produced compassion fatigue, Waked expresses a need for change held by individuals that make up the Palestinian population who are not typically visible in those media portrayals. In bypassing compassion fatigue, it is possible to potentially reinvigorate people around the Palestinian cause and motivate for engagement in means other than the repetitive ceremony mocked in his work in order to move past the current stagnation.

Why Use Humor?

What is it about humor that is so conducive to addressing post-Second Intifada Palestinian existence? As argued above, the use of humor in works like Sharif Waked's *Beace Brocess* allows for information about the present status of Palestinian life to reach an audience that is fatigued from oversaturation regarding the seemingly never-ending conflict. As philosopher Simon Critchley states, "raillery and ridicule can be defended insofar as they enable instruction in reason by making its use pleasurable. One is more likely to use reason if its use gives pleasure."[199] In fact, it is not just the fact that humor disarms audiences from their compassion fatigue, it replaces an exhaustion they may feel regarding the Palestinian conflict

[198] The last of which was seen, for example, in the American and Israeli response to the democratic election of Hamas in the Palestinian legislature in 2006.
[199] Simon Critchley, *On Humor (Thinking in Action*) (New York: Routledge, 2002), 81.

with something pleasurable, laughter—a negative sensation with a positive one. An audience will be more receptive to information about or expressions of the Palestinian conflict and contemporary state of Palestinian life, in spite of compassion fatigue, through the use of humor as a pleasing means for the transmission of this information. Therefore, it is through the joke that Palestinian artists are able to make the realities of their current condition more accessible to international audiences.

Additionally, for Palestinians, humor can be seen as a form of relief from the degrading realities of their everyday lives. As Critchley, analyzing Freud, suggests, humor "is an anti-depressant that works by the ego finding itself ridiculous."[200] In humor, "the subject looks at itself like an abject object and instead of weeping bitter tears, it laughs at itself and finds consolation therein."[201] For the Palestinian artists in the post-Second Intifada era, this is particularly relevant. After years of hoping for a return, the optimism brought on by Oslo was buried under empty promises and a lack of action, resulting in circuitous bureaucratic dances that meanwhile left them without a state or any real viable path to one going forward. Given this situation, there was little left to do but either laugh or cry. Faced with this choice, many artists have chosen laughter. The works they have created serve as a means to express their frustration with and highlight the absurdity of their contemporary situation. For Palestinian viewers, these works present an opportunity to laugh along, recognizing their own position vis-à-vis these realities. For non-Palestinian viewers, the humor in these works creates an access point that is pleasurable, that can potentially bypass any preconceived resistance they may have towards the typical information about the Palestinian occupation. Additionally, these works have

[200] Ibid, 101.
[201] Ibid, 102.

instructional value for international audiences, as they present an alternative to the typical aggressive, stone-throwing Palestinian portrayed in global media. This is not to invalidate the figure of the active Palestinian resister to occupation as an accurate representation of some contemporary Palestinians, but rather to acknowledge that these works create dimension to an international understanding of who Palestinians are and can be, and the reasons for their various forms of resistance—something that has become monolithic, particularly in the wake of rising Islamophobia in a post-9/11 climate.[202]

Humor as Solidarity through Critique

Tied to this idea of humor as an anti-depressant is the notion of humor as a means to forge communal solidarity. In particular, with regards to ethnic humor, the creation of an 'us/them' dichotomy serves to forge community out of those who are 'in' on the joke against those who are the joke's subject. As Critchley notes, "[i]n ethnic humour, the *ethos* of a place is expressed by laughing at people who are not like us, and usually believed to be either excessively stupid or peculiarly canny."[203] Critchley speaks specifically about this in the European context—each nation asserting its own unique nationalistic characterization through an assertion of what it is not as reflected in the countries it ridicules.[204] Solidarity among the English, for example, is then solidified through a collective laughing at the Irish (stupid) and the Scottish (canny).[205] This notion of humor as a means to create solidarity through an 'us/them' binary can be seen in the Palestinian use of humor as well—though, as discussed above, non-local humorous elements are integrated to bring an international audience in on the joke. It is,

[202] This applies not just to Palestinians but to Arabs/Mulims more generally.
[203] Ibid, 69.
[204] Ibid.
[205] Ibid.

however, not simply limited to the creation of a collective humor among Palestinians in opposition to Israelis. In the post-Second Intifada period, Palestinians may not only feel as others in relation to their Israeli occupiers, but also to the Palestinian bureaucracy. This bureaucracy is represented by the governing Palestinian bodies in the West Bank and Gaza, as well as the other Arab countries who have involved themselves in peace processes to further their own agenda, without real concern for the Palestinians who are ultimately affected by the decisions made. In mocking these authoritative powers, Palestinian artists have used humor to separate out and build community solidarity among the Palestinian people and international communities in opposition to governing forces (both Israeli and Arab) that they feel do not represent them and their needs.

The sculptural installation *A Great Value* (2008) by Gazan artist Mohammed Musallam highlights the commonality of the Gazan people under siege through a derision of the hollowness of the bureaucratic gestures they have been given through the peace process. The work consists of a roll of toilet paper placed on a hanging holder beside a toilet (Figure 5). The toilet paper is made up of actual blank sheets from Gazan passports, including Musallam's own. Because of the siege of Gaza, caused when Egypt and Israel mostly closed their borders with the Strip after the election and solidification of power by Hamas in 2006, Gazan citizens who possessed these passports could not actually use them—leaving them blank. The blockade of Gaza, which continues to this day, largely prevents individuals from moving in and out of the Strip, rendering the passport useless. Because of this, Musallam was able to gather many blank pages to create a toilet roll consisting of actual passport sheets.[206] The last page of the Palestinian passport reads, "This passport is of great value," inspiring Musallam's title.[207] In creating this work, Musallam

[206] Skype conversation with the author, June 13, 2015.
[207] http://mattress.org/archive/index.php/Detail/Collections/1430

highlights the "value" of these pages—given that the possessors of these passports cannot actually travel, they may as well use them to wipe their asses.

Remarking on the installation of the work at the French Cultural Center in Gaza in 2008, Musallam notes that at that time there was a "hard siege" in Gaza making travel impossible.[208] Musallam describes how despite the fact that the peace process purported to give the citizens of Gaza freedom—to travel, for instance—this had not come to pass. While passports had been issued by the Palestinian Authority (PA) after Oslo (previously those in Gaza had received passports from the Egyptian government), they were in effect made useless when Gazans were unable to travel due to the continued and persistent siege, such as that in 2008.

The inclusion of the eagle on many Arab passports, including the one issued by the PA, is another symbolic element that Musallam critiques in *A Great Value*, as well as another passport work *My Passport* (2014) (Figures 6-7). According to Musallam, the eagle is a symbol of strength.[209] However, in his view, the eagle on the passport Gazans are granted is in fact not strong at all. In *My Passport*, Musallam has cut the eagle from his passport—from the cover all the way through each page—leaving an eagle-shaped hole behind. Much like the void an animated character might leave after running through a wall, the eagle has briskly departed from the passport, leaving it devoid of its strength. The passport the Palestinians are given, according to Musallam, lack the strength of the eagle.

While Musallam's works critique the so-called progress represented by the issuing of passports, *A Great Value* in particular also makes references to an art historical precedent, which in turn served as a critique of art itself. The use of actual passport pages, rather than

[208] Ibid.
[209] Ibid.

Photoshopped or fabricated paper, and the inclusion of the installation next to a toilet makes reference to Duchamp and his readymades, in particular, his infamous *Fountain* (1917), a sculptural installation consisting of an upside-down urinal (Figure 8). Duchamp's *Fountain*, art critic Jennifer Higgie notes, "question[s]… art's fundamental definitions and categories."[210] In taking the urinal, flipping it on its side, and asserting that by being adorned with an artist's signature (R. Mutt) and being put up for exhibition (it was rejected) it was a work of art, Duchamp was playing with the question of what exactly qualified as art. The work, as with other of his readymades, questioned the preciousness typically assigned to art, and also played with the notion of the artist-as-creator—pushing this to its extreme conclusion by presenting an object that was entirely unaltered (other than the signature and a slight rotation of its positioning) and suggesting that what made it art was simply the assertion by the artist that it indeed was.

While Duchamp's work critiqued the institutional validation of the art institution (galleries and museums), Musallam's work critiques the institutional validation of the Palestinian Authority which grants the passports. Musallam references Duchamp's *Fountain* in presenting a bathroom fixture in a gallery space, recalling the piece as a critique of art itself, and utilizes it as a means to ask, rather than "what is art?"—"what is a passport?" If a government produced from a failed set of peace accords produces a document that claims to allow freedom of movement but in fact does not, is it in fact a passport? Is that government in fact autonomous? Does one in fact have the makings of a state? Musallam's *A Great Value* asks all these questions and appears to answer them all in the negative.

[210] Jennifer Higgie, "Introduction," in *The Artist's Joke*, ed. Jennifer Higgie (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2007), 13.

While the references to Duchamp may not be relevant or accessible to all Gazans, Musallam himself has a doctorate in Art and at the time was a lecturer in the School of Art at Al Aqsa University in Gaza City.[211] The French Cultural Institute in Gaza, where the work was displayed, attracts individuals throughout Gaza with an interest in the arts—other artists, university students of the arts, internationals working for NGOs, and other interested parties. Musallam has also exhibited internationally, both in Europe and in the United States, and considers an international art-going audience when creating these works. While not all viewers of *A Great Value* will necessarily make the connection to Duchamp's *Fountain*, much like international viewers may not understand all the references in Waked's *Beace Brocess*, this is just one layer of the work.

As with Waked's *Beace Brocess*, in his use of "toilet humor" Musallam uses humorous elements that are accessible to a broad international audience. Even displayed in Gaza, at the French Cultural Institute, because of the local NGOs, the work would have been seen by some members of an international audience. For all, the meaning of Musallam's linkage of the title, *A Great Value*, and the transformation of the passport into toilet paper is clear. All present viewing the work at this institution would be familiar with the difficulties Gazans face when trying to use their passport to travel in and out of the Strip. Interestingly, while critique can create a means to forge solidarity, as I argue it does below in engaging international audiences in sympathy and solidarity for the Gazan plight, Musallam notes that many artists and visitors to his exhibition of the work at the French Cultural Institute objected to the work and stated that if he felt this way about his passport, that he should give it up entirely.[212] For some then, the symbolic power of the

[211] He has since moved to Toronto.
[212] Email to the author 10/8/17.

passport as one of the few symbols of Palestinian sovereignty is still potent, or perhaps they are unwilling to admit the impotency with which they have been rendered. In either case, for some of the audience at the French Cultural Institute, Musallam's joke became divisionary between the "us" who appreciate and see value in the passport, and the "them" of those who feel they are of no great value.

While the viewers of Musallam's *A Great Value* would have been intimate with the difficulties for travel in and out of Gaza, when other works from Musallam's passport series (all of which stem from Musallam's engagement with the phrase "this passport is of great value") have been displayed internationally, it is possible that audiences may not have been as intimately familiar with the realities and difficulties of life under siege. In spite of this, the meaning is made clear. The pairing of the sentiment on the final page of the passport with the installation of passport pages as bathroom tissue, or in the instance of other works from the series, the manipulated and tortured passport pages, clearly indicates the point Musallam is trying to make about the passport. In this way, the work, much like Waked's, serves a didactic function. At the basest level, a viewer can walk away having learned that a Gazan artist seems to think that his passport is not actually worth the value it purports, even if she is not sure as to why. For those unfamiliar with the reasons, there is the possibility that later inquiry, or perhaps more likely some informative wall text, will add some context to the reasons why a Gazan artist might make such a statement about his passport.

Musallam, also like Waked, utilizes humor as a means to circumvent compassion fatigue. Rather than simply making a work that takes a straightforward approach to discussing the impotence of Gazan passports in allowing freedom of mobility to Palestinians desiring to travel in and out of the Strip, Musallam creates a work that instrumentalizes humor for the sake of

disarming potentially sympathetic viewers with laughter, allowing for access to the realities to which the humorous work refers. While the Gazans are the ones who suffer from this situation, they are not the butt of this joke. Rather, ridiculed are all those involved in the formation and creation of this empty gesture: the Palestinian Authority and Egyptian government before them who claim the power of these empty gestures of sovereignty, as well as the Western governments (especially the United States) who have celebrated their efforts and involvement in the peace process. Additionally, the work implicates the Israeli government and military in rendering these passports useless in restricting Gazans' movement. While the Palestinian government is satirized for its empty claims of value, the Israeli government is implicated in its persistent and brutal occupation. While viewers may have a broad understanding of the conflict between the Israeli government and that in Gaza, particularly in relation to Hamas, Musallam's work draws attention to how individuals are affected. Musallam's work goes beyond simply representing the fact that Gazans are under siege, to present a specific way in which the siege manifests. By utilizing the passport, an item whose function and power most global citizens understand, Musallam highlights the fact that despite being granted passports, these documents in reality do not grant them the freedom of movement they are intended to represent.

Musallam's work also serves as a means to create the potential for an international community of solidarity with the Gazan situation. Cultural anthropologist Zara Zimbardo, who discusses the use of humor to challenge Islamophoic stereotypes, notes, "Through disarming, welcoming, familiar and warming comic ritual, the transformative experience is offered of generating community across difference through shared 'getting' of the social, cultural and

political context that makes jokes both successful and necessary."[213] In referencing both specific aspects of the Gazan struggle while utilizing humorous elements that are broadly accessible, Musallam's work is able to bridge the gap of difference among audiences and create a unified community of solidarity.

Combining these last two roles of humor—solidarity and bypassing compassion fatigue—works such as Musallam's can subvert those in power and be instructive to an audience in terms of what needs to be changed to allow for the possibility of improvement. These works are not complaints about the current situation but rather a "calling out" of unfulfilled promises made in empty gestures and a call to action to relieve the circumstances that make them so—in this case, the siege of Gaza. Critchley again, "Humour both reveals the situation, and indicates how that situation might be changed."[214] Prior to the Oslo Accords, passports in Gaza were issued by the Egyptian government, though these passports did not come with Egyptian citizenship or free movement in and out of Egypt. The issuing of Palestinian Authority passports was a direct result of the Oslo Accords, and was meant to serve as a symbol of increased sovereignty and the path towards Palestinian statehood. However, the blockade of Gaza by Israel (and the limitation of movement provided by Egypt) prevented these passports from carrying their symbolic weight into practical action. Rather than simply accepting the gesture of the passport as indicative of progress and something for which he should be grateful, Musallam undermines the position of those granting the passports by asserting that these documents of

[213] Zara Zimbardo, "Cultural Politics of Humor in (De)Normalizing Islamophoic Stereotypes," *Islamophobia Studies Journal* 2:1 (Spring 2014): 59-81, https://www.academia.edu/6857769/Cultural_Politics_of_Humor_in_De_normalizing_Islamophobic_Stereotypes
[214] Critchley, 16.

national affiliation are nothing more than meaningless pieces of paper.[215] By mocking the passports, Musallam indicates a problem and implies the suggestion that this clearly is not acceptable—something must be done to create a situation where these passports have the same meaning and impact as those of nations worldwide.

The Absurd

Another element of humor that Palestinian artists have instrumentalized is the absurd. Artists have incorporated absurdist actions in order to highlight the ludicrous nature of much of their contemporary lives under occupation. What makes these actions absurdist is their discord with audience expectation. The most dominant theory within humorology is Incongruity Theory.[216] As Critchley describes, according to Incongruity theory "[h]umor is produced by the experience of a felt incongruity between what we know or expect to be the case, and what actually takes place in the joke, gag, jest, or blague[.]"[217] In other words, it is in the dissonance between our expectations and what we are witness to that we find humorous. Things typically deemed absurd or ridiculous are labeled as such because they defy the expectations of what we perceive to be "normal." Given the experiences of Palestinians post-Oslo and its failure—the cyclical realities of their daily lives, the continued hollow bureaucracy and empty promises, the song-and-dance of peace processes that never come to fruition—it is unsurprising that the humor

[215] Accentuating the symbolic nature of the passport as an attempt to further Palestinian sovereignty, in 2015 Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced that Palestinian Authority passports would be replaced by State of Palestine passports, which would phase out the former from use. Israel opposed this, and it has yet to be implemented, but this announcement came among a push from 2012-2016 toward greater recognition of Palestinian statehood and the illegality of settlements in the U.N. and from other countries with diplomatic ties—all symbolic gestures that, without Israeli cooperation or compliance, have no real impact on the daily lives of Palestinians. https://www.haaretz.com/middle-east-news/1.693110; https://www.timesofisrael.com/pa-readies-to-issue-state-of-palestine-passports/

[216] Lionis, 9.

[217] Critchley, 3.

of the absurd would be ideal fodder for artists working in the post-inter-Intifada period. Through the use of incongruities, Palestinian artists are able to not only create humorous works, but ones that also highlight and critique the absurdity of their lived realities.

We have already seen elements of the absurd in the works discussed by Waked and Musallam. The use of silent film-style music playing over animated video of Arafat and Barak in *Beace Brocess* undermines the gravity and import of the peace process documented. In doing so, it highlights the theatricality and absurdity of the actual proceedings—the most prominent result of which was the infamous video of the etiquette dance the two leaders engaged in before even entering into discussions. Similarly, Musallam's use of passport pages as toilet paper is clearly incongruous with our expectations about (and experiences with) the usage of such a document. However, the ridiculousness of Musallam's "bathroom humor" belies the absurd reality that Gazans are given passports as a sign of progress in the formation of a Palestinian national state when in reality those documents function as little more than symbolic paper. Other Palestinian artists have made absurdist actions the focus of their work, highlighting not only the ludicrousness of their daily realities, but also the irrationality of the persistence and cyclicality of this reality.

Raeda Saadeh's *Vacuum* (2007) is an exemplary work in this regard (Figure 9). Recorded in the Palestinian desert between Jericho and the Dead Sea, Saadeh's two-channel 17-minute video depicts the artist dressed in a simple black *abaya*[218] vacuuming the seemingly endless desert.[219] The audio contains the actual sound of her vacuuming as Saadeh connected the device

[218] Loose robe-like garment worn by some women over their clothes throughout the Islamic world.
[219] Rose Issa, ed., *Raeda Saadeh: Reframing Palestine* (London: Beyond Art Production, 2012), 48.

to a generator with over 1,000 feet of cable to allow her to actually engage in the act of vacuuming the desert, rather than simply mimicking the absurdist action.

Saadeh herself features in many of her works, including *Vacuum*, as a representation of Palestinian women in relation to the ongoing occupation. Saadeh's inclusion of herself in *Vacuum*, and engaging in domestic work in particular, highlights the video's portrayal of a particularly female Palestinian relationship with the land and the ongoing occupation of Palestine. The relationship between representations of Palestinian women and the land can be traced back through Palestinian art history. As Tina Malhi-Sherwell notes, "During the tense years preceding the 1948 war, Palestinians began employing the female icon as a metaphor for the homeland."[220] This was rooted in the development of a Palestinian painting style that depicted the landscape through the lens of domesticity—focusing on the activities of women and children in relation to the villages.[221] As Malhi-Sherwell continues, "Peasant women constitute the central subject of such paintings and are imaged in the landscape gathering olives, wheat, almonds, etc. or bearing such produce. Just as the woman's presence in the landscape marks the landscape as Palestinian, female peasants in traditional costume have become the foremost signifiers of Palestinian national identity."[222] This linking of Palestinian women to the land was reinforced "as women took over the responsibilities of farming since shrinking plots of land could no longer sustain households and men were forced to seek employment elsewhere."[223] As tensions between the occupying Israelis and Palestinians increased during the First Intifada, so did the engagement of women with the resistance, frequently in various forms of extended

[220] Tina Malhi-Sherwell, "Imaging Palestine as the Motherland," *Self-Portrait* exh. cat. (Tel Aviv-Jaffa: Hagar Gallery, 2001), 166.
[221] Ibid, 163.
[222] Ibid.
[223] Ibid.

domesticity, such as caretaking and shelter—images of which were depicted in contemporaneous art and visible in mass media.[224] While Malhi-Sherwell notes that depictions of the female and mother figures disappeared in the 1990s (the inter-Intifada period), there has been a notable return of the image of the Palestinian woman and mother among female Palestinian artists in the post-inter-Intifada period, including Raeda Saadeh, Larissa Sansour, and Anisa Ashkar, to name a few.

In *Vacuum*, Saadeh returns to the figure of the domestic woman present in the earlier paintings of Palestine. While she has been made a bit more contemporary in her use of a vacuum, she is dressed in traditional Palestinian garments—historically a significant indicator of Palestinian nationality. As Malhi-Sherwell describes,

> The peasant woman's embroidered dress has, in the aftermath of the great loss of the land, come to function as a way of mapping that land. The style and pattern of each embroidered dress is unique by region, and indicates its wearer's village of origin. Palestinian women continue to sew the same distinctive dresses today, even if their original village is no longer standing. […] By maintaining tradition through their clothing and cooking, they were perceived as somehow closer to the land. The peasant woman was marked as the site where the past was both alive and reproducible.[225]

Saadeh's garment in the video references this visual marker of the female connection to the land established in Palestinian visual and cultural history. This is of course accentuated by the fact that Saadeh is "working" the land in a typically domestic sense—vacuuming.

Descriptions of the work make reference specifically to the connection between *Vacuum* and the Myth of Sisyphus—a former king doomed to roll a boulder up a hill only to have it roll

[224] Ibid, 162.
[225] Ibid, 163.

down again resulting in the need to start over endlessly.[226] This reference to Sisyphus, like the works discussed in Chapter 1, serves as a representation of the cyclicality of Palestinian time in the post-Second Intifada period. The persistence of Saadeh's ridiculous action articulates the absurdity of the continuous repetition of Palestinian life—the continued checkpoints, bureaucratic rigmarole, and failed peace processes. It is through the incongruous action in Saadeh's video that the incongruous realities in Palestine are brought to light. Even without specific knowledge of daily life in Palestine, a viewer can read the futility of Saadeh's Sisyphean task as a rendering of a similar futility in the Palestinian contemporary condition.

For those more well-versed in the history of Palestine, the vacuuming of the barren desert may recall the Zionist slogan that Palestine was the ideal place for a Jewish state because it was "a land without people for a people without a land."[227] Rather than Saadeh's action being one of of complicity in creating a pristine land for continued Zionist expansion as Lionis suggests in her reading, I rather read this as an emphasis of the presence that phrase ignored and those the occupying expansion continues to ignore.[228] While the Zionists continuously asserted that the desert was devoid of human presence and cultivation, Saadeh's vacuuming is an action of tending to and preserving the land, albeit one that appears to leave no trace. Saadeh's action then serves as a representation of the relationship and cultivation of the land that was invisible to (or willfully ignored by) the Zionists. The action of vacumming in the desert may even suggest the erasure of the Bedouin, rather than urban population in Palestine—a group of people whose land also continues to be taken over by Israeli expansion.[229] Additionally, as Saadeh's action is

[226] Lionis, 121. Issa, 48.
[227] http://www.reactfeminism.de/entry.php?l=lb&id=192&e=&v=&a=&t=
[228] Lionis, 121.
[229] Thank you to Dr. Anneka Lenssen for the suggestion that the desert landscape may reference Bedouin populations.

distinctly domestic, it also makes reference to and plays on the invisibility of domestic (typically female) labor within the household.

Saadeh's *Vacuum* recalls two other well-known contemporary artworks: Martha Rosler's *Cleaning the Drapes* from her *Bringing the War Home: House Beautiful* series (1967-72) and Francis Alÿs' *When Faith Moves Mountains* (2002) (Figures 10-11).[230] Rosler's *Bringing the War Home* series also utilizes incongruity to draw the viewer into her subject matter. In the works that make up the series, Rosler collaged images from *House Beautiful*, a home decorating magazine, with photojournalistic images from *Life* magazine of the Vietnam War.[231] For example, in *Cleaning the Drapes*, a smartly dressed woman holding a vacuum uses the device on printed drapes. However, rather than a pleasant yard beyond the curtains, the scene the viewer is let in on is one of armed soldiers seated among rocks.

The incongruity is, as expected. at first humorous; however, much like Saadeh's *Vacuum*, the absurdity of the depiction belies the absurdity of reality. Rosler's photomontages are a literal depiction of the dubbing of the Vietnam War as the "living room war" due to the nightly broadcasts that filtered into American households.[232] The dissonance between the tranquil domestic scene and the photo-documentation of the war serves as a "biting critiqu[e] of domestic complacency, US militarism, and an inundation of violent imagery via television, film, and print media during the Vietnam War era."[233] It is this notion of complacency that may be most relevant to Saadeh's *Vacuum*. In the disillusionment of the failure of the Oslo Accords after the

[230] Thanks to Dr. John Welchman for the suggestion of these connections.
[231] Jayne Wark, "Conceptual Art and Feminism: Martha Rosler, Adrian Piper, Eleanor Antin, and Martha Wilson," *Woman's Art Journal* 22 (Spring-Summer 2001): 44.
[232] Ibid, 45.
[233] Karen Moss, "Martha Rosler's Photomontages and Garage Sales: Private and Public, Discursive and Dialogical," *Feminist Studies* 39 (2013): 690.

outbreak of the Second Intifada, the cyclicality of Palestinian time has resulted in a somewhat apathetic routine and a lack of optimism about any path forward. In Saadeh's domestic act of vacuuming the desert, a futile, seemingly pointless act, the artist highlights the complacency that has taken over for some Palestinians in a post-Second Intifada era through a normalization of daily life and a lack of an organized and powerful resistance. In this sense, it is possible that, as Lionis has suggested, Saadeh even implicates herself in this action.

Saadeh's "mother" figure engaging in her futile domestic work vacuuming the desert appears complacent in contrast to more active female figures in the history of the Palestinian resistance. In the 1970s, figures like Leila Khaled were held in the highest esteem for their active roles in fighting for the Palestinian cause.[234] Khaled participated in the hijacking of two airplanes in 1969 and 1970. Khaled appeared in Palestinian posters in the 1970s and continues to figure in Palestinian posters and art to this day, including a mural with her image which appears on the apartheid wall near Bethlehem (Figures 12-15). One could even see this figure engaging in her pointless domestic act in contrast to the figure of the female IDF soldier—an embodiment of the post-WWII new Jew who was strong and would fight rather than be led to slaughter in a Holocaust. Saadeh's work then can be seen as the complacency that has taken over among Palestinians and particularly a call to Palestinian women to throw aside pointless domestic tasks and the role of the docile domestic caretaker in favor of a more active role in resisting the occupation.

[234] Thanks to Dr. Anneka Lenssen for this suggestion for comparison of the 1970s female resistance fighters, as well as the later discussion of female IDF soldiers, to the complacency displayed in Saadeh's figure.

Additionally, Rosler's use of women in her images also "foregrounded women's roles as targets of violence and reproducers of the homeland."[235] In fact, these two things are inherently connected. As the producers of the homeland, in war, women become sites for the destruction of that homeland by the opposing military force. It is through the domestic figures of the American women in *House Beautiful* that the reproduction of "the American way" is asserted in Rosler's images, and it is through the violence enacted upon the Vietnamese women that another homeland and way of life (Communist/non-Western) is destroyed. In desolately vacuuming the desert, Saadeh's figure embodies both of these aspects of woman. Her tending of the land inherently ties her to the homeland, not only as its reproducer/mother, but as a representative of the land itself. At the same time, as the lone woman tending to a land which has been emptied of her people, she stands as a symbol for the violence enacted against those women and which continue to be enacted against women under the occupation—through the detainment of the male members (and frequently breadwinners) of their families to the women who have, due to the restrictions on movement put in place by permanent and floating checkpoints, been forced to give birth at the checkpoints[236]. As the caretaker of the land, she is a mother torn from her child in exile.

While Francis Alÿs' *When Faith Moves Mountains* does not focus on the relationship of women to the land, the work does engage with both the absurdist task of altering a vast landscape and questions of labor and progress that can be considered in relation to Saadeh's work. *When Faith Moves Mountains* is a video work that depicts hundreds of volunteers shoveling earth to

[235] Alan R. Ingram, "Making geopolitics otherwise: artistic interventions in global political space," *The Geographical Journal* 177 (September 2011): 218-222 (e-book not paginated).
[236] According to the Palestinian Ministry of Health, from 2000 to 2007 at least 68 women had given birth at Israeli checkpoints, resulting in 35 miscarriages and 5 of the women dying. http://www.unfpa.org/news/checkpoints-compound-risks-childbirth-palestinian-women

move a small dune outside Lima, Peru a matter of inches. While the number of people involved is significantly larger in Alÿs's work (compared with Saadeh's singular figure), the actions are quite similar in their futility. In Alÿs's work, a long row of volunteers wearing matching shirts shovel, take a step, and shovel again, in a repetitive feat that moves enough earth forward to shift an entire dune an imperceptible amount.

When Faith Moves Mountains' act, which has itself been described as Sisyphean, reveals the lack of forward progress towards a Western-defined modernity accessible in the climate of the geographic context in which it takes place. Saadeh's endless vacuuming of the desert mirrors the circuitous aspect of Palestinian time wherein there is no forward progress towards statehood. Similarly, the volunteers' shoveling serves to represent the "inevitable failure of Latin America to modernize successfully."[237] Alÿs's action was filmed on the outskirts of Lima at a dune that overlooks a shantytown to emphasize this "failure of modernization" representative of greater Latin America. As art historian Grant Kester notes, "Progress in Latin America is always failed, compromised or postponed. No matter how hard Alÿs's […] student volunteers work they will never be able to gain access to the benefits of modernity precisely because modernity, a process led by the North, depends on the strategic underdevelopment of the economies of the South."[238] Because of the overall power dynamics of the global economy and hegemony of the global North, Latin America (and the greater global South) is positioned so that it can never achieve modernity as defined by the global North. The act of moving the dune then, demonstrates that no matter how much effort is exerted, no real progress, as defined by the West, can be made. Cuauhtémoc Medina, Alÿs's collaborator on *When Faith Moves Mountains*, described, "the

[237] Grant Kester, "Lessons in Futility: Francis Alÿs and the Legacy of May '68," *Third Text* 23 (2009): 414-415.
[238] Kester, 415.

action was conceived as a parable of short productivity: a huge endeavor whose major achievement was no achievement at all."[239] Through the futile laborious actions of its citizens, the work describes the state of their lives and thereby the status of the region as a whole—exhausted from exertion with nothing to show for it.

However, as discussed in the introduction to Chapter 1, it is important to note that the mapping of a Western conception of modernity as a universal goal all societies want to achieve precludes the possibility of a unique notion of modernity embodied by those non-Western cultures, and that they desire a Western modernity in the first place. It ignores the possibility that the "failure" of these societies to achieve Western modernity could be rooted in the fact that they have already achieved an alternate modernity and that their trajectory is one altogether differentiated from that of the Western nations to which they are compared. Complicating this of course is the hegemony of the Western modern capitalist model within the economic and political spheres. The dominant Western nations work through various systems, such as exploitative loans to nations in the Global South, to submit these nations to this Western modern capitalist model making it difficult for any alternate form of modernity to succeed—particularly those that would threaten the supremacy of Western neoliberal capitalism.

Much like the stagnation depicted in Alÿs's work, Saadeh's work similarly articulates the inertia of forward progress in Palestine through a forced submission to a Western hegemonic force. However, Saadeh's effort is not a communal one like Alÿs's, but rather a solitary one. In this sense her project also expresses the abandonment felt by Palestinians in their current state—not only by those who seek to erase them from the land, but by those who are supposed to be working for them—the Oslo-created Palestinian Authority, any resistance movement, or fellow

[239] Medina quoted in Kester, 414-415.

Palestinians. Paralleling the relationship between Latin American and the "North," Saadeh's incessant vacuuming of the desert may also indicate the fact that her inability to cultivate the land further, or to make it any more "home," is rooted in the fact that the formation of the ultimate Zionist vision for the state of Israel is predicated on the continued suppression, expulsion, and erasure of Palestinian presence from that land.

In Kester's analysis of Alÿs's work, he connects the failure of Latin American progress as represented in *When Faith Moves Mountains* to May '68, stating that they indicate that "[p]olitical or social progress is always already destined for frustration and deferral, impurity and compromise, due to the inevitable co-option of the forces of organised resistance."[240] This could also be the lesson of Palestine and the Oslo Accords. In the formation of the Palestinian Authority, a result of the Accords, the revolutionary groups that had generated the pre-Oslo posters that called the Palestinian population and broader world to action were neutralized. In exchange for the appearance of legitimate independent rule in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, the elements of the revolutionary groups that would become the PA sacrificed much of their actual goals. As such, the Palestinian Authority became little more than the appearance of progress as a means to maintain the status quo desired by the Israeli government, and is restricted by the Israeli government to make sure that this is so through the violation of sovereignty through means such as the co-option of land via settlements and federalization for military or environmental purposes and the refusal to recognize elections of parties, such as Hamas, of which they do not approve. The organized Palestinian resistance was co-opted by Western forces (of which Israel, in its Anglo-European hegemony, is included) through the international pomp-and-circumstance of the peace processes. It was at these talks

[240] Kester, 416.

that the legitimation of these resistance groups were structured by these same Western forces in the terms that best-suited the maintenance of Western dominance. In the wake of the failure of Oslo, it is the frustration with the abandonment of the Palestinian people by those leaders of the resistance movements that has in part led to the general disillusionment with hope for the future. Saadeh's solitary vacuuming of the desert in *Vacuum* embodies this feeling of abandonment. The state of Palestinian reality in the post-Oslo era may contain elements of the absurd, but the path that led to this reality, as the examples of May '68 and Latin America reveal, is in fact one repeated globally and across time as a means for the powerful to maintain their positions.

Conclusion

With the formation of the PLO and its Arts Education Department in the mid-1960s, Palestinian art's main function became that of serving the revolution and the dispersion of the liberatory message. This manifest most prominently in the proliferation of posters throughout the late 60s, 70s, and 80s. With the signing of the Oslo Accords, which ended the First Intifada and formed the Palestinian Authority out of leadership from these revolutionary groups, poster production declined due to the breakup of a unified politicized art department in lieu of NGO-funded local projects and the advent of the internet supplanting poster dissemination as the most cost-effective option for circulating information and imagery. By the outbreak of the Second Intifada, the disillusionment with the Accords had set in, and artists began to take on new approaches in their artistic expressions—ones which appropriately articulated their frustration at the inter-Intifada period and the quotidian realities with which the failure of Oslo had left them.

Distinctive among the art in the post-Second Intifada period is the use of humor. In this chapter I have outlined three examples of ways that humor has been utilized by Palestinian artists: 1) as a way to bypass compassion fatigue in order to disseminate information about

contemporary Palestinian reality; 2) as a means of solidarity and community-formation through a critique of those who have oppressed or betrayed the Palestinian people; and 3) as a means to draw attention to the absurdist realities of contemporary Palestinian daily life. Each of the works discussed in this chapter are inclusive of more than one of these elements of Palestinian humor, despite their use as exemplary of one of the three. Additionally, as noted throughout the chapter, many of the works also make reference to the cyclicality of Palestinian time discussed in Chapter 1 (much as Fawakhry's *Ben on the Beach 5*, fully discussed in Chapter 1, is utilized as an introductory example of Palestinian humor).

Much in the same way, the issue of critique, particularly a critique of Palestinian and Arab politics and culture, addressed briefly in the discussions of all three works in this chapter, leads us into the focus for the next chapter. While the artists discussed herein have utilized humor as a means of critique, in the next chapter, the focus will shift toward artists who have turned their critical eye away from an exclusive derision of the Israeli occupation, and rather moved towards a reflexive critique of Palestinian and broader Arab political governance and handling of the revolutionary movement, the rise of religious fundamentalism, and issues of gender and sexuality.

Chapter 3: Looking in the Mirror: Palestinian Reflexive Critique

Introduction

In Chapter 2, humorous works by Sharif Waked, Muhammad Mussallam, and Raeda Saadeh were examined not only for their use of humor, but for how humor was used as a means to critique and scrutinize the socio-political situation of Palestine and the so-called peace process. While the incorporation of political critique is not new in Palestinian art, since 2000 there has been a shift towards a greater reflexive critique. Rather than a focus exclusively on a critique of the occupation, Zionist settler colonial practices, and Israeli military violence, artists have turned a critical eye on Palestinian governance and social and cultural life. This of course does not mean that artists, or Palestinians in general, have diminished their fervent opposition and outrage at their state of occupation or the role of Israel in their contemporary status. However, those artists of the younger generation have begun to look back at the history that led them to this place and to critique the role of the Palestinian ruling parties and other Arab countries in the formation of their current condition. Additionally, other artists have turned their critical eye towards other societal issues of concern for contemporary Palestinians: the rise of Islamism in formerly Christian Palestinian cities, and Arab masculinity and issues of homosexuality in the Arab world. However, it is important to note, and will be addressed throughout this chapter, that colonialism generally and the occupation specifically has a significant role in these aspects of Palestinian and Arab society that these artists are critiquing. Specifically, the role of colonialism and the occupation must be acknowledged in the perceived failures of the Palestinian political institution, the influence of capitalism and conservativism in the changing nature of Palestinian cities, and the influence of reactionary traditionalism and hypermasculinization in Palestine.

Political Ineffectuality: Wafa Hourani's *Qalandia 2087* and *Cinema Dounia*

As one enters the gallery space, a boisterous city in miniature appears. Passing by a café, the sound of lively café music rises, attracting patrons to sit and sip the local Palestinian beer, Taybeh, advertised by a sign out front. The bubbling of water in which a few goldfish swim adds to the atmosphere. Passing between buildings supported on pedestals, one observes a variety of gardens, children playing, and a car painted with the logo of the superhero Spiderman. The miniature city includes a site of departure and arrival, an airport populated with planes ready to take passengers to far off places. It is at the airport that one comes face-to-face with one's own reflection. Before the airport is a long wall, affixed with mirrors. However, from the vantage point of the viewer, one is able to see over the wall back into the town—a miniature diorama of the Qalandia refugee camp. The wall is a reimagining of the apartheid wall covered in mirrors.

Qalandia 2087 (2009) is the last of a series of three dioramas of the Qalandia refugee camp made by artist Wafa Hourani as part of the artist's *Future Cities* project. The Qalandia refugee camp, due to its position Jerusalem and Ramallah, is most noteworthy as the site of the most notorious of the Israeli checkpoints. Each of the three works imagines the refugee camp 100 years after a significant moment in Palestinian history. *Qalandia 2047* (2006) constructs the camp 100 years after the *Nakba*, *Qalandia 2067* (2008) depicts the camp 100 years after the Six Day War (which led to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza), and *Qalandia 2087* imagines Qalandia 100 years after the outbreak of the First Intifada. Each work consists of a series of dioramas scaled down to the proportions of the toy cars and people which populate them. They are displayed on plinths that allow viewers to walk amongst the buildings and see into them. They are constructed of cardboard and photographs the artist took to construct a visual likeness

to the buildings, despite the simplicity of their structure. Hourani calls this technique, a cornerstone of his practice, *Photolife*. While all three works in the series depict the refugee camp, the first two have been described as distinctly dystopian, while the third, the focus of discussion here, has been described alternately as neither utopian nor dystopian, or in fact, utopian.[241] It is not simply the potential optimism in *Qalandia 2087* that warrants focus here, but rather the fact that this iteration centers on a conception of a new political reality for Palestinians that involves a reflexive inspection of the Palestinian political situation as it stands contemporarily as a means to move forward.

The more optimistic trend in *Qalandia 2087* is evident in Hourani's textual imagining of a historical timeline of Palestine from 1948 to 2087.[242] The timeline lays out the factual history of Palestine from 1948 until the death of Yasser Arafat in 2005, and then follows Hourani's imagining of what happens thereon after. Arafat's death is certainly not a coincidental turning point in Hourani's history. Arafat was the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Fatah and president of the Palestinian Authority (PA) from its formation (in 1994, as a result of the Oslo Accords) until 2004. Arafat represented both the Palestinian nationalist effort, and the compromises, in the Oslo Accords, that ultimately led to the stagnation of the status quo. His death represents the end of that era's push for Palestinian sovereignty. While this elicits a disappointment at the end of this period, it also leaves room for the possibility of something new.

[241] Hourani himself claims the work is neither utopian nor dystopian, but rather just an imagining of a potential future, but I will argue that this is, at least, an imagining tinged with optimism. Author's interview with the artist 5/27/15.
[242] *Photolife*, 2009. Text sent to the author by the artist 5/28/17.

In his historical imagining, Hourani signals that a new nationalist movement will require self-reflection in the name he grants the new political party: the Mirror Party. As he notes in his entry for 2019, "After many years of living in what became an overcrowded open air prison, the Palestinian Mirror Party (PMP) decided to cover the WALL with mirrors and create the illusion of more space and seeing their reflection everywhere, begin to wonder how they got in there."[243] What begins as an attempt to create the appearance that the camp is not a restricted space only ends up enhancing it. Rather than seeing twice the space in the camp, when the Mirror Party officials look at the mirrors, all they see is the reflection of themselves, trapped in the camp. This realization appears to lead to despair, as evident from the changing of the local school's name from the Qalandia School to the Impossible School and the sealing off of the school's basketball hoops, making it impossible to score.[244]

Hourani's timeline also comments on the rise of conflict tourism to Palestine which, like the Israeli government, profits from the maintenance of the status quo in Palestine. In the entry for 2023 he notes, "An Israeli company for tourism built near the checkpoint a discothèque bar with aquarium and one golden fish they called it Checkpoint Bar to encourage trippy-political tourism."[245] In this imagined future, Israelis make a profit from the fact that Palestinians in Qalandia are stuck in both the status quo of their political situation and physically restricted in much of their movement through the addition of a dance club and bar catering to those who want to view the occupation while drinking and dancing the night away. Hourani's 2025 entry contrasts with this, noting that the mirror that the new political party used to cover the apartheid wall was named largest in the world by the Guinness Book of World Records, resulting in an

[243] Ibid. Capitalizations in the original.
[244] Ibid.
[245] Ibid.

increase of tourism to Palestine.[246] Unlike the discothèque which produces Palestinian suffering as entertainment for tourists and profit for an Israeli company, the tourism produced by the mirrored wall stems from something produced by the Palestinians themselves, rather than something that has happened to them. This achievement also casts Palestinians as victors, rather than victims.

This appears to build momentum and the entries that follow reveal renewed momentum among Palestinians towards resistance. More gardens are produced in the camps.[247] Refusal to comply with Israeli officials is documented at the checkpoint.[248] The basketball hoops are re-opened, but made larger so that making baskets is significantly easier.[249] The next turning point appears to be in 2067, when the Mirror Party wins seats in the Knesset (Israeli parliament).[250] It is for this reason perhaps that the impact of this new political shift is not seen fully in Hourani's works until *Qalandia 2087*, once the Mirror Party has gained power. The basketball hoops (an indicator of the pulse of the community, it would seem) are changed once again–this time made to be the size of the basketballs, "for more precise aims."[251] The new Palestinian party has a refocused their aim on achieving sovereignty, and now have gained a foothold in the Israeli political system. Interestingly, this also results in a return of the arts to Qalandia.[252]

The new optimism is visible in the purchase of the Checkpoint bar by a Palestinian who transforms it into an Arabic restaurant, and the removal of the checkpoint (2081 and 2085

[246] Ibid.
[247] Ibid.
[248] Ibid.
[249] Ibid.
[250] Ibid.
[251] Ibid.
[252] The potential in the relationship between the arts and political resistance will be discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

respectively).[253] Despite the removal of the checkpoint, Hourani notes that Palestinians retain a mic that is left behind and that they "change the checkpoint to Speech-point[:] a free speech area where people can say or sing what they like."[254] The checkpoint has been transformed from a space of restricted speech, movement, and freedom in general to one of free expression for Palestinians. Additionally, this signals the kind of utopian vision that Hourani has for Qalandia. Given some of the more conservative movements, like Hamas, which are associated with political Islam, there are potential future Palestines that are dictated not by Israeli restrictions, but by other restrictions on speech and song, in addition to dress, alcohol consumption, and other factors. In Hourani's future Qalandia, freedom of expression for all is vital.[255]

Hourani closes his timeline with the date of his final work in the series, 2087. In this year, he imagines the culmination of this new liberation movement, rooted in self-reflection: "One hundred years after the First Intifada, Qalandia's residents celebrated in the Stone Garden after the Mirror Party's historic agreement with the new Israeli government, which gives the Palestinian[s] the 1967 lands (the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem) along with the right of return for all refugees."[256] This is the Qalandia that viewers promenade through in *Qalandia 2087* (Figure 29)—a new Qalandia that, while on the surface may look quite similar, is rejoicing an achievement in sovereignty based on a self-reflection that is articulated through the choices made by Hourani in the construction of his diorama.

The most obvious way this notion of self-reflection is made evident is through the covering of the apartheid wall with mirrors and the naming of the victorious political party

[253] *Photolife*, 2009. Text sent to the author by the artist 5/28/17.
[254] Ibid.
[255] Artistic responses to the rise of conservativism and political Islam in Palestine will be addressed later in this chapter.
[256] *Photolife*, 2009. Text sent to the author by the artist 5/28/17.

representing Palestinians in 2087 as "The Mirror Party." The death of Arafat, where Hourani leaves off the factual portion of his narrative of the history of Qalandia, has, in Hourani's telling, left a vacuum that has not been filled by the subsequent leadership of the existing political parties. Rather, Hourani invents a new political party to lead the Palestinian liberation movement. This party, the Mirror Party, has an ideology rooted in the idea of self-reflection—looking at themselves. As Hourani notes in his text, after covering the wall with mirrors, the members of the Mirror Party "wonder how they got […] there."[257] It is through this wondering, this looking at themselves as confined within the walls built by the occupying forces, that the members of this new party are able to see themselves as part of the camp.

This is perhaps a shift from the establishment power in Palestine who, while ostensibly acting as representatives of the Palestinian people, have at times perhaps been more interested in seeking their own advantages of power. Hourani has expressed his own frustration with the existing political representation in Palestine, nothing that his "lifetime of experiences in Palestine, and several life-changing encounters with the Israeli occupation […] have led [him] to have no faith in political parties, which are constantly failing."[258] This feeling among some Palestinians that Fatah, Arafat's former party, has perhaps not delivered on its promises to those who voted for them is reflected in the success of Hamas in the 2006 Parliamentary elections, and the subsequent severing of the Palestinian governance between the two parties, only recently reconciled. Hamas's success was in part due to its administering of social services to Palestinians in need. Those who felt they were forgotten in the ongoing and unending peace processes had

[257] Ibid.
[258] "Roundtable Three: The Future: Marwa Arsanios, Simone Fattal, GCC, Wafa Hourani, Maha Maamoun, moderated by Bidoun," in *Here and Elsewhere*, exh. cat. (New York: New Museum, 2014), 148.

their most imminent needs met by Hamas. However, the shifting of the revolution from a secular nationalist to Islamic nationalist project, as it is under Hamas ideology, is yet another reason for the persistent failure of progress in Hourani's opinion. He remarks on the "lack of strategy that has led [Palestinians] into wars in the name of religion instead of revolution on behalf of human rights."[259] This lamentation over the coloring of Palestinian nationalism, as well as social life in Palestine, with an Islamic tinge arises in other works by Hourani, such as another of his Photolife works, *Al Masjid Al Waheed (The Only and Lonely Mosque)* (2014).

This reflection on what had caused a lack of success in the past is articulated in Hourani's text when he notes that the Mirror Party members see their reflection and realize that they themselves are trapped in the same situation as other Palestinians in the refugee camp. They also reflect back on the history of the Palestinian Liberation movement, what got them to this point, so that they can make changes to create future success. As Hourani has stated,

> There's a mirror on the wall in "Qalandia" that is meant to serve as motivation, so people take responsibility for themselves and for Palestine. The idea is that Palestine's current political parties will disappear as people look at themselves in the mirror and realize the danger they face—given the violence of the resistance and its lack of tactical action—as well as the desire they have to live in peace and dignity.[260]

It is through the literal reflectiveness of the mirrors that wallpaper the apartheid wall that Hourani transforms the means of suppression into the path towards sovereignty. Hourani's Mirror Party is a call to look at what the politicians of the past have done, and what obfuscations have been placed in their way by the occupation, in order to forge a new path forward to nationhood.

[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.

While today Qalandia is most well-known for the refugee camp and checkpoint that bear its name, it was once distinguished by its airport. It was briefly the only airport in Mandate Palestine, before the Wilhelma Airport (now Ben Gurion Airport) was opened near Tel Aviv.[261] After the *Nakba* the airport fell under Jordanian control, where it was turned into a civil airport.[262] It stayed under the aegis of Jordan until the occupation of the West Bank by Israel in 1967.[263] The Israelis seized control of the airport, incorporating it into their annexation of wider Jerusalem, and utilized it for domestic travel.[264] It remained as such until the onset of the Second Intifada in 2000, when it was shut down and turned into a base for the Israeli army (Israeli Defense Forces or IDF).[265] That same year the now-infamous checkpoint was opened. What had previously been a point of departure was transformed into a site geared towards the restriction of movement and tool to maintain the hegemony of the Israeli occupation.

In *Qalandia 2087* however, the airport has been returned to its former glory (Figure 30). A row of airplanes faces the mirrored wall, giving the impression of an even larger fleet. Importantly, the airplanes face toward the apartheid wall, an aggressive stance, as if to assert that they know that the wall can longer prevent the movement of Palestinians that they allow. The planes face the wall in antagonistic challenge—the wall can remain as tall as it wants, rather than a reminder of restriction, it now functions as a symbol of Palestinian resilience and achievement when faced with obstruction. Each of the planes is painted in a slightly different combination of colors and style, implying a diverse array of airlines passing through the airport—and a diverse

[261] Helga Tawil-Souri, "Qalandia Checkpoint: The Historical Geography of a Non-Place," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 42 (2010): 26.
[262] Ibid.
[263] Ibid.
[264] Ibid.
[265] Ibid.

array of destinations. One plane approaches the end of the runway, angled to take off—an ease of departure that eludes contemporary Palestinians, and which appears triumphant in Hourani's future iteration.[266] Interestingly, this resurrection of the former airport provides a more optimistic circuity of time than the one outlined in Chapter 1. While the circuity of time discussed in Chapter 1 articulated a lack of forward progress, in Hourani's imagined recreation of Qalandia, the airport has returned to its former glory. This is in fact, a resurrection and the sort of return for which Palestinians have yearned. In this instance, the return to a pre-*Nakba* status, for the airport at least, becomes a reality.

The airport is one of two landmarks on the opposite side of the mirrored wall from the refugee camp. The other is the restaurant, easily noticeable by its lively music and tank of live goldfish (Figure 31). Goldfish appear a number of times in Hourani's constructed history. Many Palestinians who were exiled from their homes lost their access to the Mediterranean Sea. Additionally, when greater restrictions were placed on movement in and out of the West Bank at the onset of the Second Intifada, those that used to at least be able to make the trip from the West Bank to coastal cities like Jaffa and Akko no longer had the ease of access. Visiting the sea required the traversing of Qalandia checkpoint, that is, if one was lucky enough to receive a permit to enter into Israel, all to reach water that is close enough to be seen from the high rises of Ramallah. A longing for the sea, so close and yet so inaccessible, has been a feature of many works by Palestinian artists and filmmakers, including Inass Yassin's *Dreaming of the Sea* (2006), and Annemarie Jacir's *Salt of this Sea* (2008) to name just two. The sea also holds specific significance for Hourani, as his brother Hasan (also an artist) and nephew Samer drown

[266] Contemporary Palestinians living in the West Bank must either receive a permit to enter Israel in order to fly out from Ben Gurion airport near Tel Aviv, or (more likely) travel through Israeli checkpoints to Amman, Jordan in order to conduct international travel.

on a rare visit from Ramallah to the Mediterranean. It was this event that triggered Hourani's shift from filmmaking, in which he was trained, to "sculpture, poetry, and science fiction."[267]

When Hourani first mentions goldfish in his imagined historic timeline of Qalandia, it is exactly this longing for the sea that fuels the arrival of the fish. As he notes in his entry for 2016 (then an imagined future), "A Palestinian from the camp by the name of Abu Jamil missed the sea and the fish so much, he dig [*sic*] a pool beside his home and brought a golden fish to swim in it. People in the camp say [*sic*] that Abu Jamil brought us the sea."[268] This single fish proliferates, creating a sea-in-miniature for the people of Qalandia. While later on the fish perish and are mourned as martyrs, they make a triumphant return in 2081 (and appear in *Qalandia 2087*) as a feature of the Al Ajami restaurant. While in Hourani's future imagining access to the sea may presumably be possible again, the live goldfish in Al Ajami serve as Qalandia's own sea, once again a reminder of the resilience and innovation of the Palestinian people under occupation.

Wandering through the plinths that make up the installation, one recognizes a number of cars lining the streets. However, one in particular is of note. Along one of the streets sits a car painted like the costume of the Marvel Comic superhero Spiderman. As Hourani has remarked, Palestinians love Spiderman because he can scale walls.[269] This is a playful and humorous nod particularly to Palestinian viewers of his piece who, by and large, would be the only ones to understand this reference. The celebration of the superhero via the car's detailing again signals the optimism of Hourani's camp. As Spiderman's ability to climb walls renders him limitless, so too is the potential for Palestinians to achieve this freedom.

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[267] "Roundtable Three," *Here and Elsewhere*, 147.
[268] *Photolife*, 2009. Text sent to the author by the artist 5/28/17.
[269] http://www.artpalestine.org/2009/02/spiderman/

The buildings that make up *Qalandia 2087* are cardboard papered with images Hourani took of the camp to create the photolife constructions. There are windows cut out of these structures which are covered with segments of film strips. A light is placed inside the buildings making them into light boxes. The film strips used in the windows of the structures are from various archives that Hourani was able to obtain.[270] The use of film strips harkens back to Hourani's original training and interest in filmmaking. The use of archival film also incorporates aspects of Palestine's history into its potential future. Hourani again seems to say that it is only through Palestinians looking at themselves, their history (political, cultural, etc.) that a future can be forged. It also hints at the possibilities for art to be utilized in revolution and liberation, something for which, as will be discussed later in this chapter, Hourani laments missed opportunities. The fact that the archival film material that Hourani obtained was being disposed of by those who were safeguarding them, and were only salvaged by Hourani's interest in them, signals the persistence of a devaluation of the arts in the context of resistance, revolution, and liberation. In the context for the continued fight for Palestinian freedom and sovereignty, the arts have often taken a back seat and have been seen as unimportant, rather than as a valued part of that history of struggle or as a means through which to execute that struggle, with the notable exception of the proliferation of poster art produced by the PLO.

The use of the diorama, the construction of Qalandia as a miniature through which viewers can traverse and observe, can bring viewers who may feel distant from such a place, like the largely American audience that would have seen the work exhibited at the New Museum in

[270] While Hourani did not specify which archives he used in all his works, he did identify the fim used in his *Cinema Dunia* as those from the archive of the Nablus cinema, which had been closed since the First Intifada and were about to be discarded. Author's interview with the artist 5/27/15.

2014, a closer experience. Much like we saw humor functioning in Chapter 2 as a bridge to empathy, so too can scale. As spatial theorist Greer Crawley observes,

> We study [Hourani's] models closely, exploring with our eyes but also through our ears; seeking out aural and visual details. Ralph Rugoff writes in *Homeopathic Strategies* how: tiny artworks force us to draw closer and this forward movement parallels a mental process; the more closely we examine minute details, the less we notice the gulf in size that separates us. The act of paying attention is in itself a kind of magnifying glass […] this charges our experience of the object, imbuing it with an almost hallucinatory acuity.[271]

As viewers walk through the plinths supporting the various diorama sculptures, they are pulled in by all the small details discussed above to discover what the camp holds. The more the viewer does this, the less they experience the diorama as a looming giant, and more as someone on the ground walking the streets. The viewer notices the details of the camp, and perhaps becomes inquisitive about them, through an immersion of themselves in the setting forged by the experience of the diorama. As Crawley continues, "By positioning his models at a height that does not privilege the overview, he allows the spectator to become engaged with the spaces at eye level. Coming 'face-to-face' with the occupants of these houses, the viewer experiences moments of recognition and identification. This is the view hidden from the military observers who rely on the ability to survey the terrain from a high vantage point."[272] This low vantage point specifically gives the view not of the Israeli occupiers whose perception of the camp is limited to a military one, but rather a personal "face-to-face" perspective. Again, this allows the viewer to take the perspective of one relating to the individuals in the camp, rather than viewing them from either the position of spectator or overlord. The inclusion of the mirrored walls drives

[271] Greer Crawley, "Fatal Strategies," in *Space and desire: scenographic strategies in theatre, art and media,* Thea Brejzek, Wolfgang Greisenegger, and Lawrence Wallen, eds. (Zürich: Zhdk, 2011), 81.
[272] Ibid, 83.

this home even further, as viewers walk through the work they quite literally see themselves reflected in the wall and placed in the context of the camp. In the context of Palestine, where imagery of the contemporary condition may be oversaturated in the collective consciousness of those consuming mass media, the care and detail of this imagined optimistic future allows for an accessibility of empathy and comprehension that otherwise might have been blocked by compassion fatigue.[273]

While this specific work from his "Future Cities" series has not been exhibited in Palestine, other works from the series that deal with Qalandia were exhibited in 2016 at Gallery One in Ramallah. In this context, Arabs (including Palestinians in the Arab diaspora) and Palestinians in Palestine are given the opportunity to look at themselves and the potential future that Hourani proposes. They are invited to see an alternative to their present reality and stagnation and explore a future wherein sovereignty and liberation are possible. The reflexivity of this is then two-fold: through the examination of the futuristic imagining of Palestine and through the literal reflection of the mirrored wall. Hourani's work proposes taking some time for self-reflection and, as a result, shaking off the status quo in lieu of moving towards a new political reality.

In another work, Hourani explores the lost opportunities to utilize the potential of the arts in service of the Palestinian revolution through the imagining of an alternative reality that resurrects a lost cultural icon of Ramallah. *Cinema Dunia* (2012) (Figure 32) is another of Hourani's photolife diorama works, this one representing one of the three movie theaters that used to exist in Ramallah. Cinema Dunia was the first of the three theaters to open in the city,

[273] For a longer discussion of compassion fatigue, see Chapter 2.

which it did prior to the *Nakba*.[274] The cinema was a prominent cultural feature in Ramallah, attracting a wide swath of people, including Esther Jallad, who became a fixture of Cinema Dunia as she never missed a screening and had a designated seat in the theater.[275] Cinema Dunia, along with the other two movie theaters in Ramallah, closed during the First Intifada. As Hourani recollects, it was the Palestinian political parties that closed down the cinemas stating that the uprising was not a time for the arts, it was only a time for revolution.[276] *Cinema Dunia* stems from Hourani's frustration at what he perceives as a missed opportunity to utilize the arts and the cinema as a means for supporting and promoting the revolution, rather than a distraction from it.

In *Cinema Dunia*, Hourani imagines an alternate reality where the theater was never closed. In his version, Ramallah is a cosmopolitan city, as evident from the diversity of dress of the various figures surrounding the cinema.[277] The theater proclaims itself as a site of the revolution, rather than something separate from it, directly on its façade. An image of Palestinians from 1948 appears atop the marquee.[278] This assertion of the potential available in the linking of the arts and resistance is echoed as well in an image on the front of the building of Juliano Mer-Khamis, the founder of the Jenin Freedom Theater. The theater, based in the Jenin Refugee Camp in the West Bank, carries as its mission, "to explore the potential of arts as an important catalyst for social change."[279] Mer-Khamis's image does not simply appear as a surrogate for the theater, but also for the proof that the arts are seen as a legitimately powerful force. Mer-Khamis, a close friend of Hourani's, was assassinated by unknown killers in 2011.

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[274] Inass Yassin, "Projection: Three Cinemas in Ramallah & Al-Bireh," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 42 (2010): 50.
[275] https://electronicintifada.net/content/memory-esther-cinema-dunia/7458
[276] Author interview with the artist 5/27/15.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid.
[279] http://www.thefreedomtheatre.org/who-we-are/mission/

Inside Hourani's cinema, a film plays, which can be viewed through cut out windows in the side of the building (Figure 33). Much like the film strips used in the windows of the refugee camp structures in *Qalandia 2087*, the film that plays inside Hourani's theater consists of a mix of clips of movies from the Palestinian Cinema Archive.[280] The walls are decorated with movie posters for films that do not exist, an archive of a Palestinian film history forged in Hourani's imagination. In *Cinema Dunia*, Hourani makes an argument for the importance of art's potential role in revolution. This argument appears in his fabricated history of Palestine as well, in the year 2075, when Cinema Dunia is reopened, alongside the first modern museum in Qalandia, the Qala Modern.[281] Considered alongside *Qalandia 2087*, Hourani's aim appears to make work that not only articulates the potential of art to imagine alternative futures for Palestinians, but to serve as a motivating force behind making these futures a reality. The argument that the arts, and in particular cinema, has not seemed to be valued high enough by or understood as a critical part of Palestinian political movements or the cultural makeup of contemporary Palestine is explored by other artists, including Inass Yassin, discussed next.

Capitalism and Conservativism: Inass Yassin's *Projection*

Changing Demographics

[280] Samuel Spencer, "Wafa Hourani Predicts Palestine's Future in New Exhibition," *Blouin Artinfo*, http://enme.blouinartinfo.com/news/story/1417571/wafa-hourani-predicts-palestines-future-in-new-exhibition?utm_source=Blouin+Artinfo+Newsletters&utm_campaign=ca2209ad02-Asia+Pacific+Newsletter+June+3,+2016&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_df23dbd3c6-ca2209ad02-83693381 Accessed May 19, 2017.
[281] *Photolife*, 2009. Text sent to the author by the artist 5/28/17.

The *Nakba* created clear ethnic demographic shifts in Palestine, as well as the surrounding countries, in particular Jordan and Lebanon. Almost three quarters of a million Palestinians were expelled from the new State of Israel and became refugees in the West Bank (then part of Transjordan), Gaza Strip (then under Egyptian control), and surrounding Arab countries, or even traveled further abroad. In addition to these ethnic shifts, the creation of the Palestinian refugee crisis also resulted in religious demographic changes. Of the 726,000 Palestinians who left the new State of Israel in 1948, 50-60,000 of them were Christians[282]—35% of the Palestinian Christian population in Mandate Palestine.[283] Much of this Christian population would ultimately emigrate to North and South America and Australia.[284] However some became regional refugees. While some did remain in the West Bank and Gaza after 1948, when these areas were occupied by Israel in 1967, another wave of emigration was triggered. Since 1967, approximately 24% of all Christians that had remained in the West Bank and Gaza Strip have emigrated.[285] Studies have shown that Palestinian Christians have in fact emigrated at higher rates than their Muslim counterparts. The rate of emigration among Palestinian Christians was double the national rate between 1967 and 1993, when the first Oslo Accords were signed[286]. Socio-economic characteristics, the conventional pull of emigration towards "Christian" countries (rather than Muslim-dominated ones which proliferate in the Middle East),

[282] Bernard Sabella, "The Emigration of Christian Arabs: Dimensions and Causes of the Phenomenon," in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. Andrea Pacini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 135.
[283] Bernard Sabella, "Palestinian Christians: Challenges and Hopes," http://www.al-bushra.org/holyland/sabella.htm, Accessed April 28, 2017.
[284] Sabella, "The Emigration…," 135.
[285] Ibid.
[286] Sabella, "Palestinian Christians…"

and a sensitivity towards declining economic and political conditions have all been given as reasons for the higher rate of emigration among the Christian Palestinian population.[287]

Because of the shifts that have occurred in terms of the broader Palestinian population, the religious demographics of formerly Christian cities throughout Palestine have also changed. These shifts in the religious makeup of traditionally Christian Palestinian cities have been attributed to lower birth rates among Christians as compared with Muslims and persistent emigration trends among the Christian Palestinian population.[288] To look at one example of a historically Christian city in Palestine, in 1947, the Christians in Ramallah comprised 80% of the population; in the early 2000s that population had decreased to 33%.[289] This drastic demographic shift is representative of what occurred in other Christian cities throughout Palestine. As Inass Yassin's work *Projection*, to be discussed later, focuses on the city of Ramallah, I will focus my discussion of the effects of these demographic shifts on that city as my example.

Ramallah's Christian character fueled emigration beginning in at least the early twentieth century. Because of its Christian nature, international Christian organizations established institutions in Ramallah.[290] The presence of church-sponsored schools created unique educational opportunities, which in turn encouraged emigration from Ramallah, in particular to North and South America.[291] Both of these elements also led to the increased social and economic differentiation between Ramallah and its more conservative and economically

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[287] Ibid.
[288] Andrea Pacini, "Socio-Political and Community Dynamics of Arab Christians in Jordan, Israel, and the Autonomous Palestinian Territories," in *Christian Communities in the Arab Middle East: The Challenge of the Future*, ed. Andrea Pacini (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 282.
[289] Ibid.
[290] Lisa Taraki, "Enclave Micropolis: The Paradoxical Case of Ramallah/Al-Bireh," *Journal of Palestine Studies* (Summer 2008): 9.
[291] Ibid.

disadvantaged neighbor, Al-Bireh.[292] The *Nakba* resulted in a flood of refugees from the new state of Israel to Ramallah and cities like it throughout the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to a Jordanian census from 1953, "67 percent of Ramallah's 13,500 inhabitants were refugees."[293] While many of the Christian refugees settled in Ramallah and the surrounding area, anxiety about the aftermath of the establishment of the Jewish state spurred emigration among those already living in Ramallah.[294] This flow of emigration was persistent throughout the 20th century. As sociologist Lisa Taraki notes, "During the first two decades of the occupation, and until the outbreak of the first intifada in 1987, emigration, the colonial relationship with Israel, and expanding educational opportunities were the main engines of the changing class structure of the West Bank and Gaza."[295] While, as noted above, Christian emigration outpaced Muslim emigration two-fold, educational opportunities afforded to those in higher socio-economic class brackets meant increased emigration for opportunities abroad among this demographic class.

As those of the lower socio-economic stratum tend to be more conservative, the socio-economic as well as religious demographic shifts led to an overall rise in Muslim and conservative representation among the population of Ramallah. However, the Oslo Accords, which resulted in the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, made Ramallah the de facto capital of the Palestinian state-in-waiting. The PLO's secular nature, and the presence of a number of Christian Palestinians in positions of authority in its structure presented a counter-presence to the more conservative elements.[296] Additionally, many Palestinians who emigrated

[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid, 10.
[294] Ibid.
[295] Ibid, 11.
[296] Ziyad Abu-Amr, *Fundamentalism in the West Bank and Gaza: Muslim Brotherhood and Islamic Jihad* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), ix, 128.

from Ramallah returned to Ramallah, continuing to influence its culture and character.[297] The presence of a large number of NGOs and international organizations has also influenced the persistence of the city's secular nature. This is reflected, for example, in the fact that restaurants in Ramallah can hold alcohol licenses, which this is not the case for Al-Bireh.[298] Because of its dual nature—no longer demographically a Christian city, but retaining its secular nature—Ramallah has been thought about and described in contradictory ways. As Taraki describes,

> Ramallah is variously depicted as proof of the resilience of the middle class, the victory of globalization, the defeat of the resistance, or of the PA's ability to assure normalcy in a time of conflict and strife. […] Part of the intelligentsia views Ramallah as the promising incubator of a cosmopolitan and secular ethos, while another despises it as the seat of a corrupt and capitulatory elite. Ramallah also elicits bitterness and anger among ordinary people as a city prospering at the expense of the marginalized zones in the new spatial regime.[299]

People sometimes refer to Ramallah as "the bubble"—a place where one can feel a life of normalcy away from the strife and injustices to which other Palestinians, in cities such as Nablus or Hebron, are still subject daily.[300] It is Ramallah's middle class that has led to the continued persistence of defining Ramallah as a Christian city, despite the fact that it now has a majority Muslim population.[301] The secular nature of Ramallah, rooted in its historical Christian character, is something that has continued to define the city despite these demographic shifts.

Additionally, in spite of these changing demographics, numerous scholars report on the continued positive relationship between the Christian and Muslim Palestinian populations. Christian Palestinians have been aligned with Muslim Palestinians in terms of their united

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[297] Ibid, 22.
[298] Taraki, 14.
[299] Ibid, 12.
[300] In the same way, people often refer to Tel Aviv as "the bubble" as it is seen as a place where Israelis can go and not feel the tensions of the Palestinian-Israeli "conflict."
[301] Taraki, 14.

nationalist cause. Even historically in cases where Israel has attempted to drive a wedge between the two groups, Christian and Muslim Palestinians have remained unified.[302] Political Scientist Helga Baumgarten cites one such example in 2000, when an Israeli news outlet reported that Israel was aiding Palestinian Christians who were trying to flee the West Bank violence of the Second Intifada. In response, Christian Palestinians released a statement of their solidarity with the Palestinian nationalist struggle and censuring any attempts by Israel to parse them out from their Muslim counterparts.[303] These attempts by Israel persist still today. In 2014, the Israeli Knesset (Parliament) passed a law defining Christian Palestinians as Christians, rather than Arabs. Ostensibly this was to prevent workplace discrimination against Christians, by defining them as non-Arabs (acknowledging that discrimination against Arabs was apparently not an issue). However, it was clearly an attempt once again to drive a wedge between the Christian and Muslim populations, as well as to prevent the inevitable demographic shift toward an Arab majority. Once again, Christian organizations responded in opposition, reaffirming the united status of Palestinian Christians with the nationalist cause.[304]

While Palestinian Christians have remained aligned with the nationalist cause, and have consistently played integral roles in the liberation movement, in the period since the outbreak of the Second Intifada, local tensions between Christian and Muslim Palestinians have grown. Much of the scholarship on the relationships between these two groups is from the pre, or beginning of the Second Intifada period. Since that time, a number of key events have taken

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[302] Helga Baumgarten, "The Politicization of Muslim-Christian Relations in the Palestinian National Movement," in *Islam, Judaism, and the Political Role of Religions in the Middle East*, ed. John Bunzi (Gainseville: University Press of Florida, 2004), 76.
[303] Ibid.
[304] Statement by the World Council of Churches: https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/general-secretary/statements/concern-over-the-israeli-knesset-law

place worldwide that have driven the rise of fundamentalist Islamist movements and Islamophobia. The first of these events were the Al Qaeda attacks on September 11, 2001. While Yasser Arafat condemned the attacks, there were mixed reactions from the Palestinian public. A poll taken in 2005 by the Fafo Foundation, a Norwegian research organization, found that 70% of Palestinians viewed Al Qaeda as a resistance movement, with only 7% of them labeling it a terrorist organization.[305] Sixty-five percent of Palestinians polled supported Al-Qaeda bombings in the USA and Europe and only 22% labeled the September 11th attacks as terrorist acts.[306] Given general anti-imperialist rhetoric associated with Al-Qaeda and other Islamist organizations, as well as the persistent support of Israel and its occupation by Western counties, and the United States in particular, these results should not be surprising. Some Palestinians view Al Qaeda's violence against the US and Europe as the necessary sort of militant action required to resist an imperialist power—the same kind Palestinians have historically used in opposition to the Israeli occupation. The role of a number of Islamist groups in revolts throughout the Arab world in 2010—known as the Arab Spring—and its aftermath provided another example of how these organizations were gaining prominence in resistance against colonial and dictatorial rule.

However, there have been growing concerns among the Christian community in Palestine with how these organizations have changed the makeup of the cities in which they live. Since before the early 2000s, some Christians have been concerned with what place they might hold in a future Islamic state of Palestine.[307] These individuals maintained, when polled in 1993, that in spite of these anxieties, they would not fuel a desire to emigrate so long as they could maintain

[305] Gro Hasselknippe, "Palestinian Opinions on Peace and Conflict, Internal Affairs and Parliament Elections 2006: Results from Fafo polls in September and November-December 2005" (Fafo, 2005), 16.
[306] Ibid.
[307] Sabella, "The Emigration…," 151.

their lifestyle.[308] However, the rise of Islamic fundamentalist groups throughout the Arab world, alongside the growing fear of these groups, rooted in a misguided anxiety regarding Islam as a whole, has also manifest in some places amongst this Christian Palestinian population. Anecdotally, during my field research in Palestine, I noted that while Muslims did not mention any issues with Christian, a number of Christians I spoke with would caution me against the Muslim Palestinian population, claiming that they were the source of much of the contemporary trouble in Palestine and the ones who could potentially be dangerous to me as an American and a Jew.[309] While these remarks are simply anecdotal, Inass Yassin's installtion *Projection* articulates the anxieties of Palestinians (both Christians and Muslims—Yassin herself is not Christian but rather a secular Muslim) about the changing nature of Ramallah—a formerly Christian city known even contemporarily for its secular nature. The erasure of longstanding symbols of the secular history of the city, in Yassin's case in the form of Al-Walid Cinema, and the supplanting of these symbols with sites of commercialized Islamic conservativism serve to change the fundamental nature of this city.

Capitalism and the Urbanizing Drive in Ramallah

Large scale urbanization has taken place in Ramallah since the establishment of the Palestinian Authority with the Oslo Accords. After Oslo, Ramallah experienced a population increase that resulted in a "corresponding construction boom because of the city of Ramallah's

[308] Ibid.
[309] In spite of this, I never had any issue or reason for concern during any interaction with Palestinians of any religion.

role as the de facto Palestinian administrative seat."[310] As construction had been left at somewhat of a standstill during the Israeli occupation of the West Bank from 1967 until 1993, the establishment of Palestinian control over at least some of the West Bank territory (Area A) allowed for the opportunity for new urban development.[311] This changed the landscape of the city: "modern concrete high-rise buildings began to dot the skylines […] and change the traditional local architectural character and style of the urban environment."[312] Yassin herself has remarked on the proliferation of high-rise commercial and residential buildings and shopping centers in post-Oslo Ramallah.[313] This construction supplanted the traditional character of Ramallah with urbanization. The transformation of the Al-Walid Cinema into one of these shopping centers is just one example of fixtures of Ramallah's historic social and cultural life being destroyed and replaced by structures of neoliberal urbanization. Combined with an awareness of the changing religious demographics in Ramallah, sometimes, as in the case of Al-Walid Cinema, these two forces colluded to create new commercial sites catering to a more conservative clientele. In these instances, neoliberal urbanization aims to capitalize on rising conservativism in the region. It is into this intersection of "modern" urbanization and rising conservativism that Yassin intervenes with *Projection*.

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[310] Salah H. al-Houdalieh and Robert R. Sauders, "Building Destruction: The Consequences of Rising Urbanization on Cultural Heritage in the Ramallah Province," *International Journal of Cultural Property* (2009): 1-2.
[311] Under the terms of the Oslo Accords, the West Bank was divided into three areas: Area A (about 18% of the West Bank) where the newly established Palestinian Authority (PA) controls both civil and security matters, Area B (about 22% of the West Bank) where the PA controls civil matters and Israel controls security, and Area C (about 60% of the West Bank) where Israel controls both civil and security affairs. The West Bank is still administered this way today. Ramallah is in Area A. Ibid, 4.
[312] Ibid.
[313] Yassin, 49.

Inass Yassin's Projection

Inass Yassin first noticed Al-Walid Cinema years after it had been abandoned. In fact, it was the sudden lack of debris in front of the abandoned theater that first attracted her attention to it.[314] She approached the man closing the gate to the theater, who informed her that the new owner of the space, the owner of Al Bakri—a knick-knack tourist store, was planning to destroy the building and replace it with a shopping center.[315] The shopping center would include a mosque and carry clothing catering to conservative Muslim women—a choice which indicates a commercial awareness of the changing demographics of the once-Christian and still largely secular city.[316] Yassin's interest in the disappearance of the once-rich cinema life in Ramallah as a site where one could find a public gathering of diverse members of the community fueled her interest in exploring the history of Al-Walid. When Yassin got access to the building in May of 2008, she found a poster from the 1969 Egyptian film *Abi Fauk Ash-Shajarah [My Father is up a Tree]*.[317] This film played a significant role both in Yassin's life, and in the collective consciousness of the city of Ramallah.

Yassin grew up in the second holiest Muslim city: Medina. While she regularly attended mosque, her family life also consisted of films—her parents had gone to the movies regularly when they lived in Cairo, and their nostalgia for this cultural practice, which was not available to them in Saudi Arabia, spurred Yassin's father to order films on VHS (the only means by which to watch uncensored movies) for viewing at home.[318] One of these films was *Abi Fauk Ash-*

[314] Ibid.
[315] Ibid. Author's conversation with the artist 6/18/15.
[316] Author's conversation with the artist 6/18/15.
[317] Yassin, 50.
[318] Ibid.

Shajarah.[319] Through her childhood viewings, the film made a long-lasting impression on the artist.

Abi Fauk Ash-Shajarah is a well-known Egyptian musical from the 1960s and was shown at Al-Walid Cinema. As Yassin recalls, at this time,

> Pornography was not presented in any form, yet there was *[sic]* no social restrictions on content of films with romantic or near erotic scenes, and everyone was able to join; old people, families, friends groups, couples, kids, they all went to the cinemas. For example, "Abi Fauk Asharjah", was extremely popular in the late 60s and no one opposed this film that is full of kissing. The kiss count in this film was the content of popular chat. When the film was mentioned to Abu Sultan who operated Al-Jamil and Al-Walid Cinemas in the 80s, he immediately recalled the fifty-nine kisses. […] No criticism was voiced against this film of youthful energy and rebelliousness[.][320]

The film's high kiss-count was a notable part of its wide-ranging appeal—so much so that it could be recalled decades later. There were no concerns about propriety in showing this film, and a diverse range of people came to view it. Going to the cinema was an active part of social life in Ramallah at the time for people of wide-ranging socio-economic statuses, religions, ages, and genders.

The occupation of the West Bank in 1967 began a decline of the cinema life in Ramallah, as security concerns with going out and the inability to access internationally distributed films decreased the appeal of movie-going in Ramallah.[321] In an attempt to stave off ruin, the theaters began to show different types of movies, including "Indian, karate, wrestling, and pornography."[322] This also narrowed the types of viewers who went to the movies—no longer an activity for all people, these films were geared towards the male population exclusively. All three

[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid, 58.
[321] Ibid, 59.
[322] Ibid.

cinemas in Ramallah were shut down during the First Intifada (1987-1993).[323] However, despite this, the nostalgia and affinity for the cinema life of Ramallah and Al-Walid theater remained.

It was this nostalgia for cinema culture in Ramallah in general and specifically for Al-Walid and for the films it used to play, such as *Abi Fauk Ash-Shajarah,* that drove Yassin's intervention into the cinema while it was under construction.[324] Yassin planned a final screening in Al-Walid of *Abi Fauk Ash-Shajarah*. In anticipation of the event, she reprinted the original poster she had found in the cinema on her visit in an edition of 200. On the posters, she affixed a sticker announcing that the film would be screened on July 12th, 2010 at 8pm.[325] Yassin plastered the posters, which feature the two lead actors about to engage in one of their infamous fifty-nine kisses, throughout Ramallah (Figure 34). The response to the posters was mixed. Some individuals expressed excitement and recalled their love for the popular Egyptian musical; others deemed the posters inappropriate given the public depiction of a (near) kiss.[326] Some of the posters were even torn down.[327] However, on the date of the screening, a diverse group of people turned up.

All told, 80-100 people showed up for the screening at Al-Walid cinema "not just the expected audience for a 'art event' coming from within the cultural or intellectual scene, but people from a wider public who had seen the poster and wanted to see the film."[328] The nostalgia

[323] Ibid, 60.
[324] Despite the desire of Al-Bakri to demolish the site, due to contractual issues with the existing storefront shops, they were forced to leave the façade of the building as is, and simply gut the building to create their stores.
[325] Geraldine Pratt and Rose Marie San Juan, "Cinema and its Publics: Between the Screen and the Street" in *Film and Urban Space: Critical Possibilities* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 162.
[326] Ibid.
[327] Author's conversation with the artist 6/18/15.
[328] Pratt and San Juan, 162.

for the film remained despite the decades since the film was released and a changing social culture in Ramallah; it compelled people of varying walks of life to flock to Al-Walid. One attendee, a conservatively dressed woman in her sixties, remarked that she came to the screening to see the film "because it reminded her of her youth."[329] Some attendees even noted that they heard the music and, recognizing it, discovered Yassin's intervention.[330] People of all walks of life were drawn to Al-Walid because of their nostalgia—for a film from their youth, for a Ramallah of the past that included public cultural spaces unrestricted by notions of conservativism, or for local historical spaces that existed before the proliferation of shopping centers in the post-Oslo capitalistic commercial sprawl.

However, as Yassin had planned, upon arriving at the cinema, attendees were not able to view the film. The cinema was surrounded by the metal fencing previously put up for the demolition and reconstruction of the cinema as a shopping center. The high fences prevented any potential viewing as they were twenty feet high and covered by a tarp (Figure 35).[331] Rather, as the site was still fenced off, they could only stand outside the cinema listening to the film. The artist stated that as the songs began to play, members of the audience started to cry.[332] Yassin's intervention highlights the loss of the cinema space. The construction had rendered the cinema space already unusable. In intervening in the already closed-off space, Yassin draws attention to the loss that has already come about—one for which perhaps many individuals living in Ramallah had not previously realized they were nostalgic. However, Yassin's intervention also

[329] Ibid.
[330] Author's conversation with the artist 6/18/15.
[331] Ibid.
[332] Ibid, 163. Yassin did not stay for the screening, as she did not want to be available for any audience members to ask her questions about what was going on. Rather, she had an assistant film the audience reactions to the intervention. Email to the author 9/30/17.

inverted the previous experience of the cinema. The once-enclosed place for all members of the public of the cinema turned itself inside-outside, and transformed the public space of the sidewalk into a gathering space for the diverse population to once again come together united by their love of the film. As Yassin has noted, "the disappearance of cinema houses is not merely manifesting and clarifying the regeneration of the space and the consequences of high-tech entertainment technology: it synchronizes or indicates the emergence of a new social and value system that condemns the cultural and social practice that we lived just yesterday."[333] The fact that the attendees could not enter into the cinema highlighted the fact that spaces like Al-Walid, where residents of Ramallah from all walks of life could once come together and participate collectively in a social and cultural experience are vanishing.

Simultaneously, Yassin's intervention created a version of this experience in the public space of the sidewalk. Despite the anecdotal evidence about diversity among the attendees, Yassin herself acknowledges that the majority of those whose attention were caught by the project were "academics, intellectuals and the art community."[334] Therefore, in spite of the ability of this particular film to transcend, for some, the shifting social conservativism that has infiltrated secular Ramallah since the 1960s, overall the division within the city is apparent between those invested in the secular nature of Ramallah and the intellectual and social value of public cultural spaces, and those whose interests have had an increasing influence since the 1960s—that of capitalistic consumerism and conservative Muslim values.[335]

[333] Yassin, qtd. in Pratt and San Juan, 165.
[334] Ibid, 163.
[335] There are of course also individuals who fall under neither category, and simply have immediate daily concerns related to their own family, work, etc. that supersede any allotment of time for concern over the arts or the expansion of consumerism in Ramallah.

The negative reaction to Yassin's poster by some members of the community and the marketing of the new shopping center to a conservative Muslim clientele were not the only links Yassin detected between the transformation of the Al-Walid Cinema and the rising influence of conservativism in the well-known secular city. In addition to the movie poster that she found inside the cinema in May 2008 when she was granted access to the space, the artist also discovered a Hamas flag. The green flag of the Islamist Palestinian group was mirrored by the green tarp that covered the fence enclosing the cinema and preventing passers-by from seeing the demolition.[336] The interior of the abandoned cinema served as a time capsule of the changes that had occurred over the years in the city of Ramallah. On the one hand, the poster of *Abi Fauk Ash-Shajarah* recalls the height of the cinema as part of Palestinian social life in Ramallah. On the other, the flag of Hamas reveals the rising influence of Islamism in the notoriously secular city.

Hamas's influence throughout Palestine has been steadily increasing since the First Intifada. Due to the frustrations among some Palestinians with the perception that the PLO had been ineffectual in its drive towards Palestinian sovereignty, in part because of its willingness to abandon armed struggle in favor of compromise, Hamas's commitment to a militant approach until full liberation was achieved was appealing.[337] Importantly, the version of nationalism and a future Palestinian state put forth by Hamas was also distinctly Islamic.[338] Hamas's influence grew much more quickly in the Gaza Strip, due in part to the lower socio-economic status of the area and the high number of refugee camps packed together with limited social welfare

[336] Author's conversation with the artist 6/18/15.
[337] Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 15.
[338] Ibid.

resources.[339] In providing these social services, again, with a distinctly Islamic tinge, they were able to gain appeal among the populace.[340]

It was increased opportunities in higher education that began the shift in the West Bank towards greater Islamization. In the late 1970s with opportunities for higher education in Egypt no longer available to those in the Gaza Strip, students began attending universities in the West Bank cities.[341] Simultaneously, there was a significant increase in the number of students arriving at these universities from the rural areas of the West Bank.[342] Both of these groups of students tended to be more conservative Muslims and more militant in their approach to opposing Israel.[343] Additionally, the rise of a parallel religious nationalist movement in Israel created increasing conflict over sites of religious importance to both Muslims and Jews "thereby increasingly identifying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a religious one"—already defined as such by Hamas.[344] This shift became apparent in the changing social and cultural landscape of the West Bank in the early 1980s.[345] The victory of Hamas in the 2006 elections reflects the continued disillusionment with Fatah and rising popularity of an Islamist option.[346] In fact, as recently as 2015, Hamas won the majority vote in a student election at Birzeit University just outside Ramallah.[347] The rising influence of Hamas is inherently linked with the increasing

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[339] Ibid, 19.
[340] Ibid.
[341] Ibid, 25.
[342] Ibid.
[343] Ibid.
[344] Ibid, 26.
[345] Ibid, 25-26.
[346] The results of the election were controversial and ultimately resulted in a split between governance of the Gaza Strip (Hamas) and the West Bank (Fatah). Reconciliation between the two governments was only announced in 2017.
[347] Student elections are often seen as a way to take the pulse of the general climate of the Palestinian populous. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/12/world/middleeast/hamas-wins-the-hearts-of-students-at-west-bank-campus-election.html Accessed May 13, 2017.

influence of conservative Islam in the West Bank at large and the cultural landscape of even its more secular cities like Ramallah.

Yassin's original intervention re-created the public gathering space that the cinema used to function as on the streets of Ramallah, highlighting the fact that this sort of public space no longer exists and that the last vestiges of it are being destroyed. The publicity for the intervention also brought out articulations of the shifting demographics of the city in some of the conservative responses to the public display of the male and female actors in an embrace. In subsequent displays of *Projection*—it has been shown in Jerusalem and the Netherlands—Yassin has shown documentation from her forays into the interior of the cinema space on the occasions she was allowed, posters used to advertise the event, and documentary video of the original intervention.[348] In the context of Jerusalem, many of these same issues that Yassin raises in the context of Ramallah likely still apply or are at least familiar to that audience. Like Ramallah, Jerusalem has undergone a demographic shift since the establishment of the state of Israel, and has also seen a rise in Islamic militantism as a result of the conflicts rooted in religious sites in the city. However, Jerusalem's conservativism is dominated by a Jewish religiosity. Conservative dress and restrictions on when businesses can be open and public transportation can run are dictated by Jewish standards.

In the Netherlands, however, *Projection* would have been met by a very different audience likely unfamiliar, at least on the same personal level as those in Ramallah and Jerusalem, with the changing cultural face of West Bank cities like Ramallah. However, Eindhoven, where the work was displayed, actually serves as an example of a reverse

[348] Yassin exhibited versions of *Projection* at Al Ma'mal in Jerusalem and Your Space, Van Abbesmuseum, Eindoven, Netherlands both in 2010.

transformation—that of sites of capitalism being changed into spaces for cultural production. The technology company Philips used to have its headquarters in Eindhoven, but moved to Amsterdam in 1998.[349] When this happened, the former buildings were transformed into "residential lofts, shared creative workspaces, boutiques and restaurants."[350] It is also the site of craft fairs and arts spaces.[351] These formerly private buildings for technological advancement were transformed into cultural social spaces. While clearly these are not catering to a diverse demographic (like the former cinemas in Ramallah) they are representative of a transformation of urban space and its effect on the cultural landscape of a city. Visitors viewing the work in the context of a city that has had a social and cultural repurposing of previously industrial spaces may have been able to empathize with Yassin's nostalgia for public cultural spaces and sadness at their loss. However, as individuals from a highly-industrialized city with a longstanding commitment to the arts in the Van Abbesmuseum, which was established in 1936, without the contextual history of the influence of imperialism and occupation, as well as the neoliberal drive for urbanization in post-Oslo Palestine, the notion that Yassin's work is articulating a larger phenomenon resulting from global influence in the region of the Middle East may be lost. This loss of public cultural spaces to capitalist and conservative influences is not simply a result of Palestinian motives and desires. Rather, it is the culmination of decades of imperialism and occupation and the influence that has had on demographics and shifting social views. The Netherlands' own imperialist history, in particular in Africa, implicates local viewers in acknowledging the impact these histories still have on the narratives of today. However, without

[349] https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/08/travel/five-places-to-go-in-eindhoven-the-netherlands.html, Accessed May 13, 2017.
[350] Ibid.
[351] Ibid.

this context presented alongside the exhibition, these connections would likely have been lost on viewers.

Projection is an intervention based on Yassin's research into the history of cinema life in Ramallah. But beyond that, it is an exploration of the effects of urbanization and a rising conservative presence in a formerly Christian city that has been historically and contemporarily noted for its secular nature. Yassin's project also injected some of this cultural past into the present, resurrecting the nostalgia for Ramallah's cultural history among a diverse group of people while also highlighting the new elements that make a return to this past seem unlikely. To repeat Yassin's acknowledgement noted above, her work "indicates the emergence of a new social and value system that condemns the cultural and social practice that we lived just yesterday."[352] The shifting of the urban landscape from cinemas and public spaces to commercial towers and shopping malls points towards this new neoliberal commercialization of a religiously conservative value system that has permeated Ramallah. The rise of Muslim conservativism in the Palestinian territories is inherently linked with the region's colonial history and has also produced reactionary traditionalism as relates to issues of gender and sexuality, noticeable in the reactions to Yassin's poster.

Gender and Sexuality in the Arab World

Arab Masculinity

The Palestinian nationalist narrative, not unlike other nationalist narratives, is a gendered one, and one that stems from the colonial projection of feminizing characteristics on the

[352] Pratt and San Juan, 165.

colonized subject. In these discourses, the land is feminized as the motherland. The colonial perception is that by entering the land, the colonizers fertilize it with new life, while from the colonized perspective, the violation of that land is metaphorized as sexualized violence.[353] Both these views imagine the motherland as feminized—capable of being fertilized/impregnated or sexually violated. The colonized subjects are then seen as feminized through their inability to protect and hold onto the (feminized) land. Palestinian scholar Amal Amireh links this gendered narrative not only to Palestinian nationalism, but to its relationship to the military as well. She writes,

> The major nationalist milestones in the Palestinian narrative tend to be occasions of military loss. For generations of Palestinians, especially the men, Palestinian nationalism was experienced as humiliation. According to this narrative, the Palestinian male fails to possess the [feminized] homeland […] This metaphor of the loss of Palestine as rape, which has been a constant in the Palestinian and wider Arab political nationalist discourse, signifies the loss of Palestine as a loss of female virginity but also of male virility, since the virile actor now is the rapist/enemy. This male loss of virility is inscribed as Palestinian defeat.[354]

It is therefore not simply an assertion of masculine power through which Palestinian nationalist goals can be achieved, but through a distinctly militaristic masculine display.

In this vein, the symbol of the Palestinian resistance has overwhelmingly been that of the *keffiyeh*-clad Palestinian male youth throwing a stone. Massad describes,

> The Palestinian nationalist agent, in addition to being masculine and bourgeois-in-the-making, is young and able-bodied—free from the physical vulnerabilities of old age. […] The self-masking of many Palestinian young men (and women) when confronting their occupiers […] contributes to the erasure of their individual identities and the emergence of a strong collective one. The mask itself is usually

[353] Joseph Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Summer, 1995): 471-2.
[354] Amal Amireh, qtd. in Gil Z. Hochberg, "'Check Me Out': Queer Encounters in Sharif Waked's Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2010): 587.

> the Palestinian *hatta* (the male head scarf or *kufiyya*), the symbol of Palestinian identity.[355]

The symbol of Palestinian resistance then becomes a symbol of male youth and virility fighting against the occupier. Massad continues, "Thus, struggling against the Israeli occupiers and colonizers is not only an affirmation of Palestinian nationalist agency, it is also a masculinizing act enabling the concrete pairing of a nationalist agency and masculinity (the two being always already paired conceptually) and their logical inseparability within the discourse of nationalism."[356] This image of Palestinian nationalism solidifies the fight as a masculinist one.

This projection of masculine nationalism permeates the bureaucracy of the Palestinian national movement as well. It was embodied In the Palestinian National Charter (1964) which adopted the language of the *Nakba* as the rape of Palestine, echoing the gendered narrative of colonialism. The masculinist lens on the nationalist narrative can be seen in the language used to describe who can call themselves a Palestinian. The charter states that Palestinian identity is passed "from fathers to sons" and asserts that "Palestinians are those Arab citizens who used to reside… in Palestine until 1947… and everyone who is born of an Arab Palestinian father after this date—whether inside Palestine or outside it."[357] As Massad explains, Palestinian lineage is passed through the paternal line. Those who lived in Palestine prior to the *Nakba* are Palestinian, but after the *Nakba*, since the rape of the land, children produced by the motherland cannot be guaranteed to be Palestinian, therefore Palestinian identity must be traced through paternity.[358] This gendered nationalist language was embedded into the charter for the Palestinian national movement.

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[355] Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine," 479-80.
[356] Ibid, 480.
[357] Ibid, 472.
[358] Ibid.

This assertion of masculine virility is embodied within the Palestinian bureaucracy through the military branch: the Palestinian Security forces**.** While many scholars have discussed how masculinity is promoted through the military and other law and order security officials, in the case of Palestine, this merges with the gendered nationalist narrative. As a former member of the Palestinian Security forces, as a Presidential Guard to Yasser Arafat, artist Khaled Jarrar, deals with this Palestinian nationalist and militaristic masculinity in his work.

Khaled Jarrar's That thou canst not stir a flower without troubling a star

While Jarrar has created a number of works that examine and play with aspects of the military, in his 2015 exhibition *That thou canst not stir a flower without troubling a star* he specifically toyed with the interplay of masculinity and militarism as he had experienced it in the Palestinian Security Forces. The exhibition consisted of a performance work, which took place at a warehouse in Geneva, and which produced a series of diptych paintings that were later displayed at the gallery Art Bärtschi & Cie. For the performance, Jarrar placed small bottles of paint between two canvases angled together to create a tenting over the bottles. Jarrar then shot live ammunition at the paint bottles, causing the paint to splatter over the two canvases. The resultant paintings, displayed as diptychs, were then numbered and titled: *Butterfly #1,* etc. (Figures 36-37).[359]

The tile of the exhibition, *That thou canst not stir a flower without troubling of a star* comes from a Francis Thompson poem and remarks on the fact that nothing happens without the action of someone or something else, and that every action sets off a number of other

[359] One painting listed on the gallery's site is only one panel and titled the same as the exhibition; however, the rest are titled and displayed as described here.

reactions.[360] Jarrar chose this title as an articulation of the conflict he feels between his former identity as a soldier, and his current identity as an artist. In both cases, he engaged in actions that had clear repercussions; however, whereas the artist is a creator, and therefore chooses his own actions with the aim of some desired effects, the soldier lacks this freedom as he follows orders, with the potential for devastating effects, which he did not choose himself.[361] Jarrar, in utilizing live ammunition and shooting skills acquired during his time serving as a soldier, transforms these destructive tools previously implemented on command into tools of his own creative agency. Additionally, rather than utilizing paint colors that might elicit references to the military or violence, Jarrar chose pinks (his favorite color), yellows, and other bright colors, against a silver background to create images that could perhaps be described as cheery. Jarrar's choice of bright colors, in particular pink, a color typically perceived as feminine, also serves to counter the hegemonic masculinity associated with the military.

The titles of the resulting works, *Butterfly*, also make reference to traditionally feminine imagery, particularly a childlike feminine nature. In displaying the two canvases from each shot together, as a diptych, the splatter pattern does appear visually similar to the wings of a butterfly. The image of the butterfly reflects a youthful femininity which contrasts sharply to the masculinity typically associated with the military. The military and hegemonic masculine acts of violence such as shooting are frequently considered to be paths to manhood. Young individuals will enter the military or be taught how to shoot in order to "make a man out of them." Interestingly enough, while butterflies themselves are transitional creatures—they represent the

[360] Author interview with the artist, June 11, 2015.
[361] Danna Lorch, "The Soldier as Artist: Khaled Jarrar Chisels Away at the Wall," *ArtSlant*, https://www.artslant.com/ny/articles/show/43379-the-soldier-as-artist-khaled-jarrar-chisels-away-at-the-wall, Accessed June 12, 2017.

blooming of a caterpillar into its full adult form—their images are frequently associated with younger girls. The title may also be a reference to the butterfly effect: the notion that a small action can have large and long-ranging effects—a similar sentiment to that referenced in the title to the exhibition.

Jarrar shot his pistol twenty-one times in the performance. He chose this number for two reasons. Twenty-one is the number of shots fired at the funeral of a soldier. In shooting twenty-one times, Jarrar recalls the devastating effects that military actions can have, as well as the controlled, militaristic way in which those men whose lives are sacrificed for the nationalist cause are sent off—an approved honorable death for men in the nationalist narrative. Twenty-one is also the age at which Jarrar joined Arafat's Presidential Guard.[362] As Jarrar joined in order to pay off debts from art school, the connection and conflict between his militaristic and artistic sides is rooted to this age as well.[363]

The performance in Geneva was not the first time Jarrar had created canvases in this fashion. He executed this technique for the first time in May 2014 in Ramallah, and exhibited those paintings produced in Ramallah and Paris. This first instance, however, was not conducted as a performance.[364] It is extremely difficult to get a gun in Ramallah, as well as the ammunition. In order to shoot off the gun without being discovered, Jarrar built a small soundproof space, 3 square meters in diameter, the interior of which he covered in sponge and egg cartons. As Jarrar notes, if the Israeli army had discovered that he was shooting live ammunition in Ramallah, his space would have been bombed or bulldozed with him inside—no questions asked, no arrest. If the Palestinian Authority had discovered it, he would have been arrested. In contrast, after being

[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] The following description comes from the author's interview with the artist, June 11, 2015.

denied the permit to perform at the public opening at the gallery, Jarrar conducted the performance in a warehouse in Geneva as a private event. While the police did come by the gallery the following day and Jarrar was prevented from leaving the country temporarily, he was not arrested, and ultimately was permitted to leave.[365] The control over displays of military might, or even the utilization of their tools, within the Palestinian/Israeli context is demonstrated by the different risks in Jarrar's performance in Ramallah as compared with Geneva.

The Ramallah paintings also incorporated a different color palette, using camouflage colors—khakis, greens, and reds, the last of which appear like blood but are also incorporated into the Palestinian soldiers' uniforms. As Jarrar notes, these works were dealing with his identification as a former soldier and artist as the former is required to hide or camouflage, whereas as artists are required to have a public presence and stand out.[366] Jarrar picked up on this idea of transitioning from soldier to artist in the series he did in Geneva, but focused in that series on the issue of masculinity associated with the military. In his performance in Geneva and the resultant *Butterfly* series of works, Jarrar challenges the masculinity inherent in militaristic acts and also creates a dissonance that highlights the discomfort in traditional societies and milieus (such as the military) of the queer and untraditionally masculine.

Jarrar has also addressed issues of traditionalism in relation to gender and sexuality in Palestinian society in a spontaneous piece he did on the apartheid wall at the Qalandia checkpoint. In late June 2015, Jarrar painted a section of the wall with the colors of the rainbow. The piece was whitewashed later that evening, stirring a controversial debate about the artist's intention, the treatment of LGBTQ individuals in the occupied territories, and pinkwashing (the

[365] Jarrar jokes that he was happy to be arrested in Geneva if they had wanted to, as it would have been a luxurious experience compared to being held by the Israeli army.
[366] Ibid.

claim of queer-friendliness in Israel as compared to Palestine as a distraction from Israeli human rights abuses, to be discussed in full later). In the artist's own words, following the celebrations in the United States after the Supreme Court decision to legalize same-sex marriage: "this got me thinking about all these international activists and ordinary citizens who were celebrating freedom for a group of people who have historically been oppressed, and the use of the rainbow as a symbol of freedom and equality and what it could represent for other oppressed groups. It also made me think of our daily struggles for equality, freedom and justice here in Palestine."[367] Jarrar chose to paint the wall like a rainbow as this symbol of hope and freedom on the most recognizable physical manifestation of the oppression of the Palestinian people. He saw commonalities in these struggles and sought to utilize a symbol of hope associated with one oppressed group's struggle with that of another. Whether misguided or not, what the conversation opened up was the link drawn among Palestinian queer activists between the occupation and freedom of sexuality, as well as the friction that exists at the site of this connection both within Palestine and Israel, as well as internationally. As discussed in the following section, queer Palestinian artists, such as Raafat Hattab, have explored these issues in their activism as well as their artistic practices, oftentimes articulating their feeling of liminality between their various identities.

Sexuality in the Arab World

Discussions of LGBTQ issues in Palestine, and the Arab world at large, have come to the forefront in recent years as the victories for "gay rights" in the Western world have led activists to take a turn towards the international stage. This maneuver, however, greatly misunderstands

[367] https://electronicintifada.net/content/why-i-painted-rainbow-flag-israels-apartheid-wall/14660

both the history of restrictions on same-sex relations and their implementation as well as how sexuality is thought of and largely (not) discussed in the Arab world regardless of the gender of one's partner. Israel has capitalized on this misunderstanding by painting the country as a safe haven for LGBTQ individuals in the midst of a "repressive and backwards" Middle East, ignoring the ways that the so-called freedoms granted to LGBTQ individuals in Israel are denied to Palestinians via the oppression of the occupation.

Same-sex relations historically and contemporarily have occurred throughout the Arab world, however, as Joseph Massad argues, the mapping of a universal conception of "gay" and "lesbian" onto these individuals is a Western conceit produced by Western gay rights activists, organizations, and academics whom he collectively dubs "the Gay International." He states that this designation in fact restricts the identification of these individuals. As Massad contends,

> it is the very discourse of the Gay International, [that] both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology. […T]his discourse assumes prediscursively that homosexuals, gays, and lesbians are a universal category that exists everywhere in the world and, based on this prediscursive axiom, the Gay International sets itself the mission of defending them by demanding their rights as 'homosexuals' be granted where they are denied and be respected where they are violated.[368]

In projecting a Western conception of "gay" and "lesbian" onto the same-sex relationships in the Arab world, Western activists and organizations are making a specific meaning out of those relationships which they may not have. They deny the possibility that there could be types of interpersonal relationships other than those defined by the West, or that the Western models could not be superior. This is not to say that there are not Arab individuals who do identify as "gay" or "lesbian" and desire the rights the Gay International promotes (largely wealthier,

[368] Joseph A. Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," in *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 162-163.

"Westernized" individuals[369]), but rather acknowledges that these are not the only types of relationships and desires that exist and that the Gay International assumes a superiority and missionary approach of social imperialism in its presumptions.

Additionally, the approach of the Gay International ignores the colonial history of those aspects of Arab culture that are viewed as restrictive to same-sex relations. With the "modernizing" colonial projects beginning in the 19th century, Western Christian values on sexuality were imposed upon Arab cultures. This was noted in the restriction of women's reproductive rights and attempts to restrict same-sex relations (mostly successful in the more easily Westernized upper classes).[370] Much as Western colonial influence in large part forged these restrictions, it is the attempt by Western influence to now advance a more "progressive" approach to gay rights that has resulted in a push-back among Arab countries. Citing one example of a police raid on a known gay club in Egypt, Massad notes that the fact that the individuals who were tracked to the site and subsequently arrested were identified via an English-language website catering to American and European tourists reveals that

> the police do not seek to […] arrest men practicing same-sex contact but rather are pursuing those among them who identify as 'gay' on a personal level and who seek to use this identity as a group identification through social and public activities. […] It is not the same-sex sexual practices that are being repressed by the Egyptian police but rather the sociopolitical identification of these practices with the Western identity of gayness and the publicness that these gay-identified men seek.[371]

The policing of same-sex relationships in Egypt is not focused on identifying those who are engaging in these types of behavior, but rather those who are adopting and attempting to engage

[369] Ibid, 173.
[370] Ibid, 171-2
[371] Ibid, 183.

within Egypt in a Westernized notion of homosexuality that Egyptian officials see as a Western imperialist influence.

Another aspect that the Gay International neglects to acknowledge is the way sexuality is talked about (or rather not talked about) in Arab culture. As Haneen Maikey, director of Al-Qaws: for Sexual & Gender Diversity in Palestine, and Ghadir Shafie, co-director of Aswat: Palestinian Gay Women, remarked in a conversation about sexuality in Palestine, "open conversation about sexuality in general is taboo in Palestinian society. A straight woman would not announce to her parents that she was having sex with her boyfriend. So to say, 'I am a lesbian' is to say 'I have sex' and would therefore just result in being thought of as promiscuous."[372] Discussions of homosexuality and notions of "coming out" are lacking in places like Palestine because discussions of sexuality of any kind are not considered culturally appropriate. Newer organizations like Al-Qaws, formed in 2007 and from within Palestine, aim to create a space for all individuals and sexualities (as noted by the inclusion of "Sexual & Gender Diversity" in their name) to have a space to discuss issues of sexuality and gender.[373] Starting from this foundation, rather than a presumption of sexuality as an aspect of larger societal discourse, reveals the awareness of Palestinian activists of the context in which they are working, something lacking from that of the Gay International.

Organizations like Al-Qaws also include in their mission statement a declaration of work towards ending the occupation of Palestine. These are not simply two issues that exist side-by-side for Palestinian queer activists living in Palestine, but are inherently intertwined. Piggybacking on the Western conception of the Arab world as backwards and restrictive when it

[372] Sarah Schulman, *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 139.
[373] Al-Qaws Website: http://www.alqaws.org/about-us Accessed June 7, 2017.

comes to LGBTQ rights, Israel has utilized Brand Israel, its large propaganda project to improve the image of the country in the West and to promote Israel as the sole bastion of queer freedom in the Middle East. Israel promotes its gay pride parade and club scene in Tel Aviv and the fact that its soldiers can serve openly in the military—a particularly potent point to Americans given that this was not the case in the U.S. until the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" in 2010. And in fact, this public relations campaign is largely directed towards an American audience. It is through changing the minds of Americans towards sympathy with Israel as a promoter of gay rights in the Middle East that Israel aims to maintain its position as the largest benefactor of American financial support, in turn allowing it to sustain the occupation of Palestine.[374] It is through the promotion of Israel as a gay-friendly, culturally progressive country, and the only one of its kind in the region, that Brand Israel aims to move the conversation away from the persecution of Palestinians via the occupation towards the perceived persecution of gay Palestinians by their own people. This process has come to be known as "pinkwashing."

However pinkwashing does more than just attempt to change the conversation, it erases the ways in which even the "rights" granted to Israelis are denied to Palestinian citizens of Israel and perpetuate the occupation of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. For example, while promoting the gay friendly clubs in Tel Aviv, it ignores the fact that Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza have no access to these sites because of the ongoing occupation. Additionally, Israeli forces have been known to exploit Palestinians because of their sexuality, much as they do medical care needs, financial issues, adultery, or anything else they can identify

[374] Jasbir Puar, "Rethinking Homonationalism," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45 (2013): 338.

in order to use them as informants.[375] The promotion of the ability for openly gay Israelis to serve in the conscripted military is perhaps the most blatant—an attempt to show the "progressiveness" of Israeli society via inclusivity when it comes to perpetuating the military occupation of Palestinian land and repression of its people. Pinkwashing therefore not only plays on Western Islamophobia to attempt to change the conversation away from its human rights abuses, but also serves as a means by which the occupation is perpetuated. The state of LGBTQ individuals within occupied Palestine is inherently intertwined with their positions as individuals living under occupation. For those Palestinians living in Israel who identify as queer, they may feel caught between two societies into which they do not fit: Israeli society, where they are an outcast because of their Palestinianness, and Palestinian society, where they are an outcast because of their gender expression or sexuality. This leaves some individuals in a state of twofold liminality[376].

Queer Liminality: Raafat Hattab's Ho(u)ria

Raafat Hattab is one of these such individuals who experiences this state of twofold liminality. Hattab is a genderqueer Palestinian artist living in Israel. While Hattab uses the term genderqueer for Western audiences, he acknowledges that this terminology comes from a

[375] http://www.alqaws.org/articles/alQaws-Statement-re-media-response-to-Israels-blackmailing-of-gay-Palestinians

[376] I use the term two-fold "liminality" throughout here to refer to the state of genderqueer Palestinians living in Israel as being neither identifying as male nor female, while also not identifying completely with either Israeli or Palestinian societies. This use of liminality originates from the work of cultural anthropologist Victor Turner in the 1970s in relation to transitional moments in a person's life (such as marriage or rites of passage to becoming an adult) and has been utilized by scholars of transgender and gender nonconforming individuals in more contemporary works such as Dianne Dentice and Michelle Dietert, "Liminal Space and the Transgender Experience," *Theory in Action*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2015): 69-96.

particular situated context that is different from his own: "I'm trying not to copy-paste it from the West. Because all the Queer theory and feminism started in the West, but here it's different. I can learn from it but I can't copy-paste it. […] I don't believe in the binary of male/female; I believe in what's in the middle, the diversity of the middle[.]"[377] It is in this "middle" space that Hattab resides both due to his status as Palestinian and as genderqueer. He explores this liminal state in his 2010 video *Ho(u)ria*.

Ho(u)ria is a 7-minute video cutting between three scenes: a mermaid (Hattab) on the beach, Hattab's aunt telling the story of her family's expulsion from their homes during the *Nakba*, and Hattab getting a tattoo of Arabic calligraphic writing on his chest (Figures 38-40). While on the surface appearing disparate, these three scenes all speak to liminality and a persistent struggle for freedom as embodied by the work's title—houria, meaning mermaid, and horia, meaning freedom.[378]

Hattab's aunt tells the story of her parents during the *Nakba*. While her father's family fled to Jordan, her mother insisted on returning to Al-Manshiyeh to see her family. When they arrived however, they found the city destroyed. She speaks about learning what history of Palestine she knows from her father, noting that any mention of Palestine was completely erased from her schooling within the newly founded state of Israel. She laments the fact that, because of this, the connection to the past has been lost since the death of her father, as the rest of the family fled during the *Nakba* leaving no familial links within Israel. Hattab's aunt is the only person who speaks throughout the video. By allowing her voice and narrative to take center-stage, Hattab counters the "predominantly masculinist narrative of Palestinian national loss and

[377] Tobaron Waxman, "Interview with Raafat Hattab," http://nomorepotlucks.org/site/interview-with-raafat-hataab/ , 2012, Accessed June 7, 2017.
[378] In Arabic: حرية (freedom) and حورية (mermaid).

struggle for return."[379] As the visual imagery and narratives that are typically seen and heard relating to the Palestinian resistance movement tend to be male, Hattab gives his aunt's female voice control over the narrative and the space to express her own experiences of loss related to the *Nakba*.

Al-Manshiyeh itself is a liminal space in Hattab's work. Previously situated on the coast near Tel Aviv, it now exists only as one of the many no-longer-extant Palestinian villages that were destroyed in the formation of Israel. It is also the site of Hattab's mermaid, beached at the edge of the water in *Ho(u)ria*. Paired with his aunt's testimony, Hattab's return, as mermaid, to Al-Manshiyeh serves as visual evidence of the erasure of the city that once was there. From the vantage point we are given in the video, we can only see the empty shoreline, save for Hattab, and occasionally a lone violinist wrapped in fishing netting. Al-Manshiyeh exists in a liminal state as it still exists in Palestinian consciousness, but the city no longer stands. The liminality of the city, as well as many Palestinians and Hattab specifically, is embodied in the manifestation of the mermaid.

The mermaid, as half human and half fish, is a liminal being. It is neither completely one nor the other. As Hattab describes it, "as a mermaid, I am in the middle—not fish enough to be in the sea, not human enough to be on the shore."[380] In the video, Hattab's mermaid lies right at the shoreline, never committing completely to one or the other. This describes the two-fold liminality that Hattab experiences as a genderqueer Palestinian living in Israel. He identifies as neither male nor female, and also not completely with either Israeli (due to his Palestinianness) or Palestinian (due to his queerness) societies. As he notes, "To live within Palestinian society is

[379] Colleen Jankovic with Nadia Awad, "Queer/Palestinian Cinema: A Critical Conversation on Palestinian Queer and Women's Filmmaking," *Camera Obscura* 80:27:2 (2012): 140.
[380] Waxman.

to live the lifestyle of a traditional society, to get married, to have a family, to be in the mainstream like everyone else […] and yet as a Palestinian, I can't be fully part of Israeli society."[381] As a genderqueer Palestinian, engaging in same-sex relationships, he does not feel completely a part of Palestinian society because he does not partake in the aspects of a traditional social lifestyle. However, as a Palestinian, he can also never be completely integrated into Israeli society, which inherently identifies him as other due to his ethnic status. As such, Hattab and other queer Palestinian citizens of Israel like him remain in a persistent state of liminality.

Hattab's choice of the mermaid is not simply limited to its physical hybridity. He was specifically inspired by the liminality of the titular character from Hans Christian Anderson's "The Little Mermaid." Hattab explains, "she can't talk, and she has to make her choices; she has to give up things for her to be a human being, the witch takes her voice to give her legs. But the price is that she can't go back in the sea. She had to give up her family, she had to give up the ocean, to cross to the other side. But without a voice."[382] The mermaid in the story is positioned between a number of choices requiring sacrificing some things she holds dear for others that she desires. Hattab's silence throughout the video embodies this sacrifice, while his state of limbo as a mermaid on the shore serves as a visual depiction of his continued liminal status. Regardless of his choices, Hattab, like the mermaid, remains stuck in the middle.

Hattab appears in the third series of clips interspersed through the video as well, this time in a tattoo parlor, where he is receiving a tattoo of Arabic calligraphy on his chest. The tattoo reads: "Jaffa: Bride of Palestine."[383] Hattab explains that the tattoo serves as a contract he is

[381] Ibid.
[382] Ibid.
[383] يافا عروس فلسطين

making with the land, certifying that he is from Jaffa, from Palestine.[384] However, even this act is liminal. The tattoo is administered in a parlor in Tel Aviv by a Jewish tattoo artist.[385] Hattab enters into a Jewish space, as a Palestinian, and has the artist tattoo him with a statement connecting him *as* a Palestinian to land which is now part of the state of Israel. Hattab's marking asserts his quotidian position as a Palestinian in a Jewish space. However, the means of marking, the tattoo, is one that marks him as outside traditional Palestinian society as well. Tattooing is not accepted in this society—indeed, both Islam and Judaism prohibit the decoration of the body. Therefore Hattab's tattoo adorns his body with a statement which solidifies his outsider status from both Israeli and traditional Palestinian societies.

Hattab has also done a number of performances in the role of the Bride of Palestine. The phrase refers to Jaffa when it was a Palestinian port city. Dressed in drag in a wedding dress, Hattab embodies the specter of Jaffa.[386] Again, there is an element of liminality here. Hattab's bride both serves as a ghostly reminder of the Palestinian cities that have been destroyed, as well as the persistent existence of those cities in the collective Palestinian consciousness. The choice of the bride returns to Hattab's earlier desire to bring in female voices and perspectives to the narrative about resistance and national liberation in Palestine. As Hattab notes, "when we talk about liberating Palestine, we talk about the men who do it. The resistance, the revolution, it's led by men, it's not taking the women into consideration. So for me, Palestine is a woman."[387] While the masculinist nationalist narrative perceives Palestine as a woman raped by the colonial powers and in need of protection, in Hattab's iteration as the bride, she is given agency as "the

[384] Waxman.
[385] Ibid.
[386] Ibid.
[387] Ibid.

ultimate witness" to the persistent occupation.[388] Much like his aunt, Hattab's bride has her own narrative and story to be told, one of which she is the owner.

Conclusion

Other artists discussed in previous chapters also articulated a reflexive critique in their works. Sharif Waked's *Beace Brocess* utilized humor as a means to highlight Palestinians' own frustration with the seemingly hopeless cycle of peace talks, repeating endlessly since the time of Arafat. Other works by Palestinian artists investigate the ways gender and sexuality play out in the dynamics between Israelis and Palestinians. In another video work by Waked, *Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints* (2003), the artist creates a fashion show of clothing items suited to showing off Palestinian bodies for Israeli security approval at the checkpoints.[389] Waked uses humor, specifically camp, to highlight the objectification of Palestinian male bodies by male Israeli soldiers. This point is hit home at the end of the video where Waked contrasts the fashion show with documentary images of Palestinian in various states of undress to demonstrate they are not a threat to the heavily armed Israeli soldiers who point their guns at them.

The link between masculinity and nationalism, as explored in the work of Khaled Jarrar, is investigated here again in Waked's work. The Israeli soldier at the checkpoint asserts his national power—his authority and right to the land, through a performance of hegemonic masculinity in the display of weapons and control over Palestinian bodies. This power is sexualized in the interactions between Israeli soldiers who exert their masculine dominance over

[388] Ibid.
[389] For a thorough discussion of this work, see Gil Hochberg, "'CHECK ME OUT': Queer Encounters in Sharif Waked's *Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints*," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, Vol. 16 No. 4 (2010): 577-597.

Palestinians through their forced disrobing of Palestinians at checkpoints. Through these acts, Palestinians are made to do with their bodies what Israelis dictate—a display not simply of power, but also of desire.[390] As Gil Hochberg has argued, the Palestinians here are not feminized in this process, but rather their masculinity is homosexualized through their position as the male objects of other male's desire. Waked's work not only explores the links between nationalism, the military, and masculinity, but also how the power dynamics at play between Israelis and Palestinians working within these institutions and narratives are implemented not only through gendered displays, but also those of queer sexualities.

The significant thing to note throughout all these works is that while artists since Oslo have moved away from creating works about the occupation that simply address Israeli action, and have begun to focus more on a reflexive critique of Palestinian and Arab society, these are inherently intertwined. Frustrations with the ineffectuality of the Palestinian Authority and governing nationalist forces since Oslo stem from elements of the occupation that have created circumstances rife for corruption and stifled the ability for true autonomy and influence. Rising religious conservatism within formerly secular areas results from the continued expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, higher birthrates among traditional families, and broader Islamophobia worldwide limiting expansion beyond the boundaries of the occupied territories. Notions of masculinity in Palestine are woven in with narratives of nationalism, and conflict in dealing with queer issues and "gay rights" stem in part from Western social imperialism both past and present. These artists are not putting aside their critiques of Israel and the occupation in favor of turning an eye towards themselves, but rather are investigating how the persistent occupation has impacted the Palestinian societies in which they live.

[390] Hochberg, 580-581.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated how the socio-political events of the inter-Intifada period—beginning with the optimism sparked by the Oslo Accords in 1993 and ending in the disillusionment that ultimately sparked the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000—mark a pivotal moment in Palestinian art history. For a younger generation of Palestinian artists, the pre-Nakba Palestine envisioned in works made by earlier generations of artists was too distant to induce in them the same feeling of longing and nostalgia. These artists, born after the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip,[391] only knew life under Israeli occupation, or as second-class citizens under an occupying and movement-restricting governing power within the Israeli state. For them, the notion of a return to a pre-Nakba Palestine is neither something they have memory of, nor does it seem realistic given the persistence of occupation. Rather, they are deeply aware of the repetitive nature of the cyclical theater of politics in which they are stuck. They are also mindful of the way international mass media portrays the Palestine-Israeli conflict, compassion fatigue for the situation among international audiences, and the general rise of Arab/Islamophobia in a post-9/11 world. They have also turned a critical eye to their own culture beyond the occupation—examining the ways that their own political movements have failed, the rise of Islamism in Palestine, and questions of gender and sexuality in Arab culture. These concerns are articulated through their contemporary art production in their portrayals of Palestinian time, an incorporation of humor, and increased criticality towards Palestinian and broader Arab society.

[391] Khaled Hourani and Sharif Waked were born just before the occupation of the Palestinian territories in 1965 and 1964 respectively. All other artists discussed in the dissertation were born after 1967.

As I have noted throughout the preceding chapters, these three thematics are not mutually exclusive, and a number of artists discussed in this dissertation incorporate elements of time, humor, *and* a referential criticality into their works. However, it must be noted that there are limits to the arguments made here and places for further exploration and research to be conducted. In the following, I explore some of these limitations and areas for further research, including examples of contemporary artists still working in the old traditions, a closer investigation of the role of Arafat in contemporary Palestinian life and art, and the potential expansion of this project to include diaspora artists.

Artists Working in the Old Tradition

Despite the trends identified in this dissertation in which many contemporary Palestinian artists are engaging, there are some artists that have continued to work in the pre-Oslo styles. Some artists are interested in continuing to incorporate traditional Palestinian style and iconography into their works to create artistic production that is recognizably Palestinian. There may be a few, not necessarily mutually exclusive, reasons for this. Some collectors, both local and international, are interested in work that is visually identifiable as Palestinian. Much as there has been a tendency in museum exhibitions and art galleries in the West to exhibit artworks by Palestinian and other Middle Eastern artists that are easily recognizable as being "from" their place of origin (either where the artists live or are ethnically traced), there is also a market both within Palestine and for visitors to the region for contemporary artwork that is clearly identifiable as Palestinian in the tradition of the post-Nakba artists. This is especially true for those depicting aspects of the land. Particularly in areas of Palestine, such as Bethlehem, that receive a large number of foreign tourists, Palestinian traditional crafts and artworks that use

recognizable iconography, depict traditionally-dressed figures, or incorporate other aspects of the lineage of Palestinian art history are produced for their salability.

A desire to preserve Palestinian tradition in the face of attempts by the occupation to eradicate traces of Palestinian culture is also a motivating force among artists and collectors. The most well-known Palestinian collector within Palestine is George Al Ama, based in Bethlehem himself, whose work as a researcher as well as a collector has sought to preserve and document the cultural tradition of Palestine and Palestinians. His collection, which includes Palestinian art and crafts from across the history of Palestinian art, appears to draw a traditional and distinctly Palestinian thread. Even among contemporary Palestinian artists who create work that engages in an arguably more "international" style and imagery, the works that he collects tend to contain distinctly Palestinian iconography.[392]

Among artists working in the style of the pre-Oslo artists, one of the most prominent is Karim Abu Shakra, nephew of 'Asim Abu Shakra, whose cactus paintings were discussed in Chapter 1. Karim Abu Shakra notes his uncle as a major inspiration and encourager of his work from an early age.[393] This influence is most evident in Karim's cactus paintings. Much like his uncle, Karim Abu Shakra has taken on the iconic cactus as his subject matter in many of his paintings (Figures 41-42).

The style and subject matter is similar to 'Asim's paintings, however, Karim's cacti are not potted, but rather typically depicted in a fairly flattened, color-blocked landscape, or even simply against a neutral backdrop, oftentimes with birds perched atop the cacti. While 'Asim's

[392] For example, in addition to being a collector of works by Kasim Abu Shakra, of the works by artist Amer Shomali, which extend across a number of mediums and subject matter, his collection includes that which depict iconic images of Leila Khaled, Yasser Arafat, and a re-imagining of the 1930s Zionist "Visit Palestine" poster that includes the apartheid wall.
[393] http://zawyeh.net/artists/karim-abu-shakra/

potted cacti articulate his feeling of being uprooted from his land awaiting return, Karim's cacti lack this expression, but rather rely on the iconography of the cactus itself to carry the weight of the Palestinian narrative inherent within it. In addition to the influence of Karim's uncle on his iconography and style, the artist also adopts motifs from European modernists, such as a Surrealist style akin to Picasso's *Guernica* (Figures 42-44). He sometimes incorporates titles that pay direct homage to other Palestinian artists of both the older and younger generations, as in the case of two cactus paintings: *Sliman Mansour* (Figure 42) and *Mohammad Abu Sal*, both from 2015. Karim Abu Shakra remarks that his works "constitute a response to the lived realities of his everyday life, and in particular, to collective experiences of suffering and hardship."[394] However this is perhaps most notable not via the content of his canvases, but rather through some of his more heavy-handed titles, including *State of Reality* (a series, see Figure 43), *Manifestation* (Figure 44), and *Rescue*.

The younger Abu Shakra's artist bio on the website for Zawyeh gallery in Ramallah, where he is represented, states that in Karim's "furious reworking of the clichés of suffering" that he adopts in his work, these clichés, such as the cactus, "refuse familiar narratives of pain and endurance, and demand a new way of being."[395] However, it is the use of modernist stylings and clichéd imagery that, for me, removes them from the narratives of suffering from which the initial iconography originated and leaves them devoid of much more than referentiality. Rather than presenting a new way of looking at the well-worn iconography of Palestinian suffering post-Nakba, Karim Abu Sharka's works seem to simply repeat them. Overall, the works are easily

[394] Ibid.
[395] Ibid.

recognizable in the tradition of Palestinian art and iconography as well as the broader tradition of Western modernism, and this is perhaps their aim.

The Specter of Arafat

While my dissertation focuses on the years between the Intifadas as a pivotal period for Palestinians and Palestinian artists, there is a figure whose specter is cast over this time period—Yasser Arafat. Arafat appears either explicitly or implicitly in a number of the works discussed in this dissertation. He engages in the circuitous dance with Ehud Barak in Sharif Waked's *Beace Brocess* (and is perhaps implicitly referenced in the title itself), as representative of the PLO he is critiqued as part of the political jabs aimed at the efforts of that organization in works by Mohammad Musallam and Wafa Hourani, and it was in the Presidential Guard for Arafat that Khaled Jarrar worked, wherein he encountered the Arab militaristic masculinity he critiques in his works.

Arafat appears in other works by contemporary artists in the post-Second Intifada period as well, such as Amer Shomali's pair of keffiyeh works *Arafat 1968* (Figure 45) and *Arafat 2002* (Figure 46) both from 2014. In each of these works, Shomali takes a Palestinian keffiyeh, such as the one Arafat always wore, and removes some of the black thread leaving only that which depicts the image of Arafat behind. Each of the images are derived from *TIME Magazine* covers, the first from 1968 and the second from 2002 (Figures 47-48). These two images, in part, articulate respectively the pre-First Intifada and post-Second Intifada period spirit of the Palestinian liberation movement as led by Arafat and the PLO. The 1968 cover image is a drawing of Arafat with a faceless armed fighter behind him. The image depicts Arafat as the leader of the Palestinian revolutionary movement. The text next to Arafat, wearing his trademark keffiyeh, aviator sunglasses, and a thick mustache, reads "FEDAYEEN LEADER ARAFAT,"

indicating him as the leader of the armed liberatory resistance. Across the upper right corner a banner reads: "THE ARAB COMMANDOS: Defiant New Force in the Middle East." The 1968 image portrays Arafat in the wake of the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Six Day War of 1967. He represents this guerilla resistance and its new organized force of military strength. The 2002 image—this time a photograph—sits in stark contrast. Arafat sits, hands clasped in front of him, before a black backdrop looking tired and old. He stares dejectedly and despairingly into the camera. With the exception of his characteristic keffiyeh, there is little similarity between this Arafat and the one in the 1968 image. The text besides him this time reads "ALL BOXED IN." The once "defiant new force" has now been reduced to a man with no more options.

Arafat died in 2004—some even mark his death as the end of the Second Intifada. While many had become disillusioned with Fatah and the Palestinian Authority, his death still marked the end to a significant era in the Palestinian liberation movement. Arafat had been a central figure in the fight for Palestinian rights for most of his life: "He was elected president of the Union of Palestinian Students in Cairo in 1952 when he was in his early twenties, was preeminent among the founding leaders of the Fateh movement in Kuwait in the late 1950s, became chairman of the Executive Committee of the PLO in 1969, and finally in 1996 was elected president of the Palestinian Authority (PA)."[396] As historian Rashid Khalidi notes, "there has often been a tendency to personalize Palestinian politics, such that every decision, every vagary, every flaw, has been described as being the work of one man: Yasser 'Arafat."[397] As he continues, "The Oslo period (1991-2000), adjudged in retrospect to have been disastrous by most

[396] Rashid Khalidi, *The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2006), 140.
[397] Ibid, 141.

Palestinians, was fully identified with 'Arafat."[398] Tracing the path of Arafat—his changing role, power, and influence—mirrors the rise and ultimate neutralization of the PLO and Palestinian liberation movement as it existed in the post-Nakba period. My future research will examine the figure of Arafat in contemporary Palestinian art, and whether depictions of Arafat articulate some of the similar thematic shifts discussed in this project, or perhaps some new shifts also indicative of the changing Palestinian mentality about life under occupation and existing Palestinian political forces. I plan to examine these issues in a future journal article.

Artists in Diaspora

Another important area for further research is the work of Palestinian diaspora artists. In this dissertation, I chose to focus exclusively on artists who created the works discussed while living and working within historic Palestine. While many of these artists either had lived abroad prior to creating this work or live abroad now (or both), I was interested in artists who were creating work specifically about the conditions under which they were living at the time their works were created, and which were created under these same conditions. This does not mean that it is impossible or "inauthentic" for Palestinian artists living in the diaspora to make work about these subjects, but rather that, since I was seeking to examine how artists' works had shifted in relation to the changing conditions on the ground, I centered my focus on artists who were "in the thick of it"—able to articulate the changed conditions of Palestine in the post-Second Intifada as those who were intimately engaged with them.

However, in expanding this dissertation project into a book manuscript, it will be important to examine the art production of diaspora artists as well. There are a few areas of investigation to explore here. Firstly, I am interested in looking at whether Palestinian diaspora

[398] Ibid, 149.

artists address the same thematics—time, humor, and a reflexive criticality—that Palestinian artists living in historic Palestine do in their works. Secondly, I seek to identify whether the same pivotal period, between the First and Second Intifadas, is a crucial point of shifting articulations for Palestinian artists living in the diaspora. As the Oslo Accords largely changed conditions for those Palestinians living within the region, I wonder whether this period was as impactful for those living abroad. While the Oslo Accords did bring with them promises of future discussions regarding the right of return for those Palestinians who had been living in exile, these conversations were never brought to the table before Oslo was declared a failure. However, additional restrictions on movement, especially in the wake of the Second Intifada, made entry to Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza more restrictive, both for those living in the region and those who sought to visit from abroad. Therefore, it is a worthy point of investigation to see what effects, if any, the inter-Intifada period had on diaspora Palestinian mentality regarding the occupation and their own Palestinian political representation, and how this was articulated in the works of contemporary diaspora Palestinian artists. Finally, future research will take up issues particularly relevant to artists living abroad such as exile, hybridity (discussed briefly in Chapter 2 in relation to artists who are engaging with global culture regardless of where they are living), and life in the diaspora and how these are drawn out in these artists' works. I plan to explore these issues of diaspora in an additional chapter for the book manuscript. Preliminary artists identified for inclusion in this chapter are Larissa Sansour, Tarek Al-Ghoussein, and Jumana Manna.

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