

## Violent Attachments,

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A standard critique of empire holds that imperial rule nourishes and feeds off the cultivation of ignorance, that empire is in the business of limiting, distorting, and obscuring knowledge and that with more of it, empires would be more vulnerable to critique; . . . that knowledge pierces what obscures the workings of power, weakens its hold, and, with sustained exposure, could be made to crash. . . . I argue that these accounts . . . may be for us to question, if not refute. (Ann Stoler)

This essay asks about the shape a critique of violence should take, about its scope and conditions of possibility, when violence is both visible and embraced rather than denied. It seeks to unpack a “structure of feeling,” in Raymond Williams’s words,<sup>1</sup> in which violence becomes an explicit part of collective identities. The theoretical-political question driving this analysis can be put in these terms: how should violence that is woven into what gives meaning to our lives be theorized—but also resisted? The concrete geopolitical setting that informs both my query and my analysis is Israel/Palestine, but the argument potentially stretches beyond this context, albeit with necessary adaptations. To allow this potentiality to echo I move, at times, between various threads and fields, between different kinds of “selves” (individuals,

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groups, states), and between different modes of violence, which I will often refer to here as modes of generating injury.

At its core, the essay questions one main mode of critique of violence, which works along the lines Stoler questions in the epigraph: the assumption that, at least in the case of democratic/liberal contexts, violence is sustainable only as long as it remains hidden or somehow unacknowledged. It is the assumption, to repeat Stoler's words, that "knowledge pierces what obscures the workings of power, [thereby] weakens its hold." Accordingly, the work of critique within this framework is to render violence visible; to expose the degree to which it dominates political arrangements. If only people would *see*, this violence would *end* or be fractured. This account—still with Stoler—"may be for us to question, if not refute."<sup>2</sup>

I follow here Yves Winter in proposing that we should consider an alternative framework: not one in which "invisibility . . . allows violence to be repeated and reproduced" but one that sees "repetition and reproduction [of violence]" as the source of what Winter calls violence's invisibility, but what I contend is its normalization (a significant distinction, as the visual field is not re-called-on in order to mark a presumed absence of that which is there).<sup>3</sup> The argument will progress in four parts. I begin with a brief illustration of two ways of situating the self vis-à-vis their own violence. My illustration is located in Israel/Palestine yet it is but one example of other political formations in which the existence of some—their lives, their bodies, their security, and their prosperity—is conditioned on inflicting violence or insecurity on others. This is therefore as much a question of capitalism as it is a question of national identities or white supremacy. For me, however, it is primarily a question of settler colonialism, where the very making of political belonging is a form of dispossession, destruction, and, as Patrick Wolfe makes clear, elimination.<sup>4</sup>

The following section provides a rudimentary map of the various approaches in the literature for analyzing how mass or state violence are being conceived (and as part of this, often

justified) by those engaging in them. It focuses on the approach captured by the epigraph, which I term “dissociation.” My purpose, in the third section, is to add another model to this list. I draw on queer, feminist and poststructuralist understandings of desire in order to show how these may work to explain the relation between colonizers and violence. These understandings will be incorporated into my argument primarily through the claim that to understand the dynamics and durability of settler colonialism we need to understand also what Stoler termed the “‘emotional economies’ of empire.”<sup>5</sup> In this sense, I work with a wide body of literature that argues that colonization cannot be understood without the networks of sentiments invested in it and the social textures it both works on and fabricates.<sup>6</sup> I further draw on queer/feminist theories of subjectivity to highlight desire as socially constructed. With this framework I argue that the social settings of settlement are likely to facilitate a desire to these very settings and with them, to violence itself. Significant to this argument is also the understanding introduced by this body of thought, that we develop attachments to structures of injury. With it I show the affectual mechanisms that sustain social and political identities that are violent due to their mere positionality. In the final section, I return to Israel/Palestine to unpack this model more concretely.

### **1. Shavit’s Two Nakbas**

In 2003, Ari Shavit, a progressive reporter writing for the Israeli daily *Ha’aretz*, who—at least for a while—was seen as a representative of the Zionist left in Israel, interviewed Edward Said. The interview begins with long descriptions of Said’s family home in Jerusalem, which later become a platform for Shavit’s fear of Palestinian return. “Do you personally have a right to return, a right to return to Talbieh in Jerusalem?” Shavit asks Said, and Said replies positively, emphasizing the right to return to the concrete home Shavit had described earlier in the piece. Shavit finds such an answer difficult to digest. He re-asks the question several times, at some

point realizing (though he still must ask): “So the demand to return is not abstract. It is not only a metaphor. Do you really mean it?”<sup>7</sup> Said insists that he does. Yet at the end of the interview, Shavit reframes this answer in a paragraph that merits quoting in length. This paragraph is brought only to the Hebrew-speaking reader, and was not translated in the English version of the article. It concludes the interview in Shavit’s voice rather than in Said’s—beyond the latter’s words, despite them, against them:

What characterizes the New York scholar is a combination of several fascinating paradoxes: . . . On the one hand, Said is considered to be a resolute critic of imperialism, particularly British imperialism, but on the other he is . . . a typical and successful product of it: he was educated in the schools of the British Empire in Egypt, to which he was sent due to the capital his father made as a merchant under the patronage of the empire and thanks to his close ties with it. So perhaps the real personal drama of Said has to do with the fact that his *real lost homeland was not Palestine*. Said’s lost homeland *is not geographical at all, but rather cultural*. It was a Mediterranean bourgeois culture, Christian-Arab, open, pluralistic, that evolved in the eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the twentieth century. But this culture was dependent on the patronage of the large European powers, and when they retreated from the Middle East, it dissolved. Thus, the *real disaster* that defined the life of the individual person Edward Said *was not the 1948 Nakba* but the collapse of the class and culture to which he belonged. *This collapse turned Said, his family members, and his fellow Christian-Arab bourgeoisie into placeless, stateless people, without any cultural home.*<sup>8</sup>

Not the Nakba but the collapse of empires; not an imperial domination but its very decline; very the loss not of place but of cultural affiliations; not land but culture; not concrete homes but metaphorical, abstract ones. Thus, Shavit (as the voice of Israelis) does not carry any

responsibility for this loss, which is an outcome of imperial realignments. But this paragraph is so foreign to the words preceding it that one must wonder how the two can inhabit the same article. Stoler reminds us that “people know and do not know, not sequentially but at the very same time.” This paragraph illustrates how “knowing is disabled, attention is redirected, things are renamed, and disregard is revived and sustained.”<sup>9</sup> It is not that Shavit is blind; he goes to *see* Said’s house and describes it elaborately. It is not that he refuses to *listen*; he conducts a lengthy interview and brings Said’s words to print. But at the same time, he does something to these words; he “renames,” “disables,” and “disregards” them.

By 2013, in his book *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel*, Shavit no longer “distorts” or “disables” words. He faces Israeli violence directly, as well as his role in it. The outcome of this recognition, however, is not rejection but an embrace of violence. Writing about the massacre that took place in 1948 in the then Palestinian city Lydda, he does not try to explain it away as an isolated incident or an accident. This was, he says with somewhat surprising honesty, “an inevitable phase of the Zionist revolution that laid the foundation for the Zionist state. Lydda was an integral part of our story.”<sup>10</sup> When he looks at it candidly, Shavit confesses, “I see that the choice is stark: either reject Zionism because of Lydda, or accept Zionism with Lydda”<sup>11</sup>—crucially, not *despite* Lydda, but *with* Lydda. This is “a reality [he] cannot contain”: “I am not only sad, I am horrified,” he states. And yet only half a paragraph later, Shavit’s horror is replaced by acceptance. Those who committed the massacre, he declares, should not be condemned by Israelis with “bleeding hearts” who nevertheless “enjoy the fruits of [these commanders’] deeds.” “If need be,” he therefore concludes, “I’ll stand by the damned.” Shavit then, begins with marking his sadness and even horror, but these seem to be tokens which can very easily be dismissed. If we have thought that his heart bleeds, as he faced an uncontainable reality that made him “not only sad” but “horrified,” this is not the case. What could have been a mark of a conflicted self—a heart that is torn or injured till it

bleeds—is actually not his, and it those with the bleeding hearts who should be condemned, rather than the massacre. “Because I know that if it wasn’t for them, I would not have been born. They did the dirty, filthy work that enabled my people, myself, my daughter, and my son to live.”<sup>12</sup> What seemed to be an existential crisis (sadness, horror, inability to contain one’s world) is instantly resolved. What is significant here is not merely the swift switch of positions, from sadness/horror to the very condemnation of those, but the explicit recognition that Shavit’s very identity and his ability to “enjoy the fruits” of prosperity is conditioned upon ethnic cleansing.

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My argument operates between these two points in time captured by Shavit’s 2003 interview and his 2013 book (points that are given here for the sake of simplification and should not be taken as precise historical coordinates). With Shavit, we can see a transformation from one way of relating to violence to another. The first manifests an ambivalent relation to violence, yet, as we saw, is *not* based on denial or willful blindness; the second resolves this ambivalence, yet does not celebrate violence. The next section points to three different ways of theorizing individuals’ and groups’ relations to their own violence. It passes through these possible relations (blindness, ambivalence, celebration). Of most interest to me is the idea, which captures something of the first moment of Shavit: whereas he is not “blind” to the violence of dispossession, Shavit of 2003 must create some separation between himself and this violence. This mechanism of separation or dissociation lies at the core of the model which will be at the focus of the next section’s analysis. While composed of many different, sometimes conflicting accounts of violence, this rests on a presupposition that selves cannot bear their own violence. But this is no longer the case by 2013, when Shavit acknowledges that his identity is dependent, if not merged with violence (recall: not despite Lydda but with it.) The subsequent section (#3) will propose a different way of thinking about the relation between selves and violence, which

may account better for the second moment above, and particularly to the ability to embrace violence as part of who one is.

My purpose here is not to argue that one of these models is better able to explain violence than the others. At different moments, people tell their own stories differently and give a different account of themselves; within a single society, different subgroups exhibit political behavior that can best be explained by this or the other model, and so forth. Political structures, like psychological ones, are never fully coherent or stable. My purpose here is merely to add yet another approach that, I believe, is largely absent from current analyses and that, I contend, has a particular value for our current moment.

## **2. “Compliance,” “Cruelty,” and “Dissociation”: Three Models for Violence**

The vast majority of the literature concerning how political communities see and understand their own mass can be divided, albeit schematically, into three main ways of conceptualizing violence. I label them as “compliance,” “cruelty,” and “dissociation.” As aforementioned, even though the three models are in tension with each other, most cases of violence can be understood by a combination of some of them. People can be cruel *and* lie to themselves—at different moments, in regard to different violences, or sometimes even in regard to one and the same occasion; we can be constituted by violence, yet still refuse to see it. In most societies, we can find all three of the above models: at times they function as competing narratives, sometimes dividing societies; at times one may gain more dominance; and at times one may be repressed or may (re)surface.

The first model asks how people can live *under* atrocities-generating regimes: what enables people to accept, not object to, and even collaborate with state violence? The relevant literature is predominantly engaged with fascism and genocide (specifically, but not only, the holocaust)

and has provided different answers to this question: the power of authority,<sup>13</sup> of ideology,<sup>14</sup> of order itself,<sup>15</sup> the bureaucratization of violence,<sup>16</sup> or lack of an ability to think independently, particularly to think from the point of view of the other.<sup>17</sup> What these explanations have in common, excluding the latter, is the idea that violence is located in some elsewhere. Violence is situated in something external (a leader, government, or social structure) and there is a psychological or sociological power that renders people collaborative, submissive, even cooperative. That is, people may respond to violence, accept it, even participate in it, but it is not part of *who they are*. If something is to be found in themselves instead of in these external sites where violence resides, it is a disposition to adhere to the violent powers (which may have to do with psycho-social factors, economic ones, etc.). It is precisely this externality that I want to question.

Indeed, if we take the idea of democracy seriously, there is another question we need to pose, if not instead of, then alongside the above question: How can one play an *active* role in a violent political order?—not as *subjected* to the regime but as a subject in the second meaning of the term as well;<sup>18</sup> as an “author,” as Hobbes would have it, of this violence?

The second group consists of accounts that see violence as emerging from political sadism, cruelty, or institutional hatred,<sup>19</sup> which are indeed *integral* to the political identity of those engaging in it. They show the different affectual dimensions implicated in practices that shape political cohorts (usually defined by race) through anchoring otherness in suffering. According to them, senses of belonging often emerge not merely through the exclusion of othered groups, but through further manifesting and experiencing otherness via a public spectacle of violence. Some of these theories discuss mental structures or personality attributes that allow people to take pleasure in others’ pain.<sup>20</sup> Others focus on different ideological or institutional apparatuses that facilitate, sustain, justify, and encourage cruelty.<sup>21</sup> Yet others point to political structures—we can call them cruel—that shape people’s desires or ways of seeing not precisely as sadistic,

but as dismissive of violence. Specifically, these modes of organizing society place people in a different relation to the violence they inflict, allowing them to see it constantly, yet erasing the victims as suffering subjects. Here we find schemes of racism and dehumanization that render some lives less accounted for;<sup>22</sup> pseudoscientific assumptions about the lack of pain among some people that erase the possibility of victimhood;<sup>23</sup> or a framing of the other as a dangerous enemy whose killing is always justified.

This model of cruelty, however, seems to be less suitable for the analysis of my case. Not merely because when I read Shavit, for example, I see an embrace of violence, yet no pleasure taken in the defeat of Palestinians (although this may be my own personal inability to see.) It is less adequate also because the “cruelty” model rests on an immediate relation to a suffering body, whereas the violence I am interested in theorizing here is often the violence of those who Robert Meister and later Bruce Robbins have termed “structural beneficiaries”: those who are not active perpetrators, but nonetheless obtain “material and social advantage” from various orders of violence;<sup>24</sup> those who are situated on the oppressive side of these orders, whose well-being (actual or perceived) is often dependent on the continuation of this oppression; those who should therefore be seen as exerting violence even if they do not actively engage in it.<sup>25</sup> Here arrives the third model, the one I termed “dissociation,” which is probably the most common model used to explain imperial and colonial violence.

This model can be found in a diverse and rich literature, including many liberal texts, but also significant segments of postcolonial literature, critical thought, and literature inspired by, or taking part in, projects of truth and reconciliation. In my own geopolitical context, it can be found in most of the relevant literature on the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. These bodies of thought can by no means be reduced to a single account. Yet, within this richness, one principle seems to be shared: if violence is to endure (at least in democratic societies), a gap, if not a rift, must be introduced between the self and the violent actions of herself or her group.

Using Stanley Cohen's very wide mapping,<sup>26</sup> alongside the work of many others who have engaged in such research, we can outline the various modes of such dissociation. They are not always as neatly separable as in the list below. For the sake of illustration, they will be accompanied by concrete examples from Israel/Palestine.

- A complete rejection of the facts. E.g., “there were no Palestinian villages in this place”; or: “the Palestinians who *were* here left because their leaders persuaded them to do so in order to aid the war effort.” And we already see from these two formulations that both “rejection” and “facts” come in different types and gradients. Salman Abu Sitta speaks in this context of a “collective amnesia,” which further complicates the relation between the known and the unknown, since what is forgotten *was* known.<sup>27</sup> In another settler-colonial context, Janet McIntosh refers to “structural oblivion” to show that the work that forgetting requires is often done at levels beyond the individual and can therefore not be seen, at least not often, as deliberate.<sup>28</sup>
- A reorganization of the facts within a framework that alters their signification. For instance: reframing violence as self-protection and aggression as victimhood. E.g. “the Palestinians who indeed were here, and whom we indeed expelled or killed, were about to exterminate us; we had no choice”. Or, alternatively: altering signification by using language that diminishes the violent act, such as the prevalent formulation in the passive: “these Palestinians *have found their death*”<sup>29</sup>. We can tie these to Charles Mills's notion of “epistemological ignorance”:<sup>30</sup> an expression pointing to the fact that sometimes, people are unable to understand or interpret (even if able to see) injustices.
- Psychological, sociopolitical, or structural mechanisms allowing a continuous sidelining of the truth; not a denial as such, but a marginalization of the facts to the periphery of knowing, of seeing, of the political matter, so that life can continue uninterrupted, despite what is known. A good example is Stoler's notion of colonial aphasia: a mode of simultaneously

denying and seeing, even being obsessed with, the colonial past.<sup>31</sup> Lisa Lowe termed this duality “the economy of affirmation and forgetting.”<sup>32</sup> This is often done alongside various methods of organizing entire political spaces of visibility in ways that render some truths more difficult to discover. The foresting of destroyed Palestinian villages after 1948, or an elevated road system in the West Bank that renders existing Palestinian villages less visible can serve as examples.<sup>33</sup>

- Psychological, sociopolitical, and structural mechanisms of deferral, disavowal, deflection, and repression that secure the self from the potentially shattering implications of that which is known. We are quite familiar with such mechanisms on the psychological level (e.g., in dealing with childhood trauma); on the political level, we can think with Jeanne Morefield’s concept of deflection: turning the gaze away from violent actions to a liberal identity that is presumably always already there, regardless of these actions. The alleged stability of identity means that the violent actions cannot contaminate it. Accordingly, by pointing to the liberal identity of the empire, its imperial (illiberal) doings can simultaneously be acknowledged *and* their meanings and implications for one’s identity denied.<sup>34</sup> Ariella Azoulay and Adi Ophir point to a different mechanism operating along the same principles: they show how expressing shock and outrage at violent acts that are allegedly “excessive” allows Israelis to reaffirm their own morality, as well as the morality of occupation.<sup>35</sup>
- Finally, ideological apparatuses that allow violence to be reframed as nonviolence. Such mechanisms range from schemes like “progress” or “the “white-man’s burden” as a mode of framing imperial domination, to notions such as “bringing democracy to the world” as a scheme justifying warfare, or the Israeli version of “enlightened occupation.” All these allow for framing violence as something that is actually beneficial to its victims, and therefore not in conflict with the liberal-democratic identity of the perpetrators/beneficiaries.

This rough map, which can surely be unpacked more slowly, ties together very different accounts that nevertheless share three connected assumptions: first, that in order to realize the formation and sustainment of political identities within ethical schemes, the violence of imperial and colonial endeavors (or other forms of institutionalized mass violence) must be dissociated from the large political communities—or political imaginations—involved in them. This, in turn, rests on a second presupposition—seldom made explicitly but seeming to be a logical necessity—that there is some tension, if not a contradiction, between violence and the self. Without this presupposition, there would be no need to assume this vast apparatus of dissociation. Thus, even though many of the abovementioned authors do see violence as constitutive of identities, they nevertheless see these identities as having to constantly negotiate with this violence. To take one example: even though Morefield’s argument concerning the politics of deferral *refutes* the idea that the violence of Anglo-American imperialism does not represent “who we are,” it nevertheless sees the sustainability of imperial violence as a function of the ability to constantly disconnect this violence from the “we” engaging in it: imperial violence is narrated and recognized by Anglo-American liberals, she argues, via “prolonged and creative forms of deflection that constantly ask the reader to avert her eyes, away from colonial violence and economic exploitation, and back towards the liberal nature of the imperial society.”<sup>36</sup> My point is that the complex apparatus that Morefield identifies is necessary only when, and as long as, the identity of the “we” is perceived as being, or indeed is, in contradiction to imperial violence. I do not argue that this apparatus is not in operation; merely that in some cases, it is insufficient to account for the relations of some liberals to their violence—violence that *they* see as part of who they indeed are. Think of Shavit’s words about Lydda in the previous section. On the one hand, we can find in them components from the above list such as pointing to a lack of choice as part of a struggle for survival. And yet, unlike the typical dissociation strategy this does not become a discourse of reversed victimhood.

Lydda is depicted explicitly in terms of a massacre. Moreover, unlike the strategy of pointing to one's own shock and outrage facing "excessive" violence as a way of reaffirming both one's morality and normalized violence, Shavit points to the "excessive" violence itself as part of the story of the self. In other words, in the above examples (see particularly the 4<sup>th</sup> bullet), we find a mode of identifying isolated cases of violence as (i) excessive and thus exceptional, and (ii) in need to be fixed or prevented. This allows a sense of self righteousness, because the self is (i) horrified and (ii) condemns violence and desires fixing/prevention, thereby performs one's dissociation from these acts. However Shavit, even if horrified, does not seek to fix, condemn, or isolate the massacre. It is the very massacre, he claims, that is part of who he is.

The third shared assumption of the above theories is that therefore, in order to resist these endeavors, a certain politics of exposure, memory, or recognition is called for, which makes violence more visible. Such visibility would presumably undo the possibility of the gap between the individual/group and their violence, and thus undo the possibility of sustaining violence. If the denial of violence, as any form of denial, is done to protect the self from the implications of that which can threaten identity, and if, at the same time and for the same reason, denial is also what allows atrocities to go on, then the role of critique according to this model is to remove envelopes of justification. The truth, as it were, must be confronted, in a process that—much like psychoanalysis—is simultaneously traumatic and cathartic. This is not always (not often) a naïve endeavor, and most of the accounts above are critical and astute in their perception of the political reality. My goal here is by no means to refute or ridicule them. My point is that I identify in them a glimmer of hope—a hope I share myself—that such an act of dismantling the mechanisms of dissociation would contribute to undermining the façade of liberal identity, force it to confront its reality, and thereby push for political change. These assumptions, however, fail to acknowledge that violence is not always in conflict with the self or the community, but something *whose very loss* may threaten the self.

The next section seeks to propose, still initially, a way of thinking about political violence that is integral to identity in recognized ways (a way, if you will, to theorize the second moment of Shavit above). The subsequent section (4) will return to the case of Israel/Palestine to draw initial conclusions regarding the role of a critique of violence.

### 3. **“Desire”: A proposition**

The fourth model I seek to outline below for mass/state/institutionalized violence joins the three above models. It follows the framework of subject formation in order to argue that subjects in positions of privilege are likely to be attached to the conditions allowing these privileges to endure, even when these generate, sustain, or are themselves a form of violence (property in capitalism or home/land in settler colonialism are just two of the more obvious examples). Moreover, these attachments do not—or not always—become possible *despite* this violence, or because people are able to ignore it, but sometimes are *mediated* by violence itself.

To demarcate this model, I begin with the context of sexual desire. With important inversions and reservations, this desire captures something of the model I want to propose. Let us begin, then, on an individual level, and moreover, from the injured subject who is often theorized using this model, and then move on to the theorization of the injurious subject, and finally to large-scale injurious groups.

By way of illustration, consider this conversation, from the story “Strangers in the Home” by Ronit Matalon. Guiding her friend, who is about to have sex for the first time, this teenager’s voice encapsulates the intimacies of violence I want to highlight here:

Look, you are getting undressed, right? Lying in bed—you next to the wall and he next to you. You take off your jewelry, your hairpins, everything, everything, and put it all in a small pile on the bedside dresser. Then you stand in front of him. You

do nothing . . . Just don't be alarmed if you start shaking. You always shake at first, in an effort to tear away the voice, the memory of the freezing touch; from the fact that when he imprints his marks on your neck, it is not you his touch addresses; from this thought that you cannot control—a thought preparing you to be a woman . . . Then he gets on top of you . . . You need to open your legs, but be careful, not too much, you'll see . . . if you open them too much . . . it hurts. . . . But it's a good pain, you will want it a little bit, this is how you feel the time passing . . . If you bleed just ask for a towel and all that.<sup>37</sup>

The blood that needs to be cleaned; the body trembling from a touch, or just the thought of a touch that seems to hurt more than it causes pleasure (a freezing touch that might bring to mind an act of strangling as it leaves its imprint on the neck); the act of tearing—tearing the self from herself, but also being torn by another; all these are part of the injury—the pain—that is identified in this paragraph as sex, as the meaning of “be[ing] a woman.” It is part of what one learns to want and is inseparable from what will become her desire. This is not to say that any sex is always injurious, and it is certainly not to argue that any sex is a form of rape (in fact, it is precisely the injury that cannot be identified with acts of raping, or sadistic desires, that is of interest to me here). It is to rehearse, albeit briefly and anecdotally, what several feminist schools have shown at least since the early 1960s if not before, even if in radically different ways: that the most intimate relations can be violent or that violence can be intimate; that its presence is not a destruction of the familiar fabric of life, but part of it.<sup>38</sup>

Significant to my own argument is that there is not an “I” beyond this structure of desire who is being “misled” to want what harms her. The “I” emerges through this desire and cannot be freed by the power of truth about oppression (which is not to say that oppression must be accepted or that a struggle against it is impossible). To jump ahead, this point will be important for the question concerning the role of critique of violence that I pose in what follows: If these

relations to injury (and through it to violence) are constitutive of the self, then a critique rendering violence more visible would not have the same liberating power often ascribed to it. Much like the injury that cannot be disentangled from the “I,” so will be the violence in contexts of social identities based on domination (patriarchy, white supremacy, settler colonialism). What has to be contended with, then, are not questions of exposure or knowledge, but of the very conditions that render violence constitutive.

Judith Butler has probably phrased this understanding most eloquently:

Called by an injurious name, I come into social being . . . I am led to embrace the terms that injure me because they constitute me socially. If we then understand certain kinds of interpellations to confer identity, those injurious interpellations will constitute identity through injury.<sup>39</sup>

For Butler, this claim has both an ontological dimension and a sociohistorical one. Ontologically, it is a function of the fact that as corporeal creatures, we are vulnerable,<sup>40</sup> and of the fact that from birth, bodies are both dependent on others if they are to survive and are shaped by social norms (even if never deterministically or fully so). But this is, as Butler puts it, a “social ontology.”<sup>41</sup> First, it is social because this vulnerability is precisely a function of our social interdependence and interconnectivity. It is because of our deep sociality that we cannot form significant ties to others and to the world without being undone, Butler teaches us, and this undoing is both a form of injury and what makes us so vulnerable to being injured by the other’s doings (betraying us, leaving us, leaving the world, but also sometimes merely a look, a touch, or the lack thereof). Second, it is “social,” or rather “political,” because it is a function of the particular social webs, kinship formations, works of power, forms of rule, and social hierarchies within a given society.<sup>42</sup> My case of analysis, however, will be different, since it is situated from the outset within a particular political constellation and is about political positionality rather than ontological conditions of subjectivity as such. Butler herself insists on

this distinction when she states, together with Athena Athanasiou, that it is crucial to distinguish between the conditions of subject formation in and through injury, and the injury that is the outcome of particular political constellations or actions. The former are “at the fundamental level of subjection,” while the latter are the object of resistance and transformation.<sup>43</sup> What is nonetheless important for me in this ontology of openness, is one insight that will be relevant also to the political analysis: An affective attachment opens us to injury in ways that sometimes make it impossible to dissociate injury from attachment.

Lauren Berlant situates this structure of attachment at the core of capitalist society. Berlant shows that the need to protect the “I” makes us hold on to objects of attachment—or perhaps better: to the very permanency of an object, or to the idea of permanency itself—even when these inflict injuries of various kinds: “The subjects who have x in their lives might not well endure the loss of their object or scene of desire, even though its presence threatens their well-being, because whatever the content of the attachment, the continuity of the form of it provides something of the continuity of the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living on and to look forward to being in the world.”<sup>44</sup> Thus, we hold on to objects, even when these are “problematic objects,” and even when they generate “compromised conditions of possibility,”<sup>45</sup> as part of an almost tragic effort to stabilize identity—the meaning of who we are.

In both Butler’s and Berlant’s accounts, violence emerges not as something that threatens identities, but as what sustains them; in both, violence therefore also becomes an object of desire, or is at least woven into a desire for other objects; in both, this nexus wherein violence and desire coproduce each other is a function of the particular social conditions that constitute identity (images of the good life in Berlant, heteronormative forms of socialization in Butler). These last three points will be central to the analysis of violent identities that I propose here, with one significant difference. In the above accounts, injury and identity are most often

considered from the perspective of those injured—by others, by structures, by a particular construction of identity. In my analysis, however, the optics will be reversed to think of those who *generate* injury.<sup>46</sup>

What I propose is a structural reversal that is for now a hypothesis: If subjects emerge via the social conditions in which they are born and that continue to form them as they continue living, and if, as Butler and Berlant argue, we come to desire these conditions even when they are injurious, then we should at least entertain the possibility that sociopolitical conditions that are founded on ongoing violence—such as settlement or colonization—are likely to give rise to a particular mode of attachment to one’s own violence.

The desire for violence I seek to pinpoint is a function of the particular structure of the settler state in which one’s very presence, one’s very political identity, is a form of taking the place of someone else; a form of dispossession, removal, domination, ethnic cleansing. There is not an “I,” in the case of the settler, without dispossession, if not elimination, of natives, and so the effort to stabilize identity, to hold on to the “continuity of the subject’s sense of what it means to keep on living and to look forward to being in the world” (to return to Berlant) is inextricable from this violence. The desire here would not be for violence or suffering itself (as in the case of the cruelty model, for example in public lynching), but rather for territory. And yet this attachment to territory is intimately linked to forms of violence that render it one of the conditions of living. Again, recall Shavit’s recognition that “the dirty, filthy work that [was done] enabled my people, myself, my daughter, and my son to live”.

A fuller analysis of such desires will have to move between understanding individual settlers and their modes of attachment on the one hand, and on the other, settler communities, in which such “structures of feelings” become more explicitly political. It will also have to move between an analysis of different and shifting political arrangement and what we may call the “ontology of settler colonialism” or what Wolfe would call its structure. What is important to

bear in mind is that *all* these strata are sociohistorical and can vary widely in its implications: even if we think structurally, on the logic of elimination, on the very presence of the settler as a violent one (this would be the “ontological” dimension), this violence can take many forms, ranging from active genocide to legal discrimination and to genuine efforts of sharing the land. All this is to say, again, that the structural claim does not preclude political work.

#### 4. Violence and Visibility



Figures 1-2 katzrin (left), and the Hermon River, at the edge of the Golan Height. Photographs by Oded Balilty.

Let us return to the Israeli context. In different ways, the accounts under the rubric of “dissociation” in section 2 called, as I proposed, for a politics of visibility: for exposing violence in order to break the hold of power. And yet the Israeli visual field is inlaid with remnants of past violence that, being part of the daily view, is simultaneously denied and asserted. Israeli tanks or old military airplanes can be found in parks or playgrounds, and ruins of Palestinian homes often “decorate” serene scenery for hikes or family picnics (see images 1–2). The violence that these remnants constantly bring to the surface, but with this constant reminder also make banal—the Palestinian Nakba and the wars that followed—has become an essential part of the personal history of many who grew up in this place. “When one travels in Israel,” Noga Kadman writes, “it is almost impossible to avoid seeing piles of stones, ruins,

collapsing walls and structures overgrown with uncultivated almond and fig trees, rolling terraces crumbling with disuse, and long hedges of prickly cactuses.”<sup>47</sup> These landscapes are woven into the memories of family hikes, afterschool activities, or simply being at home. I recall trips with my father along an abandoned railway to the ruins of Na’ane, which was close to the kibbutz where he was born and where my grandparents still lived. I recall going bathing on hot summer days in a pool that was built by the Syrian army for its officers. We knew it was called “the officer’s pool,” we always passed through the traces of war on our way to it, and yet this was “our” pool, a site of beauty amidst fig trees, whose freezing water became our challenge—who would be brave enough to jump? My childhood memories, my home, cannot be detached from the violence of 1948 and 1967.<sup>48</sup> The point, then, is not that we could not see the remnants of violence, but that we saw them all the time and almost everywhere. Nevertheless, as I showed above, so much of the critique of Israeli violence focuses on tropes of “erasure,” “denial,” or “blindness.” Perhaps this is because it is easier to explain one’s ability to destroy in light of one’s blindness to destruction and its effects. Without the paradigm of blindness or dissociation, an affirmative relation to destruction must be contended with. It is this affirmative relation that I seek to explain.

My argument in regard to this visual saturation of traces of violence is similar to, yet crucially different from, Gil Hochberg’s claim concerning the (necessary) failure to erase the violence of the past: “these repeated attempts to erase, resignify, and evacuate the historical meaning of the Palestinian ruins . . . nevertheless fail (they are *bound to fail*) to successfully repress the haunting impact that these ruins continue to have over Israelis and Israeli culture,” Hochberg claims. For her, this impossibility to erase and deny is what animates *resistance* and what *disrupts* Zionist narratives, yet Hochberg’s words also open the possibility of making an altogether different argument: Since, as she says, the “visible invisibility” of such traces is “a central feature in Israeli cultural and political imagination,”<sup>49</sup> one cannot simply talk here about

an *interruption* of identity; one must seriously consider the possibility that Israeli identity *cannot be separated* from these landscapes of violence.

When one longs for and belongs to this landscape, one does not take pleasure in the direct pain inflicted on others (the cruelty model), yet this pain cannot be fully separated from the spaces of belonging that construct the sense of self (political, communal, individual). The “I” who finds a home in these spaces, in those traces, and who is thus also defined by them, is conditioned (also) by the violence they mark, remind her of, and carry with them from the past, even if this violence is mediated by time and by other people. Put differently, the Israeli Jew is a product of the history of destruction that has led to the construction of the Israeli state and has been accompanying it ever since. Or more generally: within the structure of settlement, the conditions of possibility of the “I”—her place, her community, her home—are injurious ones—and thus the Butlerian scheme should be reversed: the “I,” to paraphrase the quote from the previous section, comes to embrace the terms through which she injures others because they constitute her socially. This injury can be intentional or not, direct or structural. It can be celebrated by the injuring person, ignored by them, or even hurt their sense of self, but it is nonetheless part of who they are.

It is true that one could refer to these traces of violence as already naturalized, decontextualized, and drained of their political meaning; or one could talk about a visual saturation that itself leads to normalization and with it to forms of not seeing (a claim with which we are familiar from critical discussions concerning humanitarian work). But it seems to me that there is something too easy about explaining the Israeli gaze, the attachment to these sites of ruin, via ideological mechanisms that explain violence away (from denial and blindness, to naturalization or resignification, or to the claim that most has been erased). The explanation so many scholars use and that I used to employ myself, namely that we could not see or that we were not seeing things for what they were, seems insufficient to me, not utterly wrong, but

conveniently partial. The aim of this brief intervention is to propose an alternative, or better: a supplementary way of thinking about one's relations to the disaster they produce. It is also to ask what the implications on the possibility of critique would be given those relations.

If violence conditions one's very being—her political identity, language, cultural references, material support—then the power of critique is limited, at best, in its ability to push for political change. Moreover, rendering violence visible (as a form of critique) can rather lead to the unapologetic acceptance of this violence. I believe this is what we see today in Israel, and many other places, particularly the United States. During the 2012 Nakba memorial ceremony at Tel Aviv University, activists of the then new right-wing organization *Im Tirtzu* (in Hebrew, “if you will it,” after the famous words of Herzl) surrounded the demonstrators and, mimicking a famous Israeli song, chanted: “we brought Nakba upon you,” ironically paraphrasing the original words: “we brought peace upon you” (*hevenu shalom alechem*). Rather than attacking the demonstrators by denying that the Nakba ever took place (the common attitude at the time), the right-wing activists celebrated the fact that it did, and perhaps also called for a new one. By 2014, the right-wing party The Jewish Home (*Haba'it Haiehudi*) launched a campaign under the title “no longer apologizing” (*mafsikim lehitnatzel*).<sup>50</sup> This was four months after Israel had killed more than 2,200 Palestinians<sup>51</sup> as part of what was described by many as a severe violation of human rights. Although not directly so, given the predominant public debate at the time, one could not but wonder whether The Jewish Home's campaign was a call to stop apologizing for what Israel had just done in Gaza. The campaign, which called on people to stop apologizing for “loving Israel”—a love that explicitly included its occupied parts—was accompanied by a concrete program to annex vast parts of the West Bank (all C territories), thereby making the state of apartheid explicit.<sup>52</sup> By the 2019 election campaign, the political center also adopted this unapologetic approach and the campaign for the new “Blue and White” party took pride that his leader, Benny Gantz, “brought Gaza back to the stone age” and killed

1364 “terrorists” during the 2014 military campaign. This unapologetic approach is obviously not simply the outcome of a left-critique that sought to render the violence of the regime more visible. Yet such a critique plays into, if not works in tandem with, a re-affirmation of violence. In asking people to confront who they “really are” it pushes to an affirmation of such identity, even if this identity is dependent on apartheid or occupation. To target this violence, then, it is not sufficient to expose it.

The structure I sought to identify at the foundation of political belonging thus undergoes slow but also rapid changes. The structural and the historical stories must accordingly be unfolded in their distinctness but also in their interdependence—a work of weaving them apart and then back together again, that is still to be done.

### **Conclusion and beyond**

By pointing to a violence that cannot be separated from identity, this paper sought to offer a model for understanding the ways by which mass/state/institutionalized violence is made acceptable. This model joins the three primary models existing in the literature. Unlike the model of compliance, it sees political violence as rooted in people themselves; unlike the model based on dissociation, it accounts for violence that cannot be explained by modes of invisibility or denial (it refuses the claim that people do not see or do not know, or that they distort and reframe their knowledge so its meaning or political implication dwindles); and unlike the model of cruelty, it does not see this violence as an outcome of cruelty or maliciousness, thereby perhaps keeping open the possibility of a shared political future.

In proposing that we think of this violence, this identity, via the feminist/queer model of desire, I do not claim, for example, that we should *compare* settlers to men in a heteronormative society, or settlement to rape.<sup>53</sup> I do not seek to propose here a complete *analogy* but rather a model, which, like any model, offers a schematic, initial guideline and is limited in its

applicability to changing test cases. A brief review of some proposed paths for decolonization can begin to show what it would mean to think of critique from this perspective.

In different ways, Lorenzo Veracini, Mahmood Mamdani, and Raef Zreik proposed that with a radical change in the structure of the settler state, the categories settler/native can be dissolved; not in ways that turn the settler into a native (the title of Zreik and Mamdani's dialogue-of-sorts might insinuates this), but in ways that make this distinction less meaningful, at least in its political bearings.<sup>54</sup> Decolonization is thus the process through which the settler ceases to be a settler, since the structure of the state itself changes.<sup>55</sup> This provides an institutional/structural path for decolonization without violence, that as such seems quite tempting. But if the "I" of the settler, her very being, is shaped by, and immersed in this structure, as I argued, then this change must go deeper than a change in legal categories and access to rights, as Zreik claims when he promotes the idea of equal juridical citizenship, or deeper even than equal access to material resources, as a more Marxist account would insist. To "kill the settler in the man," as Veracini puts it<sup>56</sup> is to kill so much of the man himself that the distinction becomes questionable. This is not just because it is analytically messy, but also because politically, I cannot imagine it taking place: it is to demand that he will give up his property (or at least some of it), his language, his cultural references, but also, if I am correct, that he change his "structures of feeling," modes of desire and attachments—to places, to people. I do not say that these are not just demands; but these changes are not easily manufactured.

Although undoubtedly necessary, institutional change consisting of democratizing the settler state is not sufficient, because it leaves intact the deep structures of racialized hierarchies, violent desires, and attachments to dispossession. These are not *psychological* structures, but sociopolitical ones, since they have to do with our modes of living together. An analogy to Marx's critique of Bauer's critique of religion may clarify this point. As Marx argued in the

Jewish Question, liberation that occurs on the ideological, institutional level of the state leaves unregulated, even protected an entire domain of human existence that is still governed by oppression. But whereas a Marxist solution involving the redistribution of material resources is necessary, it, too, leaves intact a domain of human existence where oppression can reside: structures of feelings, sentiments and attachments. Thus (still following Marx), if Bauer proposes to free humankind from religion by privatizing it, and if Marx's response to this proposition points to America as a secular state where religion still thrives,<sup>57</sup> (that is, a proof that freedom at the institutional level is insufficient, if not destructive), my response to Zreik or Veracini is to point to America as a democratized settler state, where racism and white supremacy still thrive. Further, it is to argue, together with Marx, that material reality changes consciousness; but beyond him, to suggest that when we think of material reality, we must think beyond domains of economy and take into account affectual politics (after all, if we think with Butler, affect *is* material.)

I am not sure how one dismantles structures of desire. I have seen people changing their mode of attachment to territories, landscapes and others, especially through political activism, but not in ways that can become the foundation for a policy proposition. In this sense, my intervention is limited to marking the domain about which we should ask some of our questions, rather than providing answers, but I hope that in so doing, it can open a different set of conversations.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> Raymond Williams *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977)

2. Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 248.

<sup>3</sup> Yves Winter, “Violence and Visibility”, *New Political Science* Vol34 Issue 2 (2012), 198.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999)

5. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain*, 68.

<sup>6</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Philippa Levine, *Prostitution, Race, and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire* (New York: Routledge, 2003) among many others

7. Ari Shavit, “My Right of Return,” *Ha’aretz*, September 25, 2003. All quotes from the English translation, available at <http://www.middleeast.org/archives/8-00-31.htm>.

8. Ibid, from the Hebrew version available at <https://www.haaretz.co.il/misc/1.912891>. My translation, my italics.

9. Ann Laura Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia: Race and Disabled Histories in France,” *Public Culture* 23, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 141,153.

10. Ari Shavit, *My Promised Land: The Triumph and Tragedy of Israel* (London, Melbourne: Scribe Publications, 2014), 131.

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. The Milgram experiment is probably the most famous in this regard, but many authors of the Frankfurt School can serve as more theoretical references here, with various understandings of “authority” and its workings (e.g. Theodor W. Adorno, *The Authoritarian Personality: Studies in Prejudice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1982)). For Althusser, whose theoretical implications and contexts go far beyond authoritarian regimes, adherence to authority is built into subjectivity. Interpellation works because we are subjects wired to obey;

because we are always already subjected; see Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses” in *Essays On Ideology* (London: Verso, 1984). For a critical reading of such concepts of subjectivity, particularly in Althusser, see Martel, *The Misinterpellated Subject*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017).

14. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, 5th ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).

15. Bauman offers one of the most complete versions of this argument. According to him, the Holocaust, far from being a barbaric counterexample to modern morality, can be explained by modern principles of rationality and order that are seen as morally superior in other circumstances, such as instrumental rationality, rule-following, and a complex division of labor. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1991).

16. Arendt’s idea of the banality of evil also entails the “breaking down” of evil to mundane, bureaucratic activities that are not murderous in themselves, but rather “comprised of office work” (Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin Books, 1992), 287). Bauman’s explanation in *Modernity and the Holocaust* can be read along these lines as well, however, for him, the bureaucratic explanation takes a sociological form while for Arendt, the explanation has more to do with a certain structure of personality.

17. This is Arendt’s main emphasis in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. She points to a “curious, quite authentic inability to think” that comes to replace, for her, the explanation emphasizing the power of ideology in the *Origins*.

18. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1997), 84.

19. These three should be clearly distinguished. For an analysis see Judith N. Shklar, “The Liberalism of Fear,” in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

20. Some point to political articulations of sadistic *erotic* pleasure. Harris, for example, describes lynching as an act of releasing sexual tension that provides a “particular kind of satisfaction” (Trudier Harris, *Exorcising Blackness: Historical and Literary Lynching and Burning Rituals* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 23). Or for other contexts see: Sherene Razack, “How Is White Supremacy Embodied? Sexualized Racial Violence at Abu Ghraib,” *Canadian Journal of Women and the Law* 17, no. 2 (2005): 341–63. Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014), see especially Chapter 6.

21. The analysis of lynching in the American south entails many versions of this claim. See, for example, Ida B. Wells, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All Its Phases* (The Floating Press, 2013 [1892]); Shawn M. Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000); Amy L. Wood, *Lynching and Spectacle: Witnessing Racial Violence in America, 1890–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).

22. Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and Its Outcasts* (Oxford: Polity, 2004). See also Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006). Paul Bloom presents a critique of this in the *New Yorker*: “The Root of All Cruelty?” *New Yorker*, November 27, 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/11/27/the-root-of-all-cruelty/>.

23. Saidiya Hartman shows how “the purported immunity of blacks to pain” was essential to the system of slavery (Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 51). See also

Jennifer L. Morgan, *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Robert Meister, *After Evil: A Politics of Human Rights* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 26; Bruce Robbins, *The Beneficiary* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

25. Azoulay offers a model for seeing such violence when she claims that by being *governed* as a citizen alongside non-citizens one, is “in effect exerting violence.” Ariella Azoulay, “Civil Alliances—Palestine, 1947–1948,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 4, no. 4 (2014): 416

26. Stanley Cohen, *States of Denial: Knowing about Atrocities and Suffering* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2001).

27. Salman H. Abu Sitta, *The Palestinian Nakba 1948: The Register of Depopulated Localities in Palestine* (London: Palestinian Return Centre, 1998). Spivak would refer to “sanctioned ignorance” (Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, eds. Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Chicago: University of Illinois Press), 291).

28. Janet McIntosh, *Unsettled: Denial and Belonging among White Kenyans* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2016), 10.

29. For an analysis of this use in passive voice see Jeanne Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism: Anglo-American Decline and the Politics of Deflection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 17.

30. Charles Mills, *The Racial Contract* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1997), 18.

31. Stoler, “Colonial Aphasia.”

32. Lisa Lowe, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 3.

33. Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel’s Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

34. Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 15, 3. See also Lorenzo Veracini, “Settler Collective, Founding Violence and Disavowal: The Settler Colonial Situation,” *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2008): 365.

35. Adi Ophir and Ariella Azoulay, *The One-State Condition: Occupation and Democracy in Israel/Palestine* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2012).

36. Morefield, *Empires without Imperialism*, 3

37. Ronit Matalon and Nili Mirski, *Strangers at Home* (Tel Aviv: Ha-Ḳibuts Ha-me’uḥad, 1992) (my translation).

38. Psychoanalytical feminists claimed that violence is inseparable from the formation of the self and the self’s attachments to others; postcolonial feminists have shown how desire organizes imperial domination and how imperial structures partake in the organization of desire (e.g., McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Malek Alloula, *The Colonial Harem: Images of Subconscious Eroticism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986)); and radical feminists argued that we have learned to desire subjection: to see pornography and its violence as sex, or the systematic institutional exploitation within the heteronormative family as love (e.g., Catharine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989); Carole Pateman, “Women and Consent,” *Political Theory* 8, no. 2 (1980): 149–68.

39. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 104-5.

<sup>40</sup> This is not to say that we are mostly vulnerable or mortal, or to refute the claim that, as, Bonnie Honig rightly insists, we are “natales as well” and that “a focus on natality—which is no less minimal than mortality, ontologically speaking—may generate new commonalities while orienting humanism differently than mortality does.” (Bonnie Honig, “Antigone’s Two Laws: Greek Tragedy and the Politics of Humanism,” *New Literary History*, 41 (2010):9.) It is

to say that vulnerability is one essential dimension of our existence, certainly if we think of it as an existence with others. And whereas Butler emphasizes the body vulnerability to *suffering* in some of her post- 9/11 books (particularly *Precarious Lives* and *Frames of War*), this vulnerability, which actually means openness or responsiveness, is also what allows pleasure and desire—being moved, touched, imprinted by others. As Lloyd insists, “Vulnerability in this sense is also the condition of possibility for love, desire, care, hope and life, the very natalist features that Honig largely fails to discern in Butler’s work.” (Moya Lloyd, “The ethics and politics of vulnerable bodies,” in Lloyd, M.S., (ed.) *Butler and Ethics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 214.)

<sup>41</sup> Judith Butler, “Remarks on ‘Queer Bonds’”, *GLQ*, 17:2-3 (2011): 382.

<sup>42</sup> In this sense, to insist on inherent vulnerability is not to ignore the historical and social specificities of different political structures or organizations; it is to point to a condition that is articulated differently and with different implications within different orders, and that cannot be taken outside of these concrete social articulations. We all share the condition of vulnerability, but some groups are more vulnerable than others; some political formations—and some specific governments—increase insecurity, while other forms of politics/governments work to minimize it; some acts or social structures kill, disable or debilitate—to draw on Jasbir Puar’s important distinction—some scar, and some cause temporary discomfort; and finally, some political actors work differently with their own—or with others’—conditions of vulnerability (importantly, being vulnerable does not preclude political action or renders one into a passive victim. Butler makes this distinction most explicitly in *Frames of War* where she distinguishes between precariousness as an ontological (“existential”) fact and precarity as a political condition. A similar distinction will be made in regard to the notion of dispossession to which I retune in what follows. Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* (London and NY: Verso, 2009); Judith Butler and Athena<sup>31</sup>

Athanasiou, *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2013). For important critiques, however, see Alyson Cole, “All of Us Are Vulnerable, But Some Are More Vulnerable than Others: The Political Ambiguity of Vulnerability Studies, an Ambivalent Critique,” *Critical Horizons*, 17 no 2 (2016): 274

43. Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, 3–5.

44. Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 21.

45. Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> We should note that Butler does account to this side of the equation as well, most explicitly when she talks about the “frames” that makes some life less grievable (Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London and NY: Verso, 2004). However, in these accounts of those who cause injury she is much closer to some of the threads in the “dissociation” model above, and seems to sideline these insights about the constitutive role of violence.

47. Noga Kadman, *Erased from Space and Consciousness: Israel and the Depopulated Palestinian Villages of 1948* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2015), 1

<sup>48</sup> See also Haim Yacobi and Hadas Shadar, “The Arab village: a genealogy of (post)colonial imagination”, *Journal of Architecture* Vol19 Issue 6 (2014).

49. Gil Hochberg, *Visual Occupation: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 42.

50. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBN0nqQX5xo>

51. See B'teselem 50 days: More Than 50 Children, accessible at [https://www.btselem.org/2014\\_gaza\\_conflict/en/](https://www.btselem.org/2014_gaza_conflict/en/) [retrieved 13/09/2018].

52. Program available at <http://www.myisrael.org.il/action/1352>.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of this analogy in the Palestinian conceptualization of settlers see Honaida Ghanem, “From Kubniya to Outpost: A Genealogy of the Palestinian Conceptualization of

Jewish Settlement in a Shifting National Context” In *Normalizing Occupation: The Politics Of Everyday Life in the West Bank Settlements* ed. Ariel Handel, Marco Allegra, and Erez Maggor (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2017): 244-268.

54. Lorenzo Veracini, “Decolonising Settler Colonialism: Kill the Settler in Him and Save the Man,” Seminar given at SOAS, University of London, June 5, 2017; Mahmood Mamdani, ‘When Does a Settler Become a Native? Reflections of the Colonial Roots of Citizenship in Equatorial and South Africa’, in *Text of Inaugural Lecture as A C Jordan Professor of African Studies* (Centre for African Studies University of Cape Town, 1998); Raef Zreik, ‘When Does a Settler Become a Native? (With Apologies to Mamdani)’, *Constellations* 23, no. 3 (2016). See also Wolfe, “New Jews for Old: Settler State Formation and the Impossibility of Zionism: In Memory of Edward W. Said”, *Arena* 37/38: 285–321.

55. These categories are flattened and do not always work in unified “blocks.” Settlers can belong to different groups, some more easily “nativized” than others; some were actually natives before becoming settlers. For such a critique see Kotef and Evri “When does a Native become a Settler?” (forthcoming)

<sup>56</sup> Lorenzo Veracini, “Decolonising Settler Colonialism: Kill the Settler in Him and Save the Man” (lecture, SOAS, University of London, June 5, 2017).

57. Marx, “On the Jewish Question,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader* Edited by Robert Tucker (New York: Norton & Company, 1978), 32).