

THE WAR OF WORDS: LANGUAGE AS AN INSTRUMENT OF PALESTINIAN NATIONAL STRUGGLE

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Abstract: This critical set of reflections addresses how the increasing visibility of the Palestinian struggle and the growing attention to Palestine in the (US) academy coincides with altered and depleted meanings for terms and concepts once central to a Palestinian liberation framework. The authors challenge the de-familiarization of the Palestinian political lexicon by ruminating on past, present and potential future meanings for words whose currency, they argue, has assumed a deceptively simple valuation. What are the unforeseen political consequences of visibility, of “incorporation,” and how might these be resisted within the arena of meaning and through the process of reviving language as an instrument of national liberation struggle? Revisiting old definitions of terms and contributing thoughts to the value of words such as Zionism, peace process and negotiations, statehood and violence, the authors contest the boundaries of disciplinary research in service of Palestinian liberation.

Part I: The War and its Many Battles

Introduction

On January 7, 2017, the Delegate Assembly at the annual meeting for the Modern Language Association (MLA) voted against a resolution to endorse the growing movement for the academic boycott of Israeli universities and institutions.¹ Instead, an anti-boycott resolution (Resolution 2017–1) was adopted which stated that a boycott effectively “contradicts the MLA’s purpose to promote teaching and research on language and literature.”² On June 14, 2017, the MLA ratified Resolution 2017–1, which in effect prohibits the association from adopting any forthcoming resolutions endorsing the boycott.³ Those who opposed the boycott utilized three major arguments: that a boycott would violate principles of academic freedom, that the MLA had more pressing matters to tend to including exploitation of graduate student labor and that a boycott would hinder the rights of

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individual students and colleagues to pursue their research.⁴ The irony of the way so-called “rights” of individuals legitimized negation of rights to the Palestinians collectively did not go unnoticed, even if it remains a staple tenet to the Western literary tradition and humanist ideals that constructed the contemporary academy. MLA member Jeffrey Sacks puts it best when he says, “through its vote, the MLA becomes a scene where ‘I,’ a privileged figure for literary understanding in the Bildung-centric traditions of the West, persists in forcing itself on the world ...”⁵

Following numerous contestation and resignation letters from MLA members, on January 1, 2018, Lenora Hanson and David Palumbo Liu issued a public letter of resignation from the Executive Council.⁶ They cited both their ethical and intellectual commitments as well as the Executive Council’s “fetishization of process,” which in effect allowed for external pressure to interfere in what was supposed to be a democratic membership vote.⁷ Hanson and Palumbo Liu state,

what amounted to a Kafkaesque self-imposed gag order, enacted through the language of non-action and refraining, will have and has had real-world effects in aligning the MLA with the state of Israel and its illegal Occupation, the criminalization of boycotts, and with the far-right agenda of Donald Trump.⁸

The fury of debate and lobbying surrounding the delegate member vote is reminiscent of the myriad debates that took place in scores of other academic associations.⁹ It is also reminiscent of the debates within over 100 Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) campus campaigns that pressured student governing boards and university administrations to divest from companies invested in the Israeli occupation.¹⁰ But each campaign also reflects the extraordinary measures used by state and extra-state Zionist forces to silence dissent, punish advocates for justice in Palestine, equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, criminalize Palestine solidarity activism and use bureaucratic measures to prohibit resolutions from being passed.¹¹

Consistent with the hundreds of campaigns that preceded it, the extraordinary measures taken in the June 14, 2017 MLA ratification vote are illustrative of the varying ways Zionists paradoxically purport Israel to be the only true democracy in the region, while simultaneously disciplining all forms of dissent and democratic intellectual inquiry, whether such discipline appears passively imposed or ostensibly egregious. The paradox, however, is constructive for them in that it shuts down the conversation and allows Israeli and Zionist violence to persist with complete impunity. The more that US-based academic institutions cave to such pressures and sacrifice their own rights to free intellectual exchange in order to maintain academic complicity with Israeli violence, the more precarious regulative notions of freedom of speech, academic freedom and Palestinian life become.¹²

The movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), inaugurated in 2005, has made substantial achievements in the US.¹³ From labor unions to student groups, and from cultural organizations to academic organizations, people are talking about the human rights abuses in Palestine and acting to end institutional complicity with the Israeli occupation. While BDS aims to isolate Israel economically on the global stage, BDS campaigns have primarily been successful on political and discursive levels. BDS campaigns have effectively opened the margin for debate and for critical thinking and dialogue processes which work to annihilate the barriers to meaningful engagement with the question of Palestine within cultural and academic terrains.¹⁴

Attending to these advances made by the growing BDS movement, in 2015, former Israeli parliament member and Intelligence Officer of the Israeli Defense Forces, Einat Wilf, published what she called a book of public service titled *Winning the War of Words: Essays on Zionism and Israel*.¹⁵ In a 2014 keynote address based on the text, Wilf argues that “Israel is right now at war. And it is a war in which the weapons are not tanks, they’re not airplanes, they’re not missiles. The war is waged with words, with images, with ideas.”¹⁶ Conceding that Israel’s power is not in its military strength but rather in its discourse and ideology, she argues that when Zionism/Israel are equated with such words as “apartheid, genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing” and so forth, that is as dangerous as any form of militant insurgency.¹⁷ More critical, however, is Wilf’s insistence that, by even acknowledging, rejecting or engaging in debate utilizing such terms—for example, negating that Israel is an apartheid state—Zionists will continue to lose the war of words.¹⁸ Why then do Palestinians and their allies partake in debate in which the rules, parameters and terms are dictated by frames of so-called neutrality or objectivity, logics that have facilitated Palestinian land-loss, containment and death for so long? Does the passing of boycott resolutions, even while engaging in debate limited by said logics, count as a victory? If not, what are the consequences of the frames of the debate on the meanings of words, their currency and their utility in serving the goals of national liberation?

Despite the complexity of navigating liminal space in dialogue on Palestine (and this has historically characterized the Palestinian experience), Palestinians and their allies in the US still show up to these debates, often obediently adhering to the rules of the conversation despite the pervasive forms of epistemic violence they endure in the process. They argue that an occupation actually exists, reject that Israel is the only democracy in the Middle East and are often forced to betray their political and emotional instincts—to always be in the position of needing to give the benefit of the doubt. But in the process of doing so, might they give credence and legibility to the debate itself; as if some truth lies in the middle of two conflicting groups attempting to overcome historical squabbles? Circumscribed

by the frivolous and hollow patterns of intellectual rigor these debates permit, Palestinians/Palestine solidarity activists attempt to illuminate the power differential, but in effect, flatten it.

To be sure, it is immensely rewarding to partake in critical BDS initiatives and to be part of a generation that has witnessed a changing tide in popular, intellectual and mainstream iterations of the injustice in Palestine. Further, the struggle for Palestinian freedom has reached a new milestone in the US, where Palestinians can work alongside true allies dedicated enough to justice to bear excruciating consequences of that solidarity. But the intensive stigma that surrounds the question of Palestine, even among liberal institutions in the US, has also, in some ways, conditioned Palestinians to perceive any and all solidarity with Palestine as a gift.

Upon reflection, what has motivated us to write this essay is a consideration of how and why it is that with these changing tides and the growing discourse and engagement with Palestine in both activist and academic channels, the lexicon that Palestine is articulated through is becoming seemingly *less* familiar to the Palestinian collective condition and intellectual and political tradition. This lexicon is at times remarkably unfamiliar to Palestinians' nuanced understandings of their colonial conditions or of a political program that their collective ideals of freedom mandate. We argue that this unfamiliarity is in part caused by the emotional and political estrangement Palestinians experience from the language in use, the rules of how to engage in the debate and the exhaustion of having to prove our own humanity before even being given access to the spaces where the conversation is taking place. This essay therefore utilizes an unconventional format and stylistic approach because, in order to make new, *relevant* meanings possible within a world of meanings, the rules of convention must be exploded from within. The authors construct a point of departure utilizing *Palestinian terms*, terms loaded with historically contextual meaning, to enable different political outcomes.

Rejecting the borders and boundaries of rigid formalism and pragmatic empiricism is a necessary step towards challenging the disciplinary walls of scholarship which have too long asked Palestinians to shoulder the burdens of rule, law and order without the power or reward they imply. Academic work cannot always come with "findings." Sometimes, intellectual labor necessitates delivering notice of what is undeliverable, illuminating crucial gaps rather than promising hollow "solutions." When it comes to the question of Palestine, there resides an exclusive institutionalized assertion to certain forms of knowledge, to the parameters of fields of study and terms of debate. This piece, in both the manner it was conceived as well as its final written form, attempts to break free of the confines of rule. The main intervention we make is that knowledge on Palestine, the language we use and the meanings assigned to our words must be emancipated for political liberation to be truly possible.

In that vein, stakeholders in Palestinian liberation do not adhere to the myth that scholarship is and can be unbiased, objective and neutral. Service to justice and freedom for all peoples, including the Palestinians, must force scholarship above the capitalist rationalities and marketplace demands that drive knowledge production. Political and intellectual work must not be disentangled from one another; as Black power legend Angela Davis once argued, academic freedom is an “empty concept” if “divorced from freedom of political action.”¹⁹ And lastly, writing in episodic and fragmentary bursts of thought, as Antonio Gramsci once described and as Edward Said exhibited throughout his writings and most poignantly in *After the Last Sky*, is a means of reflecting the dispossessed and besieged Palestinian colonial condition.²⁰

The Battle Against Discursive Erasure

For decades, Palestinians in exile had vigilantly fought against discursive erasure and containment that prohibited any meaningful expression of the Palestinian experience in academic and popular discourse and rendered their humanity illegible. Said, ironically a former President of the MLA, was one of the most well-known Palestinians in exile who engaged in this work.²¹ Said’s scholarship challenged the dominant common-sense narrative around Palestine within the West, particularly the US-based academy, in part with his 1978 groundbreaking text, *Orientalism*, exposing the way Western imperial imaginations register the ominous Arab/Muslim “East.” Since then, Palestinian narratives have gained credence, not only in scholarship but in popular cultural terrains, in mainstream political forums and in various facets of US institutional life. Palestinian narratives undermine the ways Zionists would rather have Palestine erased from world maps and Palestinian stories written out of history. We note here the instrumental ways every Israeli invasion has included the destruction of Palestinian archives.²² Unable to control the persistent emergence of narratives that humanize the Palestinian people and struggle in the West, Zionists also go to extreme measures to criminalize these narratives, these very forms of being, through the lexicon of terrorism.²³ Today, Palestinians in exile are increasingly acting out their political insistence and commitment through the war of words, the battle of narrative and struggling against egregious repression and slander campaigns.²⁴ While both instruments of Palestinian discursive erasure—invisibilization and criminalization—are fully in effect today, new dimensions have emerged that complicate how we understand the Palestinian struggle, even—dare we say especially—among fellow Palestinians and solidarity activists.

The Battle of Discovery

The Native American context revealed how dangerous settler “discovery” is.²⁵ Their struggle shows how the asymmetry of power is precisely built through the relationship of being not just the colonial discoverer and the indigenous “discovered,” but

also the researcher and the research subject.²⁶ Today, the Palestinian struggle has been discovered by Western consumers and with this “discovery,” Palestinian suffering is now legible, but not exactly as it articulated by its own people, terms and context, and not always in a way that serves Palestinian liberation. Palestine has become a mobilizing catalyst for industrialized expressions of academic solidarity, accompanied by the invention of new theories, wordplay and speculative fiction dystopias, where Palestine evokes a haunting visualization of a dreaded apocalypse. This template is to be toyed with or waxed poetically upon by non-Palestinian artists, academics and activists seeking to temper their aesthetic fixation with a sufficiently exotic arrangement of prolonged struggle with some degree of ethical maturity. Palestine *as* subject is not sufficient for Palestinian liberation. Said once said, “It is a terribly crowded place, almost too crowded for what it is asked to bear by the way of history or interpretation of history. Yet, for all the writing about them, Palestinians remain virtually unknown.”²⁷

Spivak once warned against “efforts to give the subaltern a voice in history.”²⁸ The academy should know better by now. However, it cannot shake the eerie murmurs that echo from the periphery of power reminding it of its ostensible ethical, political and intellectual responsibilities. This is especially true for those academics whose intellectual arena cannot let them feign surprise at the failures of an institution (the university) that from its very inception was always geared toward the facilitation, promotion and preservation of settler-colonialism, slavery, the afterlife of slavery, imperialism and myriad other forms of white supremacy/racism. And so, for these academics, a search commences for a more “authentic” and original Palestinian voice that can stand in for the guilt of holding power and that can show a “real life example” of the oppression they wish to convey, to capture. They dedicate their campus activism and scholarship to Palestine, invite Palestinian students and scholars as a legitimate witness who can testify to the horrors of life under occupation. It is not surprising, nor is it right or wrong. It simply *is*.

The Battle of Making Meaning

A resurrection of Palestinian voices/narratives is necessitated and amplified. Yet, while the words that were/are used signify a turn to a more original polity through which Palestinians had long defined their struggle—words such as liberation, anti-colonialism, resistance and so forth—their *meaning* takes new form. This transformation of meaning is caused by many factors, one of which is that the Palestinian political program such words once signified, and in fact emerged from, is now null and void, especially since the 1993 Oslo Accords.²⁹ The words are appropriated, manufactured and consumed in an industry of Palestine/Palestinian word-making that the Palestinian collective tongue has very little engagement with, purpose

for or profit from. The engagement of Palestinian *individuals* does not replace the absence of the Palestinian *collective* from the process. This substitution can unfortunately further fragment and alienate Palestinian collectives. Paradoxically, this sense of alienation is exacerbated the *more* Palestinians are granted access. Consequently, the question becomes whether or not these spaces and processes of solidarity might still retain a recuperative function, so that the words that characterize them are not empty of collective meaning and rather invigorate the national consciousness and liberation strategies once central to the Palestinian struggle.³⁰

The Battle to Establish the Rules of Engagement

In 2015, an old black and white video surfaced on social media of an interview between journalist Richard Carleton and spokesperson for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and icon of the Palestinian literary tradition, Ghassan Kanafani.³¹ The interview took place in 1970 in Beirut, Lebanon, amidst the PLO's battle with the Jordanian Hashemite Kingdom and impending exodus to Lebanon. At various points in the interview, Kanafani criticizes the words Carleton uses to frame questions and gather information. That is, Kanafani does not merely offer ripostes to Carleton; *he challenges the very terms of the debate and the establishment of the rules of engagement:*

- RC:** *It does seem that the war, the civil war, has been quite fruitless?*
- GK:** *It's not a civil war, it's a people defending themselves against a fascist government which you are defending because just King Hussein has an Arab passport. It's not a civil war.*
- RC:** *Well the conflict . . .*
- GK:** *It's not a conflict. It's a liberation movement fighting for justice.*
- RC:** *Well, whatever it might be best called.*
- GK:** *It's not whatever. Because this is where the problem starts. Because this is what makes you ask all your questions. This is exactly where the problem starts. This is a people who is discriminated, is fighting for his rights. This is the story. If you will say it's a civil war then your questions will be justified. If you will say it's a conflict then of course it's a surprise to know what's happening.*
- RC:** *Why won't your organization engage in peace talks with the Israelis.*
- GK:** *You don't mean exactly peace talks. You mean capitulation, surrendering.*
- RC:** *Why not just talk?*
- GK:** *Talk to whom?*
- RC:** *Talk to the Israeli leaders.*
- GK:** *That kind of conversation is between the sword and the neck.*
- RC:** *Well if there are no swords or guns in a room, you could still talk.*

- GK:** *No, I have never seen any talk between a colonialist case and a national liberation movement.*
- RC:** *But despite this, why not talk?*
- GK:** *Talk about what?*
- RC:** *Talk about the possibility of not fighting?*
- GK:** *Not fighting for what?*
- RC:** *Not fighting at all no matter what for.*
- GK:** *I mean . . . People usually fight for something and they stop fighting for something. So you can't tell me even why should we speak, about what? To talk about stop fighting, why?*
- RC:** *Talk, to stop fighting to stop the death and the misery, the destruction, the pain?*
- GK:** *The misery, and the destruction and the pain and death of whom?*
- RC:** *Of Palestinians, of Israelis, of Arabs.*
- GK:** *Of the Palestinian people who are uprooted, thrown in the camps, living in starvation, killed for 20 years and forbidden to use even the name Palestinian.*
- RC:** *They are better that way than dead.*
- GK:** *Maybe to you, but to us it's not. To us, to liberate our country, to have dignity to have respect to have our mere human rights is something as essential as life itself.*
- RC:** *You called King Hussein a fascist, who else amongst the Arab leaders are you totally opposed to?*
- GK:** *We consider the Arab governments two kinds. Something we call reactionaries who are completely connected with imperialists. Like King Hussein's government, like Saudi Arabian government, like Moroccan government, Tunisian government. And then we have some other Arab governments which we call the military petit bourgeois governments. That's like Syria, Iraq, Egypt, Algeria, so on.*
- RC:** *Just to end with, let me get back to the hijacking of the aircraft. On reflection, do you think that is now a mistake?*
- GK:** *We didn't make a mistake in hijacking them. The contrast, we did one of the most correct things we ever did.³²*

For some time following the Oslo Accords, the terms Kanafani uses—which were once activated by a collective consensus regarding the Palestinian struggle, its political program, resistance strategies and unifying national aspirations—were dropped from the common-sense narratives and lexicon of many parts of Palestinian political and cultural life, both inside and outside Palestine. There are many reasons for this and ample scholarly and political work outlines the

effects of the Oslo Accords on Palestinian social, political, economic, cultural and intellectual life and on the national liberation struggle. Critically, however, in recent years, as Israeli aggression has intensified, particularly with the devastating siege on the Gaza Strip and several Israeli wars on Gaza, a more radical and militant lexicon has resurfaced among Palestinian communities and allies, especially youth activists. *Liberation. Movement. Right of return. Colonialism. Anti-Zionism.* These are all terms that have resurfaced, sometimes alongside and sometimes to replace terms like *human rights, anti-occupation, peace, dialogue, conflict* and *coexistence*. Does the shift to a more critical and radical language that represents the Palestinian political tradition also signify a shift in Palestinian power, collective movement building and the accumulation of freedoms?

The State of Redefinition

In 1966, the Tunisian member of the Situationist International, Mustapha Khayati, wrote a preface to what was to become a Situationist dictionary.³³ Khayati notes that the goal of the dictionary is to “be a sort of code book enabling one to decipher the news and rend the ideological veils that cover reality” and argues for the importance of such a project because power necessarily “relies on language to guard the oppressive order.”³⁴ Khayati also warns that engaging in dialogue with power can be weaponized against the oppressed “whether passively suffered or actively provoked.”³⁵ To break free of the constraints that the language of power constructs, Khayati argues that all revolutionary theory must invent its own terms in the pursuit of destroying “the dominant sense of other terms and (to) establish new meanings in the ‘world of meanings’ corresponding to the new embryonic reality needing to be liberated from the dominant trash heap.”³⁶ Calling upon his readers to rescue the meaning of words detached from revolutionary origins, he states:

The decline of radical thought inevitably increases the power of words, the words of power . . . words forged by revolutionary criticism are like partisans’ weapons: abandoned on the battlefield, they fall into the hands of counterrevolution. And like prisoners of war, they are subjected to forced labor . . . they are deprived of their history, cut off from their roots . . . They become grists for power’s thinking machines.³⁷

Despite his relatively obscure status today, Khayati represents a figure for whom the strategic elements of liberation are indissociable from the intellectual imperative to challenge the workings of power. Khayati was involved in Palestinian liberation organizing for some time, he was a staunch proponent of the Algerian revolution

and he supported various student uprisings during the anti-colonial movements of the 1960s.³⁸ For Khayati, exposing the language of domination and signaling its potential to mean something beyond its oppressive usages becomes a vital step in the quest for freedom and self-determination—a sentiment akin to Kenyan writer and post-colonial critic Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s notion of “decolonizing the mind.”³⁹ Against the oppressive ends for which they are appropriated, words need to be put back into conversation with the histories from which they have been extricated. Their severed roots must be revitalized, recreated.

The practice of inventing and salvaging is something Palestinians know well. Living in a perpetual ontology of *Nakba* (catastrophe), whether militarily occupied in the homeland, or dispossessed and denied the right to return, Palestinians make anew wherever they end up.⁴⁰ And despite—or perhaps because of—the persistent disruptions of time and space Palestinians have endured in every incursion and exodus, they find ways to survive, to salvage, to make use of what has been through the gutter, what has been reduced to rubble. Palestinians make *Home* within the wound of exile. They find ways to invent life where life is constantly under attack, make use of what is seen as garbage, as waste. If Palestinians can teach anything to the world, anything at all, it would be these techniques of creating, inventing and salvaging life where it is never meant to exist. These are precisely the sentiments the Palestinian poet Rafeef Ziadah captures so economically with her signature phrase, “We Teach Life, Sir.”⁴¹ This ability to salvage, to reinvent, to make a shelter of the most ostensibly inhospitable sites, needs to translate to the discursive as well as physical dimension. National liberation necessitates it.

As Palestinians develop and alter a language that serves the political vision and goals of a national liberation struggle, it is important to note here that words are in no way a “safe” alternative that come without violent consequences. An epistemic challenge to colonial boundaries and histories is still a form of assault that risks injury. Thus, for Zionism, a truly liberated Palestinian expression through words—words that know no boundaries, limits and rules of Zionist order—must be contained as much if not more than other forms of resistance. Words for Palestinians are not benign alternatives for resistance. They are deeply interwoven in, foundational to, informed by and synonymous with militant insurgency—at least, they have been throughout history. The risk is when words become stand-ins for a liquidated political philosophy and project, and we don’t even know it. The risk is when we use words hastily, when we use words that are chic and in fashion for the sake of visibility alone. What happens when our words do not translate the complexity and vexed processes of thinking and engagement? When we trade a necessary commitment to the principles of anti-colonial liberation for which previous generations

fought in exchange for short-term and mediated political legibility? We have lost our land. We think this is the worst of it. But we cannot lose our words.

Beyond the shrinking borders, the walls and checkpoints that block us physically, our words are what frame the boundaries of possibility for our struggle, the agents of access, of meaning and inspiration. Our words are what have carried our cause and people forward *in spite* of the material status quo. Hanson and Palumbo Liu opened their resignation letter with a quote by Walter Benjamin, “That things are ‘status quo’ is the catastrophe.”

The process of inventing or salvaging “new words” however, is fraught with complexity. Without engaging in such a process, the risk becomes allowing romantic and nostalgic glorifications of history to obscure facts of our current realities that are incommensurable with those remembrances. On the other hand, bleak and dismal articulations of history that further deplete the Palestinian spirit of survival also cannot fully account for how and why resistance persists today, albeit in new and less organized forms. Because of this double-edged sword, a careful calculus of assigning meaning to words and using words to signify collective thought is a necessary methodological process.

The Battle of Neoliberalism and the Break of History

New challenges emerge as a new generation of Palestinians reject the oppressive status quo of seemingly perpetual occupation, siege and geographical fragmentation ushered in by the Oslo Accords and embark on the project of salvaging the political integrity of liberationist language. The exterminatory dictates of Zionism, both facilitated and bolstered by its symbiotic interface with US neo-colonialism and imperialism, not to mention the broader neoliberal hegemonic order, all require a suspension of critical examinations and counter-hegemonic narratives of history. This intentionally renders colonial subjects such as the Palestinian people unable to fully account for how and why the new generation has ended up where it has, and why the words they use have taken on new meanings. The state will do all it can to police thought, discourse and narratives that do not uplift its project, and exceptionalism of the present is a critical component of this process. As scholars such as Saidiya Hartman, Maria Josefina Saldana-Portillo and Lisa Lowe have argued within the contexts of slavery, the afterlife of slavery and settler-colonialism, obscuring the persistence and evolving transformations of structural oppression is not antithetical to but deeply constitutive of liberal-historical teleologies of “progress” and the political conceptions such as “rights” and “liberty” they engender.⁴² In the case of the Palestinian struggle against settler-colonialism, following the retreat of the imperial British power, the United Nations would issue their universal Declaration of Human Rights after devising a scheme to parcel out Palestine that favored the Zionist colonizers, and in the very

year (1948) that Palestinian dispossession realized new permutations of brutality as the first of many modern exoduses sparked by rampaging Zionist militias was underway. Here it is crucial to note the tortured irony by which UN declarations and resolutions have since become a central trope in advancing the Palestinian cause, particularly as campaigns for BDS have grown. The language of internationally enshrined “rights” has simultaneously facilitated Palestinian loss and been appropriated to advocate for its reversal.⁴³ Such contradictions surely establish a cognitive dissonance among contemporary generations of Palestinians in Palestine and in exile, compromising their ability to take on the impossible task of salvaging what has been laid to rubble, in every sense of the term. The progress narrative assumes a break in the colonized subject’s experience and understanding of history. And, worst of all, this narrative superimposes itself upon the colonized, silencing their voices and reducing their physical realities to peripheral shadows upon its own teleology. In the inverted world of colonial subjugation, incapacitation and coercion become synonyms for consent.

The Battle of Refusing Consent

Insurgent political theory and word-use thus requires the refusal of such abuses of consent. Kahnawake Mohawk feminist scholar Audra Simpson maintains that the politics of refusal are critical to rejecting how settler-colonialism shapes the tenets of citizenry, tribal sovereignty and cultural recognition.⁴⁴ Being committed to Indigenous ideals of political sovereignty that do not take the settler nation-state as the extent of possibility means that this refusal must come with a responsibility to share alternative possibilities and meanings. In a world of meanings, words are constantly in flux. For this reason, as well as the shifting status of the various ways in which Palestinian existence is tracked, catalogued and intercepted, these larger attacks upon colonial constructions of history and reality must not—indeed, *cannot*—be rigid, systematic; semantic systems and networks need to be exploded from within rather than created anew, capturing, in place of a delimited “essence,” the political necessity for words always to mean something *other* than what colonial/(neo)liberal-hegemonic frameworks and cooptation would permit. In this spirit, rather than a guidebook on lexical etiquette or yet another “activist how-to” for Palestine, what is needed is a series of meditations, reflections and ruptures intended to productively disrupt some of the conventional associations that have coalesced around several key terms of the Palestinian struggle as articulated within activist and academic spaces as well as more mainstream political discourse within the US. As Kanafani demonstrates, Palestinians must be ruthless in protecting their words, or they will be remade (and even erased) alongside them.

To fight for the future *and* the history of Palestine means to refuse consent.

Part II: Salvaging and Inventing: Language as an Instrument of National Struggle

In line with the proclamations and queries of the preceding sections, what follows constitutes a revisitation of select key terms and concepts with present and historical value to the Palestinian liberation struggle. We demonstrate the necessity and possibility for redefinition and recontextualization of words that are sometimes hastily used, in order to collectively imagine the prospects of political alterity.

Zionism

To focus on how to understand Zionism within a Palestinian framework, we necessarily revisit the work of Fayez Abdullah Sayegh. In 1965, the PLO founded the Markaz al-Abhath al-Filastini, or Palestine Research Center (PRC), in Beirut. Sayegh (1922–80) served as the PRC's initial director, and in 1966 oversaw the release of its first extensive publication, a pamphlet titled "Do You Know? Twenty Basic Facts about the Palestine Problem," that began with a full reprint of Sayegh's 1965 essay "Zionist Colonialism of Palestine." Besides this essay, Sayegh is most known for the research he contributed to and subsequent defense of UN Resolution 3379, passed on November 10, 1975, which declared Zionism to be a form of racism.⁴⁵ The resolution was rescinded on December 16, 1991.⁴⁶ As with Khayati, Sayegh represents another early exemplar who recognized the epistemological dimensions and stakes of physical struggles against dispossession. Armed with the knowledge and language of the Palestinian national movement that he fought to help bring to the global arena, Sayegh knew that losing the ostensibly abstract "war of words" would have grave material ramifications.⁴⁷

In "Zionist Colonialism of Palestine," Sayegh argues that racism "is not an acquired trait of the Zionist settler-state," for "racial self-segregation, racial exclusiveness and racial supremacy . . . constitute the core of the Zionist ideology."⁴⁸ Sayegh distinguishes Zionist colonization from other, coeval European colonial projects in two main ways. First, offering a point of distinction with other franchise-colonial models, Sayegh claims that even coexistence under racial hierarchies is insufficient, for following the 1897 Basel Platform, Zionism necessitated the complete erasure of the indigenous population. This *unique* form of colonialism, that Sayegh defines in 1965, would eventually become most widely referred to as the "logic of elimination" as it was termed by scholar of settler-colonialism, Patrick Wolfe.⁴⁹ Second, to distinguish Zionism from other settler-colonial ideologies and practices, Sayegh argued that Zionist colonialism in Palestine is rooted in the construction of a modern Jewish nationalism that utilizes colonization as a technique to realize itself. Eventually, Sayegh's insights would be taken up within settler-colonial studies, which similarly sought to demonstrate the distinctions

between colonialism rooted in resource extraction and labor exploitation and colonialism directed towards the settlement of land and ethnic cleansing of the native population. However, the field has been ill-equipped to respond and elaborate upon Sayegh's second point as a distinct feature of Zionism that must be tended to. Though engagements with Zionism have softened somewhat since the time of Sayegh's pronouncements (due in no small part to many of the concessions made by Arab and Palestinian leadership from the 1970s on), a return to Sayegh's definition is necessary to both foreground the essential urgency of the Palestinian struggle as well as decipher the otherwise invisible constancy of Zionist doublespeak.

Zionist self-reflexivity is frequently inconsistent on its surface, but this is, perhaps counterintuitively, a show of strength rather than a fatal flaw. For instance, while Israeli politicians in the past have been frank about the 1967 war resulting from a preemptive land grab, Zionists today will frequently resuscitate the subsequently fabricated narrative of a defensive struggle. More recently, Zionists alternate between denying the very existence of a present-day military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights and acknowledging it with various caveats as to its necessity and/or virtue, relying on racial constructs of so-called Palestinian terrorism and radical extremism. These tropes have been rather profitable for the Israeli state. Especially since 2001, Israel has become a global political and economic forerunner in the War on Terror, particularly through arms trade, weapons manufacturing and the development of surveillance and crowd control technologies, which they first test on Palestinian bodies and lands.⁵⁰ The paradox productively enables Zionists to claim a monopoly on democratic values while simultaneously waging war on any and all racialized peoples who they construct as a threat to progress, modernity and liberal values.

David Lloyd has offered critical insights into how the Israeli state simultaneously purports its normalcy and exemplary status, stating,

Discourse on Israel, both propagandistic and analytical, has the peculiar tendency of representing it at one moment as normal—a normal democracy, a normal Western society, a normal state—and at others as exceptional: a democracy uniquely embattled among hostile neighbors, a secular state that historically fulfills the religious destiny of a people, a democracy that defines itself as a state for a single people and religion, the only democracy in the region, and so forth.⁵¹

Yet such internal contradictions are afforded a frightening coherence through Zionism's ultimate imperative for elimination. The rationales that seem to trip over one another all, in fact, proleptically dance around Palestinian graves. More abstractly, Zionist power, as with power in general, seems to establish and affirm rather than undermine itself through contradictions, especially of its own terms.

Affecting a purely reactive posture to such fluid standards is, therefore, not only futile but actively destructive. Even if Palestinians demonstrate their humanity, their proximity to citizenship and embrace of democratic values, their humanity will still be elided through another form of Zionist epistemic and literal violence. Yet again, Kanafani's interview with the journalist Richard Carleton serves as a prime example of a "way out" of the trap. Kanafani time and time again refutes Carleton's contextualization of the Palestinian struggle (e.g., "It is not a conflict", "It is not a civil war"). At one point, Carleton asks Kanafani about "talk" with the Israelis, to which Kanafani responds, "Talk about what?" This moment feels especially relevant given the prevalence that the "dialogue" framework has come to assume post-Oslo.

Kanafani's intransigence in these moments may seem slight, but if colonization works on the mind as well as the land, then such moments of dissent and refusal are significant. Power forces a frame into which the subjugated are expected to play. Zionists in particular are very good at establishing parameters that Palestinian and non-Palestinian advocates for the struggle alike often unwittingly relent to even when attempting to pose a challenge, but so long as Palestine activist efforts remain merely reactive, they only validate Zionist power rather than undermine it. When it comes to power, and specifically the symbolic power of Zionism, Palestinians and their allies need to escape the frame. To smash it to bits. This is anti-normalization work. "Talk about what?"

Peace Process and Negotiations

Once again, the extent of a new official Palestinian amnesia was demonstrated in Yasser Arafat's speech in Cairo on 4 May 1994. He spoke of Palestinian sacrifices "for peace", as if it were a well known fact that the Palestinian struggle was not about self-determination and rights but getting the dubious achievements of the Gaza Jericho Accord. Whereas Yitzhak Rabin spoke about Israeli blood and Arab terror, rendered in his customary repertory of distorted, preposterous lies and half-truths that portrayed the Palestinian victims as the aggressors, Arafat referred passively to his people as "living on their land for the entirety of their history"—as if they had never been dispossessed, dispersed, killed, imprisoned, and militarily occupied by the very Israeli leaders he was now publicly embracing.⁵²

In the preceding epigraph, extracted from his "Tribute to Abu Omar," Said articulately elucidated what Kanafani so incisively laid bare 25 years prior following Carleton's question, "Why won't your organization engage in peace talks with the Israelis?": that peace talks are shorthand for Palestinian capitulation and surrender. If there are Palestinians who flinch instinctively at the word "peace,"

it is not because they truly are the bloodthirsty sub-humans of Zionist caricature. It is because few weapons have been able to wound the Palestinian struggle or even the very idea of Palestine itself so critically as the word “peace.”

Peace is the word behind which Zionists and their sympathizers conceal less palatable designs when discussing the Palestinian struggle. With every so-called “peace talk,” another piece of Palestinian land is lost. Peace for Palestinians was never intended to mean anything more than absolute compliance with the terms and progression of colonization. What has the “peace process” ever entailed but an unimpeded procession of colonies and colonizers, a sharpening of the Palestinian people’s collective fragmentation? In the aftermath of the “peace process,” Israel expanded settlements at a faster pace in the West Bank than they had between 1967 and 1993. Today, the machinery of colonization is more refined than it ever has been while the disintegration of the Palestinian peoples’ collective wellness, unity and resistance is greater than ever before.

The peace talks have also inverted Palestinian resistance so that violence once designated to confront colonization and dispossession is now focused intra-communally, decimating any sense of collectivity and contributing to colonial collaborationism, gatekeeping and the escalation of colonial rule. “Peace” has come to mean complete surrender and ongoing deprivation, violence and land loss for Palestinians. The broken mirror distorts utter silence and abjection to such a degree they become agency: this is all “peace talks”/“negotiations” have ever been to the Palestinians. It is for these reasons that Kanafani referred to “a conversation between the sword and the neck.”

No “peace” but in severance.

Statehood

Attempts to preemptively contain the energies of decolonial initiatives often assume the guise of anxious objections in the name of “pragmatism” and “feasibility.” Naturally, the interests and boundaries of the colonial state generate the rubrics for what is deemed “practical,” thereby funneling the necessarily boundless demand for decolonization towards the emaciated designs of the colonial powers. The melancholic dimension of the Palestinian struggle surely stems in large part from the inability to process fully, even as Palestinians name it, how their liberation was sabotaged by leaders who had internalized these colonial logics. The PLO would eventually put their demands towards a two-state solution, ceding 78 percent of Palestine to the Zionist state and in many ways setting the stage for the *coup de grâce* that was Oslo.

The PLO’s move marked a categorical shift in the ontological character of the Palestinian cause, from liberation to the construction of a state. It therefore must be of no surprise that the “liberation organization” lost its power to its own child, the

“Palestinian Authority” after Oslo. With this shift, the boundless fervor of a call for liberation—and calls for decolonization are always boundless—had been displaced by an ever-shrinking set of borders, territories and aspirations for authority guised in the language of self-determination. Oslo was in many cases the final nail in the coffin of Palestinians’ legibility as one *peoplehood*. The quest for statehood prioritized a simultaneously arbitrary and life-shattering distinction of inside and out, of *mwatan* (citizen) and *lajet* (refugee), and left for dead those Palestinians inside 1948 territories, engulfed by the realization of a Zionist state that even enjoined recognition by its victims. In the final analysis, the state had eclipsed the people.

In this light, few political pronouncements of the present moment feel more redundant than the so-called death of something called “the two-state solution,” a project of continuous deferral in the face of unabated (and generously funded) colonization.⁵³ On the other hand, all Palestinians die at least twice. The first death is metaphysical, and begins with conditional projections of derivative land allotment, of “statehood.”

Violence

The question of violence has long distorted—perhaps even *contorted*—engagement with the Palestinian struggle. Carleton imposes his paternalist projections of the naivety of colonized peoples’ use of violence on Kanafani. “*Let me get back to the hijacking of the aircraft. On reflection, do you think that is now a mistake?*” Kanafani vigilantly responds, shattering the non-violence rhetoric Carleton’s progress and modernity frame demands: “*We didn’t make a mistake in hijacking them. The contrast, we did one of the most correct things we ever did.*” Stalwart of anti-colonial thought, Frantz Fanon, once stated that the process of “decolonization is truly the creation of new men” and that “the “thing” colonized becomes a man through the process of liberation.”⁵⁴ Fanon argued that the violence of the colonizer must be met with a greater violence by the colonized to make possible a truly universal humanism; precisely because the existing Manichaean relationship within the colonial order relies on the negation of the colonized peoples’ humanity.⁵⁵ But Lewis Gordon brilliantly points out that Fanon is often misunderstood, in shallow terms, as an advocate of violence. Rather, “His point was that it was impossible to attempt to reduce or eliminate it [colonial violence] without entanglement.”⁵⁶ A Fanonian analysis of Kanafani’s response to Carleton would suggest that, in this moment, by meeting the epistemological violence of the colonizer’s terms with an insurgent refusal to succumb to them, Kanafani and the Palestinians become human.⁵⁷ *Whether armed or unarmed, any act of resistance on the part of the colonized is read and coded as an act of violence.*

In offering a ready-made set of rhetorical appeals for the Palestinian cause firmly grounded in semantically conjoined values of “equality” and “nonviolent”

opposition, the 2005 BDS call (and the myriad projects and efforts it has spawned) might seem to have outmaneuvered the Orientalist logics animating colonialist accusations of the use of violence, or, more to the point, “terrorism.” Yet the opposite has proven true, as BDS activists have found themselves the targets of backlash from both a well-funded US Zionist network and the Israeli government.⁵⁸ The degree of opposition and repression to which figures, organizations and campaigns associated with an avowedly nonviolent initiative have been subjected might seem counterintuitive if one forgets that the external definitions of anti-colonial “violence” are strategically fluid and self-referential.

The colonial mandate is for ongoing seizure, extraction and exploitation. The Zionist colonial mandate overlaps, but as Sayegh notes, also requires extermination. The category of anti-colonial “violence” is a byproduct, constructed accordingly. By the belligerent shrewdness of colonial vigilance, there can be no “good” colonial subject so long as that subject resists, however inadvertently. Along with their geographical impositions, the epistemological integrity of settler-colonial projects must be uncompromisingly safeguarded. Thus, even Palestinian martyrs not engaged in physical resistance are repackaged as “human shields,” lest the myth of Israel as a judicious extension of Western “democracy” be jeopardized.

The point here is not to contrast the animating, structural violence of colonial apparatuses with the hypocritical charges levied against their dissenting victims. But it is important to ask: how does the inevitability of colonialist assignations subvert the Palestinian struggle? What would an engagement with the Palestinian cause that does not take for granted colonially derived rubrics of respectability look like? Is striving for such an engagement ethically necessary, however impossible it might be to realize? Has the very concept of “possibility” paradoxically been the metaphorical thorn in the side of Palestinians and many others who struggle for the veritable—not just the “possible”—liberation and self-determination of the Palestinian people all along? If so, what would it mean to tear it away—and how liberating would it feel to bleed?

Palestine Analytic

In an article written for *Social Text* in 2014, Loubna Qutami offered a definition for what she called the “Palestine analytic” as a footnote to contextualize the political approach from which she was addressing the question of solidarity with Palestine.⁵⁹ The ideas in the original footnote have long been practiced as part of the Palestinian intellectual tradition, political movement and among global movements who have taken up Palestinian liberation as deeply bound to other liberation struggles and causes. But the precarity of these times as well as the recent developments in the Palestinian statehood discourse and the US designation of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital make it worth revisiting the question of the relevance

of a Palestine analytic to radical theory more broadly, for Palestinians as well as various other global struggles for freedom.

The Palestine analytic moves beyond thinking of Palestine as an isolated issue, or an ethnic- or geographic-based cause, and instead allows for thinking through the particularities of Zionist settler-colonialism as informed by and informing structures of oppression globally. The analytic elucidates how Palestine/Palestinian resistance can present new global anti/de-colonial opportunities and new solidarities between causes and communities that are not bound by the nation-state. Palestine/Palestinian resistance can do so because, first, Palestine can be paradigmatic of broader structures of asymmetrical power that shape the present world order. Second, the temporal axis of Palestine's resistance highlights the dubious contradictions of the post-1948 neoliberal political and economic global form and how the language of civility, progress, rights and democracy sustains racial capitalism and colonialism globally.

The Palestine analytic marks both a return and a departure in the sense that it rekindles oft-buried frameworks for articulating and engaging the Palestinian struggle that Oslo and its aftermath effectively decimated, and also deviates from a dangerous political exceptionalism that posits Palestinians as uniformly embodying alterity or Palestine as a synecdoche for a struggle without structural or historical analogue or precedent. In place of a surface-level politics of "solidarity" that uncritically staggers various and varying experiences of subjugation (as criticized by Jared Sexton in "People of Color Blindness") the Palestine analytic calls for a more scrupulous engagement with Palestine liberation work that takes heed of what we refer to as the "necessary burden of articulation," a burden resulting not only from a pained awareness of the vicissitudes of ongoing Palestinian colonization, but also, and most importantly, from the ethical requisites inherent to framing the Palestinian cause in a manner that takes full account of subject position; that does not limit its relevance to a geographical land-mass; and that constantly strives to encompass the full range of interconnected struggles for liberation and resistance.⁶⁰ This is the primary distinction between the reformist/accommodationist vision from which Oslo was born, and the revolutionary spirit that both preceded the Accords and continues to sustain Palestinian youth in the looming shadow of their legacy.

Conclusion

In a piece in support of the MLA academic boycott of Israeli institutions, Fred Moten calls for a reconsideration of the very notion of academic freedom as being underwritten by settler logics and purposes.⁶¹ By this token, something called

“academic freedom” is contingent rather than universal, and determined just as much, if not more, by whom it denies than by whom it protects. Israel’s deprivation of Palestinian education and general freedoms is thus not an aberration, but in perfect keeping with any notion of “academic freedom” operating within a historical/institutional context; it is not too much of a stretch to imagine how UC Berkeley’s initial cancellation of a course titled “Palestine: A Settler Colonial Analysis” following Israeli governmental pressure is likewise an affirmation rather than deviation from the implicit logics of extant “academic freedom.”⁶² Moten thus labels the possibility for something called “academic freedom,” which must be striven for and is always in the process of becoming rather than being presently experienced, as “fugitive.” Such considerations are sharply adumbrated by the US university’s historical benefit from and instrumental role in slavery and settler-colonialism.⁶³ Contrary to self-aggrandizing mission statements, “freedom” seems to have played a rather minimal role in the US academy’s function, and any concessions to the contrary have always been the direct result of struggles against power rather than the inevitable fulfilment of a teleological given.

The so-called “purpose” invoked by the MLA in adopting its anti-boycott resolution is in line with this long-standing pattern: by aligning itself with Israeli colonialism and systematic deprivation and dispossession of the Palestinian people, the MLA has equated a contented quietude surrounding structural death, violence and erasure with the “objectivity” requisite for scholarly work, in the humanities or otherwise. Such dangerous equivocations have always been subjugated peoples’ most faithful executioner.

Whether from the vantage point of the academy, beholden to the powers that be, or the placelessness of Palestinian liminality, revisiting the Palestinian struggle comes with doubts in place of sureties, with questions rather than answers. But perhaps the problem as of late has been a relentless mode of “answer,” of what has been (and continues to be) taken for granted, for certainty. Might the process of inventing, salvaging and more collectively defining and contextualizing words used in charting the Palestinian struggle reconcile some of the troubles outlined earlier?

Can there be liberation without “what if . . . ?”

Notes

1. Scott Jaschik, “MLA Votes to ‘Refrain’ from Backing Israel Boycott,” *Inside Higher Ed*, June 15, 2017, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/15/mla-votes-large-margin-refrain-backing-israel-boycott>.
2. “2017 Delegate Assembly Resolutions,” *Modern Language Association*, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://www.mla.org/About-Us/Governance/Delegate-Assembly/Motions-and-Resolutions/2017-Delegate-Assembly-Resolutions>.

3. Mlaboycott.wordpress.com. "Protest MLA Ratification of Resolution 2017-1." *MLA Members for Justice in Palestine* (blog), June 16, 2017, <https://mlaboycott.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/protest-mla-ratification-of-resolution-2017-1/>.
4. Lenora Hanson (former MLA Executive Council Member) in conversation with authors, August 31, 2019.
5. Jeffrey Sacks, "The Resistance to Boycott: Palestine, BDS, and the Modern Language Association," *Radical History Review* 134 (May): 233.
6. "Letters to the MLA." *In the Moment* (blog), January 1, 2018 (10:30 am), <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2018/01/01/letters-to-the-mla/>.
7. Lenora Hanson and David Palumbo-Liu. "Why we Resigned from the MLA Executive Council." *In the Moment* (blog), accessed January 11, 2018, <https://critinq.wordpress.com/2018/01/01/lenora-hanson-and-david-palumbo-liu-why-we-resigned-from-the-mla-executive-council/>.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Other academic associations that voted to endorse the academic boycott include: the African Literature Association, American Studies Association, the National Women's Studies Association, the Association of Asian American Studies, the National Association of Chicana/o Studies, the Native and Indigenous Studies Association and the Critical Ethnic Studies Association. See for example: "ALA Resolutions and Executive Letters." African Literature Association, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://africanlit.org/about-the-ala/ala-resolutions-and-executive-letters/>. See also: "What Does the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions Mean for the ASA?" American Studies Association, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://www.theasa.net/what-does-boycott-mean>. See also: Elizabeth Redden, "Another Association Backs Israel Boycott," *Inside Higher Ed*, December 1, 2015, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/12/01/national-womens-studies-association-joins-israel-boycott-movement>. See also: "National Association of Chicana and Chicano Studies Endorses Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions," *Jadaliyya*, <https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/32001/National-Association-of-Chicana-and-Chicano-Studies-Annual-Conference-Endorses-Boycott-of-Israeli-Academic-Institutions>. See also: "USACBI Statement of Support for the Association for Asian American Studies." USACBI, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://www.usacbi.org/2013/04/usacbi-statement-of-support-for-the-association-for-asian-american-studies/>. See also: "Declaration of Support for the Boycott of Israeli Academic Institutions." NAISA (blog), December 15, 2013, <http://www.naisa.org/declaration-of-support-for-the-boycott-of-israeli-academic-institutions.html>. See also: "Critical Ethnic Studies Association Passes BDS Resolution Supporting Academic Boycott." USACBI, <http://www.usacbi.org/2014/07/critical-ethnic-studies-association-passes-bds-resolution-supporting-academic-boycott/>.
10. "U.S. B.D.S. Victories." US Campaign for Palestinian Rights, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://uscpr.org/campaign/bds/bdswins/#1499720610811-1ef54a63-054b>.
11. The Center for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal issued a comprehensive report that engages how Palestine is made an exception to legal free speech. The International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network has traced the informal financial networks' funding backlash against Palestine activism. Jewish Voice for Peace has examined how false charges of anti-Semitism are used to stifle Palestine human rights activism. See for example: "The Palestine Exception to Free Speech: A Movement Under Attack in the US." Center for Constitutional Rights, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://ccrjustice.org/the-palestine-exception>. See also: "The Business of Backlash: The Attack on the Palestinian Movement and Other Movements for Social Justice," International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://www.ijan.org/resources/business-of-backlash/>. See also: "Stifling Dissent," Jewish Voice for Peace, accessed January 5, 2018, <http://stiflingdissent.org/>.

12. See O. Zahzah, "Special Issue Review Essay: The Intelligentsia In Dissent: Palestine, Settler-Colonialism and Academic Unfreedom in the Work of Steven Salaita," *Transmotion* 5(1), 211–224. Accessed August 18, 2019, <https://journals.kent.ac.uk/index.php/transmotion/article/view/640>.
13. "Palestinian BDS National Committee," *Bdsmovement.net*, accessed January 5, 2018, <https://bdsmovement.net/bnc>.
14. The intention behind making these claims is not to erase the essential work performed by pre-BDS organizations such as the Organization of Arab Students (OAS) or the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG). Both of these organizations, as well as many of their individual members and several organizations that followed in their wake, share a prime responsibility in introducing Palestine to the US academy as well as challenging reductive cultural discourse about Arabs and Muslims more broadly well before the advent of student organizations such as Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP). We cannot underscore enough the critical importance of groups such as the General Union of Palestine Students (GUPS) which came to forerun student activism for Palestine on US campuses between 1979 and 1993. Third World alliances and some anti-war formations have also centered Palestinian liberation as part of their own anti-colonial, anti-racist political programs as well. We further note that Jimmy Carter's advocacy for the Palestinian people and the challenges posed by the Israeli New Historians to the Zionist nationalist narratives were essential in bringing an awareness of the Palestinian struggle to larger intellectual and public audiences. However, this article concerns itself with BDS work and BDS discourse because of the present centrality that such framings have come to assume within Palestine academic activism and scholarship and solidarity organizing. The purpose here is thus not to draw a historical overview or genealogy of Palestine activist and intellectual efforts in the US so much as to intervene in present-day debates, to explore the possibilities for imbuing the rhetorical hallmarks of BDS-centered Palestine activity with a revolutionary character more in step with the original vision of the Palestinian national movement.
15. Einat Wilf, *Winning the War of Words: Essays on Zionism and Israel* (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2015).
16. Einat Wilf, "The War of Words Against Israel and the Fight Back." A Lecture Given at the Truth Out Conference, Israel. Youtube Video, 4:40. Posted [June 2014]. Accessed March 5, 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CXLuO1YPSnM&t=568s>.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. "Academic Freedom and Tenure: The University of California at Los Angeles," *AAUP Bulletin* 57 :3 (1971): 382–420.
20. See Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, New York: Columbia University Press. 1998.
21. Hanson and Palumbo-Liu, "Why we Resigned."
22. See for example: Rona Sela, "Seized in Beirut: The Plundered Archives of the Palestinian Cinema Institution and Cultural Arts Section." *Anthropology of the Middle East* 12:1 (2017), 83–114.
23. National Students for Justice in Palestine and Palestinian Youth Movement. "NSJP and PYM Condemn Repression, Racism and Islamophobia during NSJP Conference at UCLA." *Mondoweiss*, November 26, 2018, <https://mondoweiss.net/2018/11/repression-islamophobia-conference/>
24. *Ibid.*
25. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London : Zed Books, 2012).

26. Ibid.
27. Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 3.
28. Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" revised edition, from the 'History' chapter of *Critique of Postcolonial Reason*, in Rosalind C. Morris, ed., *Can the Subaltern Speak? Reflections on the History of an Idea* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 21–81.
29. Mjriam Abu Samra. "The Road to Oslo and its Reverse #Palestine," Allegra Lab (blog), October 29, 2015, <http://allegralaboratory.net/the-road-to-oslo-and-its-reverse-palestine/>.
30. For more on national identity and consciousness see for example: Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997).
31. James Carleton. "PFLP Ghassan Kanafani, Richard Carleton interview COMPLETE." Filmed [1970]. Youtube video, 6:56. Posted [August 2017]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3h_drCmG2iM.
32. Ibid.
33. The Situationist International was an alliance of revolutionary intellectuals, writers, and artists formed in Europe that spanned 1952 to 1972. The Situationists believed that Marxist ideology was commensurate with the artistic avant-garde movements of the day, such as surrealism, and their critical output represents a unique fusion of these seemingly disparate orientations. For more on the Situationists, see: "Situationist International," [tate.org.uk](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/situationist-international), accessed August 16, 2019, <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/s/situationist-international>. For the relevant excerpts from Khayati's dictionary, see Mustapha Khayati, "Captive Words: Preface to a Situationist Dictionary," anarchistlibrary.org, accessed January 5, 2018. Unfortunately, the work is currently out of print, though excerpted translations are available online. <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/mustapha-khayati-captive-words-preface-to-a-situationist-dictionary>.
34. Ibid.
35. Ibid.
36. Ibid.
37. Ibid.
38. In 1969, Khayati left the Situationist International to join the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) based in Jordan. In his resignation letter, he noted that he was politically opposed to "double appartenance" (belonging to more than one political formation) and that the seismic transformations of the Arab region and its mounting crisis obliged him to rather focus his efforts there. For more on Khayati see: "Mustapha Khayati." Postwar Culture: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, accessed August 14, 2019, <https://www.postwarcultureatbeinecke.org/copy-of-asger-jorn>.
39. See: Ngūgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonizing the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann; Studies in African Literature. 1986).
40. For more on the Palestinian ontology of Nakba, see: Loubna Qutami, "Before the New Sky: Protracted Struggle and Possibilities of the Beyond for Palestine's New Youth Movement" (Doctoral Dissertation, University of California, Riverside, 2018).
41. See: Frank Barat, "We Teach Life Sir: Palestinian Poet Rafeef Ziadah Launches New Album." Middle East Eye, accessed August 16, 2019, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/features/we-teach-life-palestinian-poet-rafeef-ziadah-launches-new-album>.
42. See for example: Lisa Lowe, *Intimacies of Four Continents* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015). Also: Maria Josefina Saldana Portillo, *The Revolutionary Imagination in the Americas and the Age of Development* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). See also: Saidiya V.

- Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).
43. For more on the dubious ways the 1948 construction of the legal apparatus of “human rights” has been used to sustain the pre-1948 colonial divisions of the world along economic, political, and racial lines, see for example: Randall Williams, *The Divided World: Human Rights and its Violence* (Minneapolis, MN, and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xvi.
 44. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014)
 45. See: Keith Feldman, *A Shadow Over Palestine: The Imperial Life of Race in America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015), 23–57.
 46. “It is not incidental,” Feldman writes, “that Resolution 3379 is the only General Assembly resolution to be formally revoked by the United Nations,” for “the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise of a unipolar world” cemented an epistemological embargo upon the counter-narratives of all dispossessed by the project of so-called Western liberal democracy.” *A Shadow Over Palestine*, 56.
 47. Amplifying the Palestinian narrative to the global arena was especially important, not only because Palestinians had endured a great catastrophe which shattered their livelihoods, but also because the Zionist narrative purported their project to be a solution to rectify the violences of anti-Semitism, and compared their aspirations for settlement in Palestine with other anti-colonial movements taking shape across the world, particularly in India. Palestinians therefore needed a counter-narrative that could argue that Zionism is a form of colonialism, which Sayegh illustrated so beautifully in his 1965 piece. For more on how Zionists paralleled their aspirations through anti-colonial sensibilities, see Joseph Massad, “The ‘Post-Colonial’ Colony: Time, Space, and Bodies in Palestine/Israel,” in *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (London and New York: Routledge, 2006).
 48. Fayeze Sayegh, “Zionist Colonialism in Palestine (1965),” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2:1 (January 2012), 214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648833>.
 49. Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8:4 (2006), 387–409.
 50. International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network, “Israel’s Worldwide Role in Repression,” IJAN, accessed August 31, 2019, <http://www.ijan.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/IWoRR.pdf>.
 51. David Lloyd, “Settler Colonialism and the State of Exception: The Example of Palestine/Israel,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 2:1 (January 2012), 59. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2012.10648826>.
 52. Edward Said, “A Tribute to Abu Omar,” *Hanna Mikhail Abu Omar: Man, Intellectual, Freedom Fighter*. Accessed, January 5, 2018. <http://www.abu-omar-hanna.info/spip/spip.php?article103>.
 53. “Zumlot: US Move ‘Kiss of Death’ to Two-State Solution,” *Aljazeera: News*, December 8, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/12/zumlot-move-kiss-death-state-solution-171208112719252.html>.
 54. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 2004), 2.
 55. Ibid.
 56. Brooks Kirchgassner, “On Frantz Fanon: An Interview with Lewis R. Gordon,” *Black Perspectives*, February 11, 2016.
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