DRESSED FOR DISSENT

Decolonial Fashion and the Queer Struggle for Palestine

ROBERTO FILIPPELLO



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Roberto Filippello



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CONTENTS

Note to the Reader *ix*
Acknowledgments *xiii*

Introduction *1*

1. The Queer Staging of Anti-Apartheid Fashion *17*
2. Against Ecocide: Toward an Indigenous Fashion Justice *54*
3. Stealth and Fugitivity in Jenin and Umm al-Fahm *93*
4. Slow Fashion: The Politics of Time and Labor in Gaza *121*

Epilogue: The Affective Afterlives of Clothes *149*

Afterword *155*

Notes *159*
Bibliography *193*
Index *211*

NOTE TO THE READER

On October 6, 2023, I spent my evening on Zoom in conversation with a panel of artists featured in this book as part of a fashion film screening program I was curating for the Queer Cinema for Palestine film festival. For some of them, particularly those connecting from Palestine, it would have proved quite difficult to travel, so we decided to prerecord our conversation and play it in the theater after the screening of their films, should they be unable to make it to Amsterdam in person. The conversation moved across different registers: the frustration and uncertainty about traveling; the general excitement of discussing their work; the pleasure of being somehow "together" in our shared investment in the liberation of Palestine—something that, we were saying, "feels like it's getting closer." By that time, after years of involvement in my book project, the panelists and I had become friends. When I started working on this book in 2019, I was thrilled with the first contacts I made with these Palestinian creatives: I knew the project would present a big challenge, but their creative energy was contagious. I was finishing up my PhD, and while maybe a bit naive, I was genuinely committed to a project that stimulated my intellectual curiosity and invigorated my political involvement, a commitment that has remained unswerving. At the time, the United States had just recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel as well as Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights; the next few years saw a number of Israeli incursions into the West Bank with adjoined plans for further annexation, the normalization of diplomatic relationships between some Arab countries and Israel, the ten-day uprising and outbreak of violence in Gaza formally known as the "2021 Israel–Palestine crisis" or "Unity Intifada," and the evictions of Palestinian families from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem. All these events

in different ways made working on this book quite hard. Nevertheless, on that evening of October 6, as a group of us were all together for the first time in the same online space, we were laughing and sharing jokes. In that period my writing was going well, and the tremendous support I was receiving from both Palestinian artists and academic friends was uplifting.

I went to bed on a real high. When I woke up the next morning, though, my phone was filled with texts from the producers of the film festival: "OMG have you seen this?" followed by links to apocalyptic scenes. I jumped on my laptop to read the news, opened Twitter/X on my phone, and scanned through the confusing and alarmed reports on Hamas's attacks against Israel, which had begun at dawn. I was disoriented—only a few hours prior I had shared wishes of hope and enthusiasm with Palestinians . . . the following week the film festival was scheduled to take place with several artists, scholars, and activists from the Palestinian diaspora as guests . . . and the week right after I was to start teaching a graduate seminar on the politics of popular culture in Palestine/Israel. Amid the panic and confusion, what was I to make of what was going on? How would my collaborators in Palestine feel about it? How would I emotionally handle my Palestine-related commitments and how might they change? As I checked in on friends and colleagues, what was going to happen became pretty clear to all of us: Israel would respond right away, and with unprecedented violence. Even while that was clear enough, few of us anticipated that Israel would proceed to unleash a deliberate extermination campaign of the Gaza Strip, and do so at such a rapid pace and with such complete and blatant support from the West.[1]

Although no Palestine-based artists and filmmakers were physically in attendance, the film festival did take place and achieved a success that exceeded expectations. The people in the audience seemed to share a sense of disbelief about the initial instances of "the first livestreamed genocide in history";[2] their desire to better understand what was going on and hear about and from Palestinians was palpable. University teach-ins on Palestine were organized that same week, supported by several academic institutions. The first student encampments were built by students in solidarity with Palestine on university campuses across the United States and Europe (and, shortly after, faced brutal police repression). What energy I had all went into the course I was teaching: Never had I struggled so much in a classroom to get students engaged—the emotions were running high and most of the students were paralyzed by the fear of saying the wrong thing, saying too much, or not saying anything at all. As time passed, that changed, and the classroom became a sort of therapeutic space: There was discomfort, disagreement, but also a genuine and deep engagement with the art we were studying. In fact, the conversations that took place there helped me regain the motivation I needed to go back to my book. A book that had started with such joy was now a source of anxiety, if not despair.

Dressed for Dissent is about the coming together, in the aftermath of the Second Intifada, of young Palestinians to develop a cultural scene whereby fashion is

a practice of community-building, a language to be played with against occupation and apartheid, and an opportunity to disrupt the very discourses used by the Zionist entity to dismiss, degrade, or erase Palestinians. It reflects on clothes made, circulated, and photographed by young Palestinians as a collective tactic of cultural, aesthetic, and affective resistance against the suffocation of the joy, pleasure, and altogether existence of the Palestinian people. In the aftermath of October 7, I saw that fashion world disintegrating before my eyes. I came to question the purpose of this book, worrying that it would no longer make sense, be resonant, or "feel right" at such a new conjuncture (one that requires attending to concerns that are probably more pressing than art and cultural production), when the infrastructures that made the work of the protagonists in this book possible have, to a vast extent, vanished. I wondered if the whole book should be rewritten retrospectively—namely, from a post–October 7 perspective. But every time I considered this possibility, I felt stuck, confronted with a sense of unease, if not of impossibility. Every attempt to rewrite the book from that vantage felt misplaced, wrong. Rethinking the temporality of the book made me feel as if I were betraying the optimism that pervades the narratives of its protagonists, and would have eventually, implicitly, risked marking them as having failed (and maybe giving the reader an idea of them as shortsighted, in light of the current obliteration of Gaza).

What's more, I realized that the critical fashion practices developed by the main actors in this book up until 2023 still carry the seeds of a yet-to-be-manifested actuality: For now their work has slowed down significantly, but it is too soon to assess the influence it might have on creative production, and fashion more specifically, in the future. I began to think that within the catastrophe of the present and uncertainty about the future it was even more imperative to finish the book, that it was essential to document that fashion world, also as a way of helping give a sense of permanence to the courageous creative work that had been going on in Palestine. Perhaps by probing the creative production of young Palestinians pre–October 7, *Dressed for Dissent* can prompt the reader to ask themselves: If this is what young Palestinians were able to do until recently, what could they do in the future? What can I do for their creative work to be reignited, relaunched, and rethought?

In the end, I decided to leave this book as originally intended (i.e., from a pre–October 7 perspective, as nearly all of it was written before the winter of 2023) so as not to hinder the inspirational quality of the voices of the creative practitioners. I trust that this decision will make the stories herein even more powerful for readers who encounter them a few years hence. With a concluding section pondering the changing political landscape in relation to a possible future of Palestinian fashion, the book will inevitably become the "historical" document it was meant to be, one that stays loyal to the artists themselves "as history makers as opposed to historicized objects."[3] *Dressed for Dissent* is thus a capsule in time, a cartography of an artistic Palestine that, despite nearly eighty

years of efforts to annihilate it, truly was and could still be. As a result, it is an unavoidably incomplete book; but incomplete and bound to incompleteness is also the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, and incomplete *yet bound to completeness* is the very liberation of Palestine: a liberation that future books will, hopefully, in the lifetime of my readers, document.

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Dressed for Dissent has been a long labor of love. I wrote this book in numerous and distant places, often in a state of general precarity. In each of those places I was lucky to find intellectual interlocutors and friends who have listened to me with curiosity and patience, and helped me, at times unwittingly, navigate the ups and downs of the writing process. However, those who have grounded me the most by reminding me of my commitment to this project with an openness and generosity that I didn't think possible are my collaborators ("research participants"), whom I hope I can now call friends, in Palestine.

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Introduction

I had hardly arrived in Ramallah, my first time there, when I received a text message from a friend in Jerusalem: "There's an underground souq happening some time today in Ramallah. With lots of fashion. Here's the address . . ." I didn't know exactly when "some time" would be, but I jumped in the first available taxi only to find that, when we arrived, the address was wrong. After going around in circles through the city hills, I was about to give up when the driver pointed out a garage-like structure where people were milling around. I got out, and as I approached the entrance I recognized the voice of Palestinian pop artist Bashar Murad playing in the background. Inside I saw several stands set up, mostly with clothes, handmade objects, and vinyls—I knew I had found the right place. I browsed through the racks of clothes and talked to the sellers. Assuming they were also the designers, I asked them questions about the products only to learn that many of them didn't know much, that they were there in the role of friends and supporters; regardless of their role, these people became key contacts when I officially began my research on the Palestinian fashion scene a few months later. Without hesitation and out of generosity, they put me in touch with the designers who had been unable to attend or had been late in arriving, either because they were stuck at checkpoints or hadn't received the requisite Israeli army–issued travel permits in time.

Indeed, for most Palestinian designers to travel to markets such as the above or to their production facilities across the different areas of the West Bank, they have to request a permit and pass through checkpoints, which can take incalculable amounts of time and hence delay the operations.[1] However, as I would come to learn, they deal with such slowness by embracing it as an actual methodology of production of clothes that is grounded in lived experience, one that gives them the ability to ideate cunning strategies through which to mess with Israel's

imposed spatio-temporal coordinates. In doing so, they also operate in a way that is sustainable to them, without complying with the capitalist norms of the apparel industry; in other words, they weaponize externally imposed slowness in order to conceive of fashion beyond the accelerationist logics that drive late global capitalism. Thus, while the slowed-down chronopolitics of the occupation and the spatial fragmentation of the Palestinian territories greatly affect their ability to work, they have also reimagined new infrastructures. As fashion designer Shukri Lawrence put it to me:

> Despite territorial separation, Palestinian fashion designers are all connected. For instance, we have a WhatsApp group that we use to keep each other posted on everything that happens in Palestine, even though each of us is in a different place. It's very hard for us to connect physically, in real life, despite the fact that we're all technically in the same region. There are many designers from Gaza and parts of the West Bank that we can't really see in person. But there is a kind of creative renaissance happening in Palestine, where all designers are connecting and supporting each other. The great thing about this fashion scene is that there's no sense of being in a competitive industry. We know we are all trying to make a better place for all of us, so it's crucial to stay in touch and help each other.[2]

One way young Palestinians and, more pertinently, fashion creatives circumvent the spatio-temporality of the occupation is via digital media, through which they develop collaborations, coordinate the production and circulation of garments, and promote each other's work. In addition to digital media, they get assistance from fellow creatives and artisans in the region to circulate their products, use a network of taxi drivers holding the license plates that allow them to travel across different areas, and even rely on their own families and friends to handle deliveries. These are just some of the tactics they have engineered to sustain their work.

Something else I gleaned at the Ramallah *souq* is that one of the main features of the Palestinian creative community is its independence from external institutional and financial support. All the creatives I met there told me that not only do they adamantly boycott any funding competitions or grants by organizations that have ties with Israel, but they are also not financially backed up by the local Palestinian administration, meaning the only options they have to physically showcase their work are to self-fund or raise money from within their community. Given the lack of external aid, only local fundraising makes bazaars such as the one I went to possible. The organizers are Palestinian artists and activists who, via social media, have built a network of designers, musicians, and performers and host regular events in temporary markets across Palestine. At these markets, creatives connect with one other, and anyone who is part of their extended network can attend.

Israel's settler occupation, with its spatial and temporal organization of life, and the Palestinian governing bodies' authoritarianism frame the political context for

the emergence of the Palestinian fashion scene I outline in this book. *Dressed for Dissent* explores the creative practices of the Palestinian fashion community, attending to the ways in which their ingenious uses of fashion have enabled them to carve out spaces of both relief from and opposition to the occupation, and in the process produce a shared aesthetic-political vision for a liberated Palestine.

CULTURAL RESISTANCE AND THE CREATIVE IMAGINATION

The majority of the members of the Palestinian fashion scene I write about in this book were born around the time of the Oslo accords (signed in 1993 and 1995). They grew up witnessing the entrenchment of the occupation within an affective atmosphere of disillusionment with political prospects promised by Israel as well as the Palestinian political elites. Rather than fulfill the promise of the accords to guarantee the establishment of an independent Palestinian state, Israel splintered the already occupied land to create a "carceral archipelago" in which Palestinians became stranded.[3] A web of arbitrary and illegal spatial and administrative restrictions immobilized Palestinians according to a "theology of security" aimed at incapacitating movement, severing people from one another, and ultimately denying them economic viability.[4] The "regime of movement" also encompassed a system of information-gathering and classification of the Palestinian population through data and biometrics.[5] This panoptic structure of surveillance penetrated the private and public spheres and encroached on all kinds of activities, from the most mundane, personal ones to cultural production and political organizing.[6]

The Oslo process was, all in all, "a one-sided farce" that, instead of addressing the root cause of Palestinian oppression (i.e., Israel's settler colonialism and occupation), facilitated spatial and temporal strangulation, all with the consensus of Western powers; this way, land confiscation, the expansion of Jewish settlements, the building of infrastructures of occupation, and the isolation of the Gaza Strip were enabled.[7] Moreover, under Oslo, the Fatah-backed government body known as the Palestinian Authority (PA) was formed with the goal of exerting control in the West Bank enclaves. Since its establishment, the PA has essentially acquiesced to Israel's territorial partitioning as the only way of attaining independence; has accepted Israel's control over Palestinian natural resources; and has committed to the formation of a Palestinian state (which, as per Oslo, would encompass only 22 percent of historic Palestine). With the PA as the ruling political body in the West Bank, the official political discourse shifted from one of liberation from colonization to one of state formation. To manage internal dissent and protect a relationship with Israel as a means of giving, in Edward Said's words, "official Palestinian consent to continued occupation,"[8] the PA has enforced securitization and policing practices against Palestinian cultural actors and protesters and ultimately undercut the people's calls for self-determination.[9] In other words, by prioritizing

the state apparatus over the people, the PA distanced itself from any concrete plans to unify the Palestinian territories or to bring people together in the name of a broader vision of liberation.[10]

Oslo eventually culminated in what Leila Farsakh has called the "demise of the liberatory promise of statehood," which coincided with a detachment of the larger Palestinian population from official politics and an ensuing urge to rethink themselves through a prism of unity beyond statist-nationalist framings.[11] The utter failure of Oslo to lead to Palestinian self-determination created the conditions for the Second Intifada (also known as al-Aqsa Intifada, 2000–5), which broke out in 2000 across the entirety of Palestine. Animated by a mood of anger and frustration, this uprising, compared to the First Intifada (1987–1993), was marked by a heightened level of violence, which in dominant media and public discourse consolidated the coding of the Palestinian resistance as terroristic. What resulted, and, beginning in the 2000s came to contour ordinary life for Palestinians, was the building of the Separation Wall; the enforcement of a permit regime that staunchly regulates travel between areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem; daily attacks on Palestinian properties by Jewish settlers; and regular incursions of the Israeli army into Gaza.

With the exacerbation of enclosure policies, Palestinians throughout the 2000s elaborated forms of resistance against their atomization, for instance, by building tunnels under roadblocks, breaking pathways through the Wall, and setting up market stands in the vicinity of checkpoints to bear the exhausting waits. They also resisted by more creative means, such as documenting their daily lives through film, practicing parkour among the ruins, drawing graffiti, and, as I show in this book, making clothes and photographing each other wearing them, in the process asserting their presence and agency in the face of segregation.[12] Under conditions of colonial separation and surveillance, Palestinians have enacted "a politics of performative formation of communities and space."[13] Such insurgent creative practices, and in particular those that are fashion-based, are read in this book as generative acts of self and collective subjectivization and imagination.

The Second Intifada engendered a crisis of representation stemming from a sense of disconnection between Palestinian political subjectivities and the hegemonic meta-frames of the Palestinian struggle: It was at this historical juncture that young creatives began interrogating the meaning of the political in renewed aesthetic forms and their own potential role as cultural producers at the margins of the public sphere.[14] Ever since, within an atmosphere of fatigue, disaffection, and disenchantment with both a settler colonial partitionist ideology and a self-serving political leadership marked by violent factionalism (between Fatah, which administers the West Bank, and Hamas, which rules over the Gaza Strip), a community of art creatives across Palestine has been engaging in a collective praxis of cultural production. Without adhering to political party orientations, they conceived of the political through cultural and artistic means. As Sunaina

Maira has outlined, the "post-Oslo generation" of young artists across Palestine channeled their widespread disillusionment into a reformulation of "resistance" as more capaciously encompassing everyday creative production (e.g., through art forms such as music, graffiti, and, of course, fashion).[15] Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter-Devroe have argued that the practices of post-Oslo artists "did not necessarily carry clear militant messages. They sometimes operated as affective or performative arenas activating political subjectivity on their own terms."[16] By operating outside the Palestinian cultural field of nationalist art, they have shaped new visual imaginaries: Their seemingly depoliticized ordinary practices have come to play a role within the larger, multilayered Palestinian struggle for liberation.[17]

In the early 2010s, the uprisings that swept through the Middle East in response to authoritarianism, increasing corruption within national political establishments, and economic depression and unemployment manifested strong transnational solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. The Arab Spring had the merit of, on the one hand, igniting the staging of popular protests in Palestine in reaction to the economic discrepancies in the Palestinian social fabric, the repressive policies of the PA in the West Bank, and the violence of Hamas in Gaza, and on the other, emboldening the impetus for local community formation among youths through art practices.[18] Although not all Palestinians participated in the protests, most youngsters came together, whether in person or via social media, to engage in art practices, including fashion design, as a way to resist the erasure of their voices and to reimagine their struggle against the occupation and the local political elites.[19] The events of the Arab uprisings also constituted a major inspiration for young Palestinians with regard to how social media could help certain vast yet decentralized, separated, and leaderless segments of the population to form communities, and also encouraged a creative mobilization guided by feelings of mutual solidarity and care.

The conjuncture that I have periodized lasted about fifteen years: During this time a shift in consciousness occurred among Palestinian youths. Their creative or cultural (two terms I use interchangeably) resistance practices enabled them to deliberate their own agency and rethink sovereignty beyond ideals of statehood. Lila Abu-Lughod has interpreted the efflorescence of creative projects in Palestine during the 2000s as an exemplum of what she calls the imagination of Palestine's "Alter/Natives," an alternative conception of collective agency and self-determination that pushes against the idea of the nation-state as the sole entryway into Palestinian liberation.[20] The nation-state as a model of sovereignty had little appeal for those in the anti-authoritarian youth movements that reached their apex during the 2010s. The younger generation of visual artists, musicians, filmmakers, and fashion designers gravitated to the original principles and demands of the Palestinian struggle: territorial sovereignty, Israel's reparations for its crimes, the right of return, and freedom of movement between the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza. Resultingly, the creative-cultural production is delinked from dominant, nationalist

ideologies, is anti-imperialist, and adopts the language, aspirations, and values of indigeneity to articulate a vision of the political that is intersectional and decolonial.

Edward Said stated that "in the Arab and specifically the Palestinian case, aesthetics and politics are intertwined."[21] In the face of Israel's continual attempt to silence Palestinian voices, and the Western mainstream media's misrepresentation of those voices, to communicate one's existence and struggle via all kinds of creative means is a step toward the cultural and political production and reproduction of Palestine as a people, a nation, and an idea. Helga Tawil-Souri has put this succinctly: "The very act of 'creating culture' . . . is a form of political resistance . . . because it *de facto* attempts to reverse [former Israeli prime minister Golda] Meir's proclamation that Palestinians do not exist."[22] It is in this context that Palestinian cultural production emerges as unmistakably and inherently political. Cultural resistance to misrepresentation, dehumanization, and obliteration, however, cannot be cordoned off from the material resistance to the occupation. I understand the two as interrelated, coalescing genres of the same struggle against the Zionist project of annihilating Palestinians, and in so doing I suggest going beyond the too rigid binary of violent/nonviolent modes resistance.[23]

Creative-cultural production reckons with the occupation's usurping of Palestinian freedom by exposing the oppressive workings of the Zionist enterprise; in challenging these through counternarratives that cherish beauty and pleasure, creative production generates a vision of what a decolonial Palestine could look like. In the words of Dina Matar and Tawil-Souri, the cultural production of Palestinianness "is a multilayered activity, mobilized by various actors taking myriad different routes . . . stimulating and in some cases also simulating new visualizations, realizing Palestine while also contending with its possible and impossible horizons."[24] In other words, contemporary Palestinian art and cultural production are not solely about resisting externally imposed narratives and representations of Palestinians, but also about producing alternative aesthetic forms and imaginaries (i.e., what is immanent but not yet there, existing *in potentia*).[25] *Dressed for Dissent* shows how, in the aftermath of the Second Intifada and even more visibly in the wake of the Arab Spring, a community of fashion collectives—an expression I use to refer to groups of designers, image makers, and crafts makers who work together in the production of clothing and their visual representation—has emerged in Palestine, a community that centers an anti-individualist and anticapitalist approach to art and cultural production.

"Fashion" as discussed in this book is a set of practices that within a particular "structure of feeling"—the post-Oslo crisis of the political imagination and its revitalization after the Second Intifada—responds to the political economy, culture, and dominant cultural-political discourse across a number of distinct yet interconnected locations across Palestine.[26] One could think of it as *fashion from below*, namely a concerted effort of thinking through, making, and presenting clothes as a means of addressing, or redressing, the social and political inequities

taking place aboveground.[27] Seen this way, as will become clearer to the reader, fashion is a material, life-sustaining practice that—in its development—aspires to throw a spanner in the works of the very policing systems that silence or annihilate Palestinians (both physically and symbolically). Designers and image makers produce aesthetic counternarratives and forefront fashion in the larger, collectively shared effort for liberation.

Similar to filmmaking, Palestinian fashion design and its photographic representation—which I refer to as "fashion storytelling"—operate as an activist endeavor that brings to light not only archives and narratives, but also specific affective formations, thereby fostering engagement with and belonging to a "community of conscience" that announces the possibility of an "otherwise" from extant political aspirations.[28] For these Palestinian creatives, renouncing the ideological shackles embraced by previous generations does not imply an outright disavowal of tradition. Contemporary fashion practices in Palestine show, in fact, the centrality of the past—that is, of past dress histories, styles, and manufacturing techniques—in the remaking of the present. Palestinian fashion designers are indebted to a long, rich, political heritage of dressmaking, and in particular to unique techniques of weaving, knitting, and embroidering; they are bent on retrieving, revitalizing, and incorporating such techniques into their work. Recovering place-based knowledges such as crafts-making is a way of counteracting attempts to erase Palestinian culture and thereby of reclaiming their indigeneity. Such a relationship to dress echoes Frantz Fanon's cautioning against "treating dress as a static aspect of an essentialized national identity," a treatment that collapses indigeneity into "cultural mummification" and in so doing ultimately detaches dress from any project and prospect of decolonization.[29]

In 1982, a few years prior to the First Intifada, Muhammad Hallaj wrote a compelling essay titled "Palestine: The Suppression of an Idea," in which images of traditional women's dresses (thobes) harking back to as early as the nineteenth century attest to the Indigenous Arab population in Palestine. Not only is dress, in the essay, described as the most striking evidence of cultural and social life within what settler colonialists referred to as a wasteland, but it is construed as a material temporal vector that condenses the historical continuity of a people's presence on the land and its resistance to colonial invasions. I take Hallaj's word–image nexus as indexical of Palestinian identity: a rootedness that, given Israel's confiscation of archives and artworks, is hypostatized by a visual and material culture in which dress is central. Indeed, dress resists "the suppression of an idea" (idea, from the Greek "form," "pattern") and of an identity. As "vessels of identification and belonging," clothes are "vehicle[s] bringing past time into the present," carrying the "force of history."[30] They are simultaneously carriers of identity, historical records and witnesses, and conveyors of undisclosed possibilities.

These functions of clothing are central in the work of Palestinian fashion designers, who reconfigure and repurpose traditional meanings or techniques

of Palestinian dress so as to serve current needs and contexts of the Palestinian liberation struggle.[31] In this sense, the Palestinian fashion community is keen on what Chiara De Cesari, writing about heritage projects developed by Palestinian civil society throughout the 2000s, has called "anticipatory representation," in that their practices carry an "anticipated materiality."[32] As a politics of the body and senses, intimately tied to our imagination, fashion is an ideal medium through which new material-sensory figurations of an "otherwise" can be produced. Fashion practices in Palestine produce affective-material repositories of knowledge for an imaginative refiguring of the present-future. Such world-building imaginaries are by necessity decolonial: This means that on top of being anticolonial (i.e., of emerging in opposition to the colonial regulation or invalidation of life), they also carry a decolonial impetus (i.e., they are aimed at shattering the very imperial-colonial history, mentality, and attitude through which Palestine and Palestinians have been *imaged* and *imagined* in the West).

QUEERNESS, INDIGENEITY, DECOLONIZATION

The Palestinian fashion designers and image makers herein invoke a sense of unity in the liberation struggle that supersedes the masculinist imaginary of the nationalist resistance; they produce figurations that are divorced from those of the previous generation of resistance artists, with their insistence on the image of the woman as a metaphor of the land that gives birth and takes care of the sons and husbands (i.e., the eventual national heroes).[33] In light of its imbrication with the body and therefore with the body's relation to the different axes of identity, fashion has emerged as an important yet overlooked site for an intersectional negotiation of gender, sexuality, and race-related concerns within the scope of a decolonial cultural politics. Indeed, the ethos that has animated the local cultural scene since the 2010s and into the 2020s is centered on the conviction that, in order for Palestinians to achieve emancipation from colonialism (and its normalization), it is paramount to address the gender, sexual, and racial issues that are inherent in the system of occupation. Re-presenting their struggle with particular attention to gender, sexuality, and race would allow, in their intentions, for an interrogation of those very exclusionary and oppressive mechanisms ensconced in the Zionist colonial ideology as well as the heteropatriarchal structures that have come to govern Palestinian society.[34]

Dressed for Dissent shows precisely how fashion collectives carry out work that, in various ways, challenges the reproduction of the gendered, sexed, and racialized hierarchies that underwrite the Zionist project as well as the heteropatriarchal, nationalist political vision of Palestinian identity espoused by the PA. As with other cultural producers that are part of the post-Oslo artistic scene, these collectives complicate, and at times exceed, the gender-sexual formations enshrined in the Palestinian historical imagination. Walaa Alqaisiya would say that their work

can be seen as reflecting a "native queer politics of refusal," namely a rejection of "heterocoloniality"—a rejection that comes from individuals who do not necessarily identify as queer but who, in their work and aspirations, adopt queerness as a decolonial optic of political refiguration.[35] Along these lines, and regardless of whether the protagonists in this book identify as queer or not, my use of queerness is not merely descriptive of a gender-sexual identification of the subject, since categorizing and prioritizing the identities of Palestinian social actors might actually collide with the goal of unfixing the power dynamics to which Palestinians are subordinated. In other words, in employing the rubric "queer" I don't mean to reify the gender and sexual identities of the fashion creatives I write about, but rather to indicate an oblique disposition to their colonial reality. Moving away from normative, representational conceptions of Palestinian identity that revolve strictly around gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, and religion, the idiom of "queer" can capture non-essentialist, hybrid, intersectional, and often opaque ways of subjectivization.[36]

The interplay of decolonization and queerness that has invigorated the field of Palestinian studies over the past decade is key to the framing of this book. As Leila Farsakh, Rhoda Kanaaneh, and Sherene Seikaly have cogently observed apropos of queerness in Palestine, "queer" might function as a colonial as much as a decolonial category.[37] In this geopolitical context, it can be understood as a tactic of dissent with the gendered and sexed power structures of Israeli settler colonialism, and can open up possibilities of being together in the world vis-à-vis the naturalization of gender-sexual hegemonies.[38] Queerness and decolonization can therefore be seen as coextensive: A decolonizing movement in Palestine necessitates a queer resistance to coloniality insofar as the eradication of Zionist settler colonialism requires the effacement of colonially gendered and sexed categories and norms.[39]

This reshuffling in the use of queer in Palestinian studies resonates neatly with the use of the same concept within Indigenous studies, and responds to how within much queer theory "queer" has reinstantiated a white settler colonial worldview premised on the omission of colonized Indigenous peoples. Yet, as Indigenous studies scholars have largely demonstrated, queerness, while concealed, negated, or repressed by colonial hegemonies, is extant and cultivated in native societies. This is certainly the case with Palestine, where the Zionist settler colonial enterprise has instrumentalized the idea of "modernity"—a colonial idea that in neoliberal times encompasses the developmentalist language of LGBTQ+ rights, pride, and visibility as its indisputable indicator—to advocate Israel's hetero- and homonormative stances and dismiss Palestinians as premodern. By invoking modernity, progress, and democracy, Israel has normalized the ontological violence of its civilizational mission. In turn, the Palestinian ruling bodies have uncritically accepted and upheld a system of power that attempts to exclude the participation of minoritized segments of the population in the liberation struggle. Given the gendering and sexualizing processes integral to settler colonialism and its normalization, in *Dressed for Dissent* queer is purposely used for its (decolonial) ability

to linguistically, epistemologically, politically, and symbolically dispel a (colonial) myth of modernity predicated on the idea that conquest can be justified in view of, or can lead to, gender and sexual freedom. I use queer as an analytic tool of disidentification from this equation and as a localized cultural praxis of re-worlding.

Dressed for Dissent brings queer-feminist Palestinian studies into close dialogue with Indigenous studies as well as with scholarship on Palestinian popular culture, while also conversing with fashion studies and media studies.[40] Recent developments in the field of Palestinian studies share with Indigenous studies a concern about the limits of the state with regard to the politics of liberation and consider the phenomenon of nationalism as de facto exclusionary and violent. They question the assumption that sovereignty, in order to be achieved, must be thought out in relation to statist institutions; such an assumption precludes the possibility of imagining "governance from below," namely forms of (self-)representation detached from participation in the nation-state.[41] Put differently, the ongoing process of producing the state is predicated on the dispossession of Indigenous land and the disavowal of Indigenous self-governance.[42] Indigenous decolonial sovereignty, instead, indicates layered, shared, communal, evolving, and multiplying aspirations of self-representation, land restitution, and return across the whole of Palestine. Such aspirations are intrinsically intersectional and queer, in that they make space for, or even rely on, a configuration of forward-looking realities that the settler colonial entity and its accomplices attempt to stymie.[43] The paradigm of indigeneity in the Palestinian context does more than simply assert the ancestral belonging of Palestinians to their land: It responds to the state's disavowal of their sovereignty by means of foregrounding Palestinians' (hi)stories of resistance to settler colonialism as well as their narratives and ambitions, as opposed to reading all these as part of Zionist narratives.[44]

Ilan Pappé has argued for the conceptual inseparability of indigeneity from cultural and artistic production in Palestine, stating that "indigeneity has become a signifier of cultural and political Palestinian struggle" (i.e., a struggle that he refers to as "cultural indigenous resistance").[45] Per Pappé, it is when the popular cultural resistance takes nondramatic artistic forms that indigeneity—as an optic and a motif—plays a role in (re)making sense of the world.[46] The relatively narrow body of work on Palestinian popular culture—falling under "Palestinian cultural studies"[47]—that took off in the mid-1990s, precisely post-Oslo and as part of the resignification of cultural resistance mentioned earlier, has drawn attention to the important yet neglected role of popular cultural production in the negotiation of the political in Palestine.[48] Indeed, writing about popular culture—and, more precisely in this book, about fashion—in Palestine dovetails with the very work of grassroots cultural resistance conducted by Palestinian creatives, and of disbanding the trite view that, in Palestine, music, television, fashion, and the likes are epiphenomenal if not irrelevant to politics. Emphasizing the political value of cultural-artistic praxis in Palestine, Tawil-Souri has maintained that the project

of Palestinian cultural studies is essentially "a mode of consciousness reclaiming history," insofar as Palestinian cultural producers "preserve the(ir) past and reproduce its images and its discourse, and simultaneously represent and recreate the present, whether in exile, in refugee camps, in ghettos, or open-air prisons."[49]

By fostering an encounter between Indigenous studies and cultural studies, *Dressed for Dissent* contributes to bringing to the fore how the paradigm of indigeneity, as well as Indigenous narratives, are mobilized by cultural producers as a way to *make* culture a form of resistance. In the wake of a widespread return among young Palestinian cultural producers to Indigenous epistemologies as a means to reorient their creative vision for a decolonized Palestine, local popular cultural production can be generative of unbounded imaginings. *Dressed for Dissent* broadens the understanding of resistance beyond traditional political or military actions, introducing contemporary fashion as a paramount yet overlooked site of negotiation of resistance. All the protagonists in this book consider their work a form of resistance—mostly because in the face of Israel's mission of ethnic cleansing, any form of creative-cultural production that fosters community, generates knowledge, recuperates the past, and produces new narratives, is an act of resistance to obliteration. This book argues that such work of cultural-creative resistance—via fashion production, design, and storytelling—is deliberately decolonial, insofar as it is committed simultaneously to exposing and questioning the queerphobic, racist, and xenophobic scaffolds of the Zionist state, while simultaneously bringing forth Indigenous values, knowledges, and aesthetics through which to shape a reality freed from settler colonialism.

Dressed for Dissent maps an affective cartography of fashion across Palestine—including the West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem, and the '48 territories (or 1948 Palestine, i.e., the territories where Palestinians lived before the establishment of the State of Israel and that today are officially considered Israel proper)—showing how over the past fifteen years a generation of young Palestinians has developed decolonial approaches to the making, circulation, and documentation of fashion as a political way of prefiguring alter/native lifeworlds beyond dominant assumptions and discourses around the Palestinian "cause." The fashion collectives discussed in this book are for the vast majority based in Palestine, and for a tiny minority maintain Palestine as their base but have members in the global diaspora. All the collectives are connected with one another by way of amical and professional collaborations. I attend to how these cultural producers have formed a creative community in the face of Israeli efforts to fracture Palestinian identity through joint forms of debilitation, such as the maiming and killing of civilians, the shattering of the land into isolated enclaves with the ensuing de-development of certain areas and the enrichment of others, and the devastation of the environment. This book serves as an archive, a document of a particular moment in Palestinian cultural life when a number of fashion collectives took an affective, aesthetic, and political stance against ongoing settler colonization, and did so through the creation of beauty.

Attending to how Palestinians make use of and document fashion to challenge structures and systems of knowledge as well as to craft new senses of Palestinian identity, I propose the conceptual framework of *queer decolonial fashion* to describe how Palestinian fashion designers and image makers use fashion intersectionally to take a stance against settler colonial oppression and move beyond colonial and nationalist narratives that obfuscate queer and Indigenous perspectives. Queer decolonial fashion marks out the lived creative praxis of Palestinian fashion creatives. Their practices disentangle the aesthetic-political consciousness of the Palestinian struggle from the heteropatriarchal fantasies that have largely imbued Palestinian imagination pre-Oslo; and in so doing, they forge alter/native horizons, namely horizons that are grounded in an Indigenous reformulation of collective identity and relationality. As a concept and a practice, queer decolonial fashion in Palestine intertwines gender-sexual embodiment, racial dynamics, class issues, and environmental concerns as a means to mobilize, through fashion, a critique of the Israeli occupation. In this sense, the design collections, as well as the visual documentation of these collections and the production process behind them, illustrate the ways in which the challenging of colonial structures and the retrieval of the Indigenous past can be effected.

Fashion, a genre of cultural production that has been historically peripheralized in Palestinian studies, emerges in this book as a creative activist platform that allows young Palestinians the freedom to disavow how their collective identities have been narrated in the past. They do this by way of resituating them into a decolonial framework of the liberation struggle. They use fashion as a toolbox with which to open up possibilities of attaching to Palestine differently, that is, of experiencing various modes of belonging as well as questioning and recrafting collective identity via dress. Ultimately, the analysis of their work reveals how certain fashion practices employed throughout historic Palestine operationalize a cogent model of creative decolonial activism grounded in the interdependence of gender, sexual, racial, and environmental concerns through which a more livable and desirable future for a free Palestine can be envisioned. Such a model is potentially applicable to other settler colonial contexts in which fashion-making practices with a deeply rooted ancestral history have been overlooked, and offers a portal—via fashion—into a broader understanding of cultural resistance on a global scale.

METHODOLOGY AND BOOK STRUCTURE

Dressed for Dissent relies on extensive interviews conducted with Palestinian fashion designers and image makers over a period of five years. These interviews are supplemented by a series of informal participatory observations, such as studio visits and conversations via email, WhatsApp, and telephone. My initial research for this book began prior to the COVID-19 pandemic timeline;

after a few months of fieldwork in the West Bank and '48 Palestine, establishing relationships with a number of research participants and speaking to local cultural institutions and scholars, the prospect of lockdown regulations forced me to continue this project remotely. I therefore had to abandon the more traditional ethnographic dimension in which this book was initially supposed to have been framed, and I instead conducted interviews online over a period of three years. Thus, all in all, the research on which the materials for this book are based did not follow a linear ethnographic trajectory.[50] I managed to make two additional trips to Palestine: before the Israeli government further restricted access to international scholars and journalists, and before the eruption of genocidal violence following October 7.

I found support with the challenges of carrying out this research in the work of other scholars working on Palestine, particularly in the words of Nayrouz Abu Hatoum, who wrote about "methodology in/of uncertainty" in relation to the isolation and frustration of having to suspend research visits, conduct remote Zoom interviews with research participants, and ultimately "surrender to slowing down."[51] Indeed, slowing down—coherent with the praxis of the protagonists of this book—turned into the very methodology of my own project. Adjusting to Palestinian lockdown temporalities on top of the already splintered temporality of their daily life, as well as taking into account the unpredictability of Israeli incursions and their cutting off of electricity (and the consequent disruption of communications with Palestinians on the ground) for weeks or even months, became the only manageable way to continue this project, to maintain nourishing relationships, and to stay attuned (as much as one could possibly do from afar) to the reality in Palestine. As Abu Hatoum put it, while "there is a form of intimacy that can only be created while being in a physical location and getting to know it through multiple sensory engagements and over a long period of time," the abovementioned obstacles and frustrations are actually quintessential to researching Palestine (i.e., those obstacles are instructive inasmuch as they elucidate the spatial and temporal constrictions and compromises imposed on researchers by the Israeli settler regime).[52]

The analysis of fashion work in this book consists of visual readings of garments, photographs, and films. In these readings I "pursue feeling," an expression used by Lauren Berlant in a conversation we had in the early stages of my research; namely, I remain attentive to the affective qualities and properties of the objects I look at and to the ways in which they attuned me, as a reader and viewer, to certain aesthetic sensibilities, while also acknowledging that my affective engagement with these materials is, at least in part, informed by the affects sparked by the conversations I had about them with their makers. An affect theory–informed visual analysis of creative outputs helps me illustrate how fashion storytelling offers insights into the relationship between affect, aesthetics, and politics under settler colonialism.

Holding a European passport with which I can travel freely, I have the ethical and moral duty to reject any pretense of neutrality as I observe, listen to, and continue to learn about the brutality of Israel's project of ethnic cleansing.[53] I recognize, however, the contradiction in my positioning, for while making these statements I benefit from living in safety (as a white, cisgender, middle-class man) in the Global North, which has supported the State of Israel, in more or less overt ways, since its establishment. I hope that this book will, in its own humble way, stand as a testament to the importance of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle as well as to the exhilarating creativity that the younger generation of Palestinians has persistently cultivated in the face of injustice. It has been my task to interpret their work and stories, to place them in a broader scholarly framing; but the designers and image makers themselves are the storytellers and theorists of their own work, to which I hope mine will do justice.

My use of "Palestine" in the book encompasses the entire homeland, or historic Palestine, meaning, Palestine as a whole, including the territories that were annexed to what today is called Israel. This epistemological stance does not ignore the differences across the territory with regard to how in certain areas people's livelihood is much more at risk than in others; yet, referring to Palestine as one single land implies a refusal to abide by the Zionist-colonial territorial fragmentation and annexation of Palestine on the level of space, time, and identity. Sarah Ihmoud has stated that "Palestine is embodied regardless of where we may live—in the homeland or the *shataat* [diaspora]," an argument centered on the understanding, shared within much of Palestinian decolonial feminism, that Palestine—as a nation, identity, and idea—also encompasses the diaspora.[54] Thinking about Palestine as inclusive of the diaspora is undoubtedly necessary to understand the relation between Palestinians and the homeland beyond conventional models of national belonging premised on a local/diasporic, or diasporic/nondiasporic, binary. As for the fashion creatives herein, their relationships with the diaspora are varied: Some of them are allowed to travel in and out of Palestine and therefore carry out some of their work from neighboring countries; others have one or more members who live in the diaspora and coordinate part of the logistics of product distribution from afar; others have a web of relationships with artisans and fellow Palestinian creatives who live across the Levant without whom their work would not be possible; lastly, others are firm about working only in Palestine with Palestinians and for Palestinians, with no internationally based collaborators or customers. The differences in the relationships with and views on the diaspora are testament to how nonhomogeneous the Palestinian fashion scene is, despite its overall unity.

Dressed for Dissent highlights these relationships in the discussion of the practices of each fashion collective; however, in my analysis of Palestinian fashion practices, I do not substantively engage with those of the diaspora. This is, on the one hand, to give voice to the work of fashion collectives on the ground

and account for the material challenges they face under occupation, and on the other, to avoid putting their work in conversation with that of diaspora designers in the West who, to a vast degree, have surrendered to capitalist logics of overproduction and hyper-consumption. Despite the "glocal" practices of some of the protagonists in the book, I notice a tangible disjuncture between the designers in Palestine and those in the diaspora.[55] Part of this disjuncture has to do with language. My collaborators alternate between English and Arabic (some use English as their main language of communication on social media channels, while others use solely Arabic). Conversely, I would contend that the exclusive use of English and the complete omission of Arabic in the work of most Palestinian creatives in the West contributes to robbing Palestinians not only of their rights but also of their language. What's more, many Palestinian fashion designers in the diaspora market their work as "Palestinian" without directly engaging with local artisans in Palestine, understanding the labor conditions there, or materially contributing to the Palestinian economy. Even though the majority of Palestinian designers in the diaspora do urgent work in raising awareness about the Palestinian struggle, they are more visible, more heard, and have bigger audiences, whereas those in Palestine have remained—to varying degrees—unheard, while working in dramatically difficult conditions: *Dressed for Dissent* is about them.

Each chapter of this book zooms in on circumscribed locales while also speaking and linking to places referenced in the other chapters so as to retain a continuity of analysis consistent with the idea of Palestine as a single, inseparable territory. Chapter 1 hones the argument that contemporary Palestinian fashion collectives are anti-statist and anti-apartheid: It does so by exploring practices addressing the Zionist settler state, a state that ethnically relegates Palestinians to the outskirts of the public sphere, that continuously uproots them from their land, and that reveals its xenophobia and queerphobia by equating "brown Palestinian Arabs" with promiscuity, animality, and perversity, while parading Ashkenazi white nationalist hetero/homosexuality as a model for inclusive citizenship. I introduce the concept of *anti-apartheid fashion* through a discussion of fashion practices that make explicit the inextricability of the occupation with queer Palestinian oppression. In chapter 2 I turn my attention to the entwinement of queerness and the environment through a discussion of how Palestinian fashion collectives have developed sustainable practices to assert their attachment to land as well as refuse Israel's attempted destruction of same. What does it mean, after all, to envision a liberated Palestine, even a queer one, if the land has been brutalized by the occupation and its infrastructures shattered? A speculative answer can be found in the sustainable work of local fashion practitioners who, by embracing a holistic, Indigenous understanding of the relations between body and land, humans and nonhumans, employ fashion to confront Israeli environmental injustice and thereby reassert land sovereignty. Chapter 3 ponders the relationship between creative activism and militant resistance. In the face of Israel's surveillance technologies and Western

epistemologies of gender, sexual, and racial representation, fashion can mobilize tactics of fugitivity while simultaneously consolidating a communal spirit of unity and oneness; illegibility is hereby invoked as an ethical return to an ontological being-together-in-the-world—a call for relationality in the struggle against settler colonialism. Shifting the focus from the spatial to the temporal dimension of fashion, chapter 4 argues that no Palestinian model of creative justice is tenable without an anticapitalist embrace of slow time. The immobilization imposed by Israel is counteracted by Palestinians through a negotiation of temporal structures that takes the form of a strategic slowing down on their own terms. Not only does such slowing down ensure fair labor in terms of fashion production, but it also solicits, among fashion creatives, ingenious ways of inhabiting the temporality of the blockade by bringing history back into the figuration of new ways of being. The chapter ultimately proposes that the adaptive temporality of fashion sustainability is connected to the malleable temporality of gender and sexual embodiment, thereby strengthening the land–body nexus that is at the core of the social justice agenda of the protagonists of this book.

To sum up, *Dressed for Dissent* charts the emergence of the Palestinian fashion scene as well as its evolution over the last fifteen years in response to two main phenomena: first, the entrenchment of the material infrastructures of the Israeli occupation, which, with its draconian system of enclosure, has curtailed the movement of people and goods; and second, the ever-increasing repressive policies of the PA—in the form of the ban on protests, the shuttering of grassroots organizations, and the physical beatings or incarceration of cultural organizers and activists.[56] While the Palestinian fashion community responding to these phenomena is far from homogenous, inasmuch as there are multifarious modes in which ambivalent post-Oslo affectivity has been channeled into garments and been documented through fashion storytelling, its members resolutely share the same ultimate goal: creating new atmospheres of living beyond the constraints of settler occupation.

1

The Queer Staging of Anti-Apartheid Fashion

In 2019 I connected digitally with Shukri Lawrence, a then twenty-one-year-old Palestinian fashion designer from Jerusalem, after coming across his popular Instagram account, @wifirider. I was intrigued by his social media posts: a thoroughly curated collage of digital artworks of fashionably dressed, genderless avatars, some of them wearing the keffiyeh or garments featuring the Palestinian flag. These striking artworks, occasionally alternated with images of Arab and Western pop music icons, were the basis for some extravagant, full-fledged design pieces that would mark the starting point for Trashy Clothing, the fashion collective that Shukri would go on to establish with filmmaker Omar Braika, a Palestinian refugee in Jordan.

The following year, I met Shukri in person at a terraced café in Jabal al-Weibdeh, Amman. He talked to me about the origins of the collective with an air of curiosity, skepticism, and restrained excitement. I could understand how extra caution might be required in encountering a non-Palestinian academic researching critical fashion practices in contexts where discourses around activism as well as gender and sexuality can be divisive or even invite surveillance. But after a little small talk, the conversation took a more relaxed and engaging turn, and Shukri quickly revealed a charming sense of humor and taste for hilarity—something I would come to see reverberating throughout his work.

Born soon after the Oslo accords, Shukri and Omar spent their teen years using the internet, in Shukri's words, "to escape from the reality of the occupation." While the war between Israel and Palestine raged on, they developed social media contacts with fellow Palestinians (including artisans with whom they would later work in producing their designs). These contacts were a "survival strategy," a means of alleviating the mundanity of the occupation, with its bifurcation

and splintering not just of geographical space but of social connectivity. Their community-oriented approach to media consumption resonates with how Palestinians in general are affected by and are reliant on technologies when social and political life are foreclosed, and when physical gatherings become impossible.[1]

Shukri told me that, even before the advent of social media, in order to navigate cyberspace safely and freely and to facilitate communication flows across borders, Arab youths tended to use fake names, profiles, and pictures online; these anonymous interactions via chat rooms laid the groundwork for the construction of transnational communities.[2] The use of the internet for purposes of community-building became even more cogent after the outbreak of the Second Intifada in 2000; indeed, during the uprising the number of Palestinian internet users, especially young users, dramatically increased insofar as people confined to their homes turned to the internet not just as a source of entertainment but as a means of communication with other Palestinians they had been separated from. In addition to their physical separation, the rise in internet usage was also a response to the systematic erasure of Palestinians from the hegemonic Israeli and Western public spheres and their marginalization from local mainstream media, regulated by the Palestinian Authority. The disjuncture between their virtual engagement with one another and their physical isolation and marginalization prompted Palestinian youths to solidify what Amahl Bishara referred to as intimate "network[s] of care" and "media world[s],"[3] which intensified further with the flourishing of transnational digital activism that came out of the Arab Spring.[4]

In 2013, inspired by the role that social media platforms were playing in amplifying political dissent and mobilizing youths against authoritarian governments in the MENA region, Shukri found himself, alongside Omar and many of their peers, searching for creative styles of expression online in the face of state-sanctioned dominant ideologies.[5] He decided to create an Instagram account; he called it @wifirider. Shukri mentioned that when he set up this account he was invested in the global popular culture that social media had given him access to. He recounted that by "riding the Wi-Fi" (hence his Instagram handle) he had absorbed "the emo-ish poetic imagery that was dominant on social media during those years": By mixing an emo aesthetic with Palestinian signs and symbols, he created a visual and conceptual clash as a means to experiment, develop his artistic sensibility, and make sense of his own positionality as a queer Palestinian.[6]

Since opening his account, Instagram has been Shukri's main vehicle for communicating with fellow Palestinian creatives and for disseminating fashion images and messages about nonnormative bodies that undermine, or at least evade, the oppressive and exclusionary structures of Israeli and Palestinian societies.[7] A site of stylistic and political experimentation, @wifirider built up a base of followers who could presumably relate to the queer style and popular culture that Shukri's assemblage of images hinted at. The success of his Instagram page led directly to Trashy Clothing. Today, Trashy's vast social media following is largely Middle

Eastern and constitutes a virtual hub of support for Palestine: Their followers regularly like, comment on, and share their visuals—mostly photographs of designs or shots from advertising campaigns.

In addition to social media, throughout the 2000s the number of Palestinian TV and radio stations in the West Bank grew exponentially; thus television, too, became an important medium for young Palestinians who then had further access to a pan-Arab popular culture and a global media culture more broadly.[8] In fact, besides daily war coverage, private Palestinian TV stations were rebroadcasting entertainment content, including movies and music videos, produced in other MENA countries, especially Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. Both Shukri and Omar grew up enveloped in this pan-Arab entertainment mediascape through which they were introduced to performing artists such as Lebanese drag queen Bassem Feghali, Lebanese star Haifa Wehbe, Armenian Lebanese pop musician Maria Nalbandian, and Egyptian singer and actress Marwa Nagy. While none of these figures were explicitly queer, they were coded as such by queer people like Shukri and Omar, who attuned themselves to the affective-aesthetic properties of the performers' unconventional, often outlandish, appearances.[9] Those music divas, with their glamorous looks and ambiguous, erotically charged lyrics and performances, informed Shukri's and Omar's tastes and, eventually, Trashy Clothing's aesthetic.

Social media and TV offered young Palestinians a way to form counterspaces in which to communicate in the digital realm and foster attachments to nondominant styles of masculine and feminine embodiment. Palestinian youths, and certainly the fashion collectives discussed in this book, have been actively responsible for appropriating and reconfiguring media for their own dissident ends.

BOOTLEGGING AND HACKING

Shukri described Trashy Clothing to me as a Jerusalem- and Amman-based "Palestinian queer fashion collective" that produces fashion design, photographic, and filmic work. Omar added that "it's a queer, political, subversive ready-to-wear label that plays upon the idea of satire; sometimes we also like to call it an 'anti-fashion fashion label.'" Trashy's work is varied: It spans clothing production, photo shoots, films, and digital media, each of which is employed as a form of storytelling and deals in some way with their everyday life as Palestinians under occupation. The two cofounders explained that the goal of Trashy Clothing is to reclaim—through design collections, lookbooks, photographic spreads, and videos—a multifaceted Palestinian identity that is unmoored from clichéd associations with terrorism and bigotry. In Shukri's words, "The name Trashy is *bootleg*: It comes from stores in the Middle East with names translatable as Nice Lady or Elegant Clothing. To call it Trashy was a fun way to question what is considered elegant, luxurious, and aspirational." The name is meant to question the globally recognized centrality of fashion capitals, all of which are in the Global North, with most brands



FIGURE 1. Trashy Clothing lookbook for 2017 Ready-to-Wear Collection. Photo and artwork by Shukri Lawrence. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

outsourcing their production to the Global South, as well as their luxury branding strategies, which promote parameters of glamour that historically coincide with Caucasian, cisgender, and able-bodied beauty ideals. As Sulafa Zidani has argued, humor is a way for "doubly marginalized [Arab] youth to disturb the power relations subsumed under binaries such as local-global, dominant-marginalized, and center-periphery."[10] Trashy Clothing deliberately disidentifies with and seeks to unsettle, through a campy optic, the manufactured fantasies in which fashion consumers are typically invested.

Trashy Clothing's first collection featured a digital media work that got shared widely on Instagram, namely a T-shirt with the Marc Jacobs logo juxtaposed with a photo print of women wearing niqabs and making a V-sign. The picture presents the viewers with contrasting signifiers: Specifically, we see women in traditional

Muslim garb, the logo of a high-end New York fashion label (designed by a gay fashion designer), and a queer model and activist wearing harem pants. This "fashion gesture" unfixes the iconography of Islamic femininity, associated with modest fashion, through a queer mash-up that occurs on two levels: the graphic design of a symbol of Western capitalism and the styling of a queer Middle Eastern popular figure in a pose that mocks the fashion editorial models in glossy magazines. An iconic brand in the fashion industry is extracted from its luxury context, and its logo is, firstly, counterfeited, and secondly paired with an image that is markedly Arabic.[11] Similarly, in an image from the same lookbook (fig. 1), a woman poses in a sparkly, gold and green lurex niqab while exhibiting a knockoff Gucci backpack and a knockoff Moschino bangle. Over her dress she wears a tee with the print of a Muslim woman driving a car, with a superimposed Nike logo. Again conventional projections of Muslim female bodies are confounded by their juxtaposition with logos of American and European brands on both prints and accessories as a way of questioning or making fun of the puzzlement such cultural remixing might generate in a Western viewer (who presumably wouldn't immediately associate most Muslim women, in their "modest" dress, with an overt display of popular luxury fashion items).

In yet another photo from the collection, on a bootlegged top the FILA logo is altered to read "Fafi," a Palestinian term that approximates the slur "faggot": To reclaim this word and to brand it as fashion is rather audacious, seeing as anyone wearing the T-shirt would run the risk of being stopped, questioned, or even attacked. From a queer Arab vantage, Trashy Clothing's bootlegging operations reshuffle popular cultural references and symbols in order to question the stereotypical representations of Palestinians within the dominant visual public sphere. For Trashy Clothing, to both make and wear these clothing items is a political provocation: It pushes the limits of the sayable and the nameable that demarcate the visual field in a given geopolitical context.[12] In other words, it poses the question of what and who is entitled to representation within, in this case, the visual economy of fashion. A knockoff FILA sweatshirt is *queered* and *Arabized* through a slang word that signals the "faggotry" of both the T-shirt and its wearer. Trashy bootlegs well-known Western brands by mixing their logos with Arabic letters and motifs, thereby poking fun at Western fearmongering and the deceitful association of the Arabic language with Islamic terrorism. The use of Arabic is also meant to disassociate the Trashy team's linguistic identity from a negative social imaginary and to bring it into dialogue with fashion and creativity.

I use the expression *queer Arabic bootleg* to describe the humorous approach with which Shukri and Omar, via fashion styling and digital artworks, center their gender, sexual, and ethnic identification in critiquing a capitalist, colonial model of fashion, one that participates in the consolidation of the latent gendering and racializing tenets of the nation-state to the exclusion of minoritized, and potentially dissenting, bodies and voices. By producing these queer Arabic bootleg garments

and digitally circulating their photographic representations across social media channels, Trashy Clothing hijacks the protocols of the "fashionable" or, rather, the "noteworthy" that regulates fashion representation by inviting oblique or polemic dispositions toward Western conventions of beauty, gender, and sexuality. Concomitantly, it challenges the assumption that Arab youths are detached from or even unaware of fashion—an obsolete and reactionary cultural perception pivoted on a distinction between center (the West) and periphery (the East) as well as on an idea of Arab communities as isolated from global popular culture. Through its queer taxonomy of anti-fashionable fashion imagery, Trashy's queer fashion gestures make it possible to see fashion design and photography as practices of visual critique of the fantasies of glamour and wealth as well as of the implied aesthetic progressiveness fostered by the fashion system. Its humorous genre of fashion-making unsettles the hegemonic fashion imaginary, an imaginary within which queer Arab voices that evade the boundaries of neoliberal, trendy aesthetics have historically had no place.

Trashy Clothing's bootlegging makes explicit their decision to forefront, in Shukri and Omar's words, "Arab queerness" in the fight against colonial, Western(izing) representational fashion protocols. Through what Shukri calls "a burst-out image of Middle Eastern queerness," Trashy's bootlegging also disputes the nature of the relationship between capitalism and the Middle East: Whereas Western fashion brands are widely consumed in Israel and in international shopping hubs across the region, such as the high-end malls in the Emirates, the same brands only penetrate as counterfeit products in Palestine. In the context of Palestinian activist design, counterfeit is embraced as a DIY practice that exposes the power asymmetries shored up by inequities in the apparel and textile industry. Bootlegging prompts a reflection on the political economy in Palestine vis-à-vis other Middle Eastern countries, including the State of Israel. It is a critical practice that interrogates capitalism's channels of luxury consumption, from which entire populations are excluded and/or in the service of which others are exploited.[13]

Apropos of consumption, Trashy Clothing's customer base is transnational, comprising, for the most part, Palestinians of the diaspora living in Europe or the United States, along with other Europeans and Americans. Because their clothes are sold exclusively online, they have fewer consumers in the Middle East, where online shopping is less popular. As Shukri mentioned, "Whenever we get an online order, whether from the Middle East or from the Global North, we also receive a message from the customer on the likes of 'this is in love of Palestine.'" The majority of Trashy's consumers, both in Palestine and elsewhere, are queer; however, their more confrontational queer clothing items are rarely worn openly in Palestine. Trashy Clothing's popularity on social media platforms led to artistic collaborations with queer designers outside of Palestine, which in turn boosted Trashy Clothing's reach in Europe and the United States. For example, in 2022 they collaborated with GmbH, a Berlin-based, BIPOC, and sustainability-conscious



FIGURE 2. Trashy Clothing editorial spread for *i-D* magazine online. Unpublished photo by Shukri Lawrence. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

fashion collective, to produce a collection of "Free Palestine" T-shirts, the proceeds of which went to Palestinian communities.

The labor involved in developing these collaborations factors into a larger grassroots mobilization aimed at voicing political consciousness (and possibly connecting the viewer-consumer to the Palestinian struggle). Trashy Clothing also generates capital that is then, at least in part, devolved to local groups whose commitment to the Palestinian struggle is transparent and deserving of extra aid, such as The Land of Canaan, a foundation that supports village-based cooperatives and traditional farming communities in Palestine; Rainbow Street, a protection organization for LGBTQ+ youths in the Middle East; and alQaws, a Palestinian queer-feminist activist group. Unlike other Palestinian designers discussed herein, Trashy Clothing, with their queer Arab aesthetic and collaborations, critically intervenes in the larger fashion mediascape, reaching both Palestinians in the diaspora and other international consumers.

Trashy's critical commentary on the inconvenience of queer Arabs to the visual culture of fashion took a striking form in a photo shoot staged along the Separation Wall in the West Bank. The shoot featured models casually posing in various outfits in front of the wall (fig. 2); eight of the images from the shoot made it into an editorial spread published in 2018 on *i-D* magazine's digital platform and were accompanied by a poem from Palestinian artist Reem Kawasmi titled "To deny my people is to deny peace itself—period."[14] The photo shoot took place in Bethlehem

on the afternoon of New Year's Eve in 2018: a strategic time when the city felt empty. Shukri recounted that despite the relative calm, they had to be careful: They checked the area and made connections with nearby shop owners in case of any problems with the Israeli army.

Fortunately, the photo shoot proceeded smoothly. Even so, there is a perceptible air of suspension, a self-contained fear of impending danger in the photos: The models look distracted or numb; they are not emoting. Additionally, with their queer looks they embody a mode of *being in*, or inhabiting, masculinities and femininities that contravene, using Lauren Berlant's wording, those genres of gender and sexual identity that function as "structures of conventional expectations" on to which people hold to acquire "certain kinds of affective assurances."[15] In other words, they don't lend themselves to any easy reading; they are not intelligible through any conventional emotional register. They are free from what Mohammed El-Kurd calls "the Palestinian's affective allowance," which he defines as the shrinking range of feelings that one is permitted to express visibly.[16] Indeed, in their visual work, Trashy Clothing rejects the representational norms of grief and suffering that Lori Allen has ascribed to an affective politics of "immediation," namely the set of conventions through which international humanitarian projects leverage negative feelings in the pursuit of empathy and solidarity.[17]

Vis-à-vis graffiti tags and posters, which leave material traces and ephemera as signs of lived experience, the performative happening of this photo shoot introduces the actual bodies of the Palestinian members of the collective into the visual framework of the Wall, thereby enabling them to affirm their agency and record their presence: an exercise in affective belonging and citizenry that Asef Bayat has called the "art of presence."[18] In this sense, the situatedness of this experience is embodied and made public. Also, given Trashy Clothing's rejection of the neoliberal humanitarian rhetoric of peacebuilding, the very publication of this photo spread in a trendy style magazine for an issue dedicated to "peace" attests to their commitment to hacking mainstream platforms. Such hacking allows them to carve out a space of critique in media outlets wherein their provocations would ideally be understood by readers. In this photo shoot, the physical presence of youngsters wearing Trashy Clothing (see fig. 2) is captured against an icon of separation and oppression, as if to show, simultaneously, the existence of queers in Palestine and their very real involvement in the anti-occupation movement.

By enshrining their queer looks into a fashion frame (that of the fashion photo shoot as well as that of the magazine), these images participate in the shifting, or at least the expansion, of the field of visuality of the occupation as constructed by international media. If, on the one hand, Trashy Clothing unsettles the dominant genre of fashion representation by instantiating a polemic relation with Western fashion cultures, on the other, and more ambitiously, it hacks the media representations of Palestinian youths as fixated on a twofold model: that of (high-intensity) violent resistance and (low-intensity) suffering. As Gil Hochberg

has shown in her analysis of the visual politics of the occupation, Israelis and Palestinians have become, through Western spectacularizing media images, "familiar objects" within a dominant, highly restricted visual framework of loss and violence.[19] In discussing Hochberg's argument with Shukri and Omar, they expressed the belief that a frame of violence is not in itself negative since, as a matter of fact, Palestinians are resisting the Israeli occupation with every means possible, given the asymmetry of powers at play; however, daily news coverage by international newspapers and TV channels that equates Palestinians with terrorists is indeed damaging, for it cements the image of Palestinians, as per Hochberg, into a structure of ontological violence.

Along adjacent lines, I argue that while the framing of the Palestinian resistance as violent does belong to a larger imperial, colonial visuality through which Palestinians are portrayed as dangerous, and might therefore be counterproductive, sanitization of the resistance may be equally problematic inasmuch as it implies that Palestinians are somewhat disenfranchised, passive, and ultimately lacking agency. Creative interventions such as Trashy's partake in the project of dissembling this field of visuality by showcasing local queer youths engaged in decolonial creative actions. The political meaning of a fashion shoot such as this might lie in its capacity to glitch the iconography of the occupation and eventually make it possible for queer subjects to represent themselves beyond the aforementioned, highly restricted framing. The photo spread is an enunciation that interpellates the spectator to become acquainted with Palestinian queerness under occupation. What makes this invitation concrete is the patent ordinariness of the scene of the photo shoot: its lack of forced aestheticization or glamorous fashionability—the poses are casual, the outfits overall ordinary, the facial expressions flat—generates a scopic ground wherein feelings of compassion, pity, or anger are not actively elicited.

These images neither reify the Wall nor contribute to consolidating the fetishizing frame of victimhood and oppression through which Palestinian lives are often depicted by Western media. Indeed, the backdrop of the Wall is covered, in the segments pictured throughout the photo series, with graffiti of all kinds, some made by international artists in support of Palestine, others made by Palestinian artists, with celebratory statements invoking the Palestinian liberation from settler colonial oppression—see, for instance, the graffiti of an iconic image of Leila Khaled (notable militant of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine) holding a rifle, as well as a caricature of US President Donald Trump—an unrelentingly vocal supporter of Israel's occupation and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians—crossed out with a black X.[20] As Arjun Appadurai observed, backdrops in decolonial photography "serve not just as 'icons' . . . for the photographic subject, but they are, in practice, indexical of these realities." They bear the potential for a "visual decolonization . . . outside the taxonomizing and coercive techniques of colonial observers and the colonial state" and prompt the imagination beyond the confines

of the colonial visual border.[21] In photographing themselves, Shukri, Omar, and the other members of the collective challenge the typical script in which Palestinians, and Palestinian queers more specifically, are constructed as "other"—or simply nonexistent outside the imperialist purview of humanitarian rescue—and foreground the *queer ordinariness* of their bodies and lives, including their creative participation in the anti-occupation struggle, as shown by the models' proximity to the graffiti on the Wall: Their fashion shoot is a gesture that in its performative mundanity calls into question the normalization of the occupation by visualizing what and who is made invisible by the state as well as those who creatively partake in forms of cultural resistance.[22]

In Trashy Clothing's work we find a through line that is common to virtually all Palestinian fashion designers. Specifically, in/visibility and il/legibility are negotiated along two main, apparently contradictory lines: On the one side, making oneself visible as Palestinian is paramount to reclaiming presence and agency throughout the continuing process of ethnic cleansing and memory erasure; on the other, making one's presence visible yet not fully legible is a way for Palestinian creatives to refuse their assimilation into hegemonic culture and politics, as well as a way to stage a refusal to be subsumed under the normative frameworks of intelligibility proper to Western politics and media. To be visible, and at the same time illegible (at least in part), is an approach to cultural production that enables Palestinians to speak and represent themselves in their own terms, while concurrently inconveniencing the visual and discursive logics of the Western public sphere.

The "fafis" in these images are agentive subjects who draw attention to the materiality of the occupation through the orchestration of a photographic event, and in the process encourage their viewers to think of fashion image-making as an arena for the dissemination of styles and affects defying colonial narratives and assumptions. While their fashion aesthetic might read as queer to Western eyes, their emotional postures remain opaque: Their affective illegibility prevents the viewer from projecting onto these bodies feelings (of, say, anger, sadness, empathy, or other) that have been coded by mediatized, monolithic images of Palestinians. Their self-portrayal is blurry: Their queerness is asserted through the clothing, but it is not offered up for further scrutiny or commodification; the models/members of Trashy Clothing are not partaking in what Elspeth Brown, writing about fashion photography, refers to as the transfer and circulation of "commercialized affect," a formula indicating that the body of the model is socially articulated through forms of affective labor (such as highly rehearsed posing) embedded in the consumer economy and pandering to capitalist consumption.[23]

The imagery here, produced via photographic self-staging, has the potential to stick with the viewers/readers precisely because of its apparent spontaneity, which is at odds with the artifices of commercial fashion photography. This self-representation of young Palestinians evokes Miriyam Aouragh's argument that (what Edward Said famously called) "the permission to narrate" one's own history



FIGURE 3. Trashy Clothing fashion show, Berlin, 2021. Photo by Michael Wittig. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

can also mean to show pictures of oneself via digital media as a means to offer a view from within, and in so doing, I would add, to suggest ways of structuring alternative modes of political agency.[24] I read this editorial spread as an example of "fashion hacking"—an expression coined by Otto Von Busch to describe experimental creative practices through which fashion makers otherwise sidelined by the fashion system collectively intervene in, or hack, that system by subverting its stylistic conventions and stereotypical expectations.[25] Fashion hacking can be understood as an artistic practice used to hijack and disorient mainstream fashion codes to produce new imaginings that foster community and resistance against the state and/or capitalism.

At the start of their 2021 fashion show (fig. 3)—sponsored by the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, a Dutch NGO that funds creative initiatives in regions with limited opportunities, and held at Berlin's annual fashion week—the designers built and installed a drywall on the side of the runway, blocking the view of half of the audience. The models were dressed in traditional Arab clothing items (such as hijabs and *sirwal*) paired with leather harnesses and PVC crop tops. While the runway show was taking place, the discombobulated audience on the wrong side of the wall instinctively got up and went around the wall. Already familiar with Trashy Clothing's fashion provocations, I understood the stunt was intentional but was left disorientated nevertheless, unsure whether to follow the other attendees or to stay seated in the claustrophobic space facing the wall. As Shukri recalled: "We recreated the Apartheid Wall on the runway, and after the show 90 percent of the attendees with whom we spoke didn't even know that a wall like that existed in real life, hence their confusion."[26]

Their intent was to create for the spectators an experience of defamiliarization with the fashion show (a performance genre that typically sets out to spark awe,

pleasure, and desire), as well as, in turn, to familiarize them with the bad feelings associated with having one's own vision blocked by a separating wall. They converted a runway show held in a fashion-forward European city into a space in which the attendees were left with feelings of disorientation, unfamiliarity, and discomfort—feelings that Sara Ahmed has called *queer feelings*.[27] Trashy Clothing's performance, inasmuch as it plays with the dialectic visibility/invisibility (of the Wall, of the crowd, and of the models and their queerness), can be seen as having a somewhat pedagogical function: By affectively confounding the audience within a disorienting space (the other side of the runway), it forces them to sensorily experience for themselves, albeit briefly, the imperial visuality of the occupation; in so doing, it immerses them into a collective mood of uncanny disturbance and unsettledness. Through this performative fashion act, Trashy Clothing attunes the audience—via "bad" or ambivalent feelings—to its espousal of a critique against the Wall, and, by extension, Israel's apartheid. Moreover, Trashy styled the models in outfits that, in generating a clash between Western queer popular aesthetics and Arab traditional dress, simultaneously *arabized* queer looks and *queered* Arab dress, hence troubling the visual regime of fashion. The operation at play in this performance has a twofold goal: to hack the conventions of the fashion show (one in which clothes and the models' clothed bodies are made visible and desirable for the entire audience) by obstructing the audience's vision; and to confront the audience with outfits that, thanks to their queer Arabic bootleg style, foreground Arab queerness as an aesthetic of disturbance of the hierarchical parameters of mainstream fashion.

I see the aesthetic techniques of bootlegging and hacking that I have discussed so far as falling under the rubric of *disidentification*; according to José Muñoz, to disidentify does not mean simply to misrecognize something, or to disengage from its image. Rather, to disidentify with a certain aesthetic means to transcode its message in a way that both exposes its exclusionary logic and gives voice to those individuals who are excluded from and/or are inconvenient to that logic.[28] It is about using the code of a dominant group as a tool for articulating a critique of that group. Put differently, disidentification—an aesthetic-political practice performed and embraced by minoritized subjects—is about engagement, as much as disengagement, with mainstream oppressive content; the dual purpose of this disidentification is immediate survival and future liberation. Disidentification is a way of handling dominant ideology by neither opting out altogether nor assimilating oneself into it; rather than actively escaping or passively participating, the subject who disidentifies with the hegemonic ideology works *with, on*, and *against* it by recognizing the structural, oppressive inequities that undergird it, tactically attempting to dismantle such inequities. In Muñoz's words: "Disidentification is about recycling and rethinking encoded meaning. . . . It scrambles and reconstructs the encoded message of a cultural text in a fashion that both reveals the encoded message's universalizing and exclusionary machinations and recircuits its workings to account for, include, and empower minority identities and

identifications."[29] It is an aesthetic strategy that seeks to challenge and transform a cultural logic from the inside by rerouting its codes toward the self-representations of subjects who have been "othered" by the majoritarian culture. The minoritized individuals (primarily queer people of color) and communities engaged in disidentificatory practices are neither aligned nor adamantly at odds with the dominant culture, but are rather interested in rescripting and transforming its ideological signs for their own affective and political purposes.

This well applies to Trashy Clothing's work, which references global, mainstream, popular styles and culture while also distancing itself from said culture's exclusion of nonnormative and racialized bodies and refuting the Orientalist association of the latter with alterity. As the previous examples show, images associated with the "Orient" (e.g., the women in Muslim garb in the digital artwork, or the veils worn by the femme-presenting models on the runway) are combined with mainstream Western fashion items and are bootlegged and blended with queer fashion to reorient them, or transcode them, within a hybrid, humorous, campy frame. In like manner, the hacking of the colonial fashion gaze, as seen in the editorial spread (see fig. 2), is a technique of disidentification that, by placing queer Arab bodies into a dominant space—i.e., that of a hip, Western, style magazine—purports to decolonize the fashion imagination by messing with its conventionalities. Through these operations Trashy Clothing plays with the coded meanings of fashion objects and appearances and reshuffles them with the goal of disrupting fashion iconography and its colonial underpinnings.

FASHION FOR PINKWATCHING

Trashy's visual interventions are salient in a context in which queer movements are often quelled: As activist Haneen Maikey, former director of queer-feminist organization alQaws, affirmed, "LGBTQ Palestinians have to deal with the burden of being a double minority: as LGBTQ persons in Palestinian society *and* as Palestinians living in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories."[30] According to both the Trashy Clothing collective and several queer and feminist Palestinian activists in the region, such as Maikey, the protest against the occupation must not overshadow and should not be unburdened from the queer struggle.[31] Shukri and Omar put this straightforwardly: "The queer struggle and the anti-occupation struggle go hand in hand because you can't have free queer Palestinians without a free Palestine. In order to achieve that you need to plant the seeds for it. That's why we do what we do through representation as a way to fight for queer freedom. In order to be able to live in a free Palestine, queer people need to be able to have rights."[32]

Leila Farsakh, Rhoda Kanaaneh, and Sherene Seikaly unpacked this idea when they compellingly wrote about how being Palestinian and being queer are deeply entwined as two forms of marginalization. If Zionist discourses postulate the incompatibility of Palestinian and queer freedoms, at the same time Palestinian

nationalist discourses disregard queer rights for being potentially threatening to Palestinian identity.[33] Confronting both obstacles, queer Palestinian activists call into question the viability of a normative model of Palestinian liberation, a model that essentially denies collective liberation for *all* Palestinians.[34] Trashy Clothing's work encapsulates a decolonial ethos through its centering of Arab queerness via the enactment of visual performances that disidentify with and disturb a colonial gaze. The fashion creatives in Palestine tend to conceptualize their practices in alignment with the mission of local queer and feminist activist organizations, which, based on their native positionality, reject colonial-imperialist epistemologies of LGBTQ visibility (epistemologies to which, for instance, the narrative of "coming out" can be ascribed) and stress how the heteropatriarchal structure of the nation-state model underpins the settler colonial project and intensifies the oppression of Palestinians. These activist organizations posit queerness and anticolonialism as inextricable, and they critique the sexual and racial politics of the Zionist state.[35]

Through its commitment to an "intersectionality of struggles," Trashy Clothing shows its indebtedness to decolonial queerness—a framework that, as discussed in the introduction, was developed by scholars in Palestine studies and activists for understanding the Palestinian struggle in present times.[36] Trashy Clothing is contributing to challenging the imagination of the state-building process by *queering* the visual field from which Palestinian queer people have thus far been left out. Vis-à-vis the fantasy of state-building, which is imbued with expectations of security, order, and policing, Trashy's coalitional art-making practices advance a critique of the normalization of Israel's colonial mission and its tactical obliteration or exploitation of queer subjectivities. Trashy, through their disidentificatory praxis, underscores the attunement of contemporary Palestinian fashion to grassroots activism in Palestine.

As Shukri reflected in a conversation we had in 2020: "Queer Palestinians are facing the very harmful effects of pinkwashing: Essentially, two main facets of our identity, Palestinian and queer, are used by Israeli discourse and representation against each other. Pinkwashing imposes the narrative that our Palestinian identity and our queer identity are in contradiction with each other. This false narrative is oppressive toward us and our people, and it has the effect of creating more internal violence."[37]

Pinkwashing is indeed a crucial concern for Trashy Clothing. In 2019, Shukri and Omar commissioned Tunisian digital artist Patshuro to create an artwork (which they posted on their website and social media channels) showing two chained-up queer avatars of brown, naked, human bodies—somewhat akin to Barbie dolls or Lara Croft–style action figures—with the underlying caption "Against Pinkwashing." The digital artwork suggests how queer Palestinians are resisting the symbolic strangling of their bodies and identities enacted by Israel. After this striking imagery was circulated on social media, Trashy Clothing's most iconic clothing items have become those that explicitly state Trashy's anti-pinkwashing

stance, or, to use an expression coined by queer Palestinian activists, their "pinkwatching."[38] Such items include the "Anti Whitewashing and Pinkwashing Club Shirt" and the "Tourist Syndrome Shirt" (which reads, "Someone who hates pinkwashing very much got me this t-shirt").

"Pinkwashing" is a glamorization of Israel's LGBTQ friendliness aimed at obfuscating the ongoing racialized violence along with the violations of international law and human rights that are perpetrated as part of settler colonialism—an operation that is a constitutive part of Israel's (homo)nationalist project. As Jennifer Kelly has argued, gay tourism in Israel, and particularly in Tel Aviv, with its vibrant gay clubs and beaches, spares international tourists from "witness[ing] the everyday violence of Israel's racialized segregation" while simultaneously positioning militarism as necessary to the "maintenance of diversity and the promise of safety from violence against queer tourists—a promise of safety that pivots on racialized and Islamophobic constructions of Palestinians."[39] In this way, the "promise of protection against homophobic violence . . . is sutured to the rhetoric of protection against terrorist violence": a promise reliant on the construction of Israel as a counterterrorist nation-state.[40]

In 2005 the ministries for foreign affairs and tourism of the State of Israel, with the endorsement of the municipality of Tel Aviv, invested millions of dollars in an advertising campaign called "Brand Israel" aimed at redesigning the public face of Israel for foreign liberal audiences in an attempt to consolidate the state's public self-narrative according to which Israel would be the only democracy in the Middle East (i.e., an outpost of the United States and Europe that subscribes to their same liberal values).[41] As part of its campaign, Israel strategically focused on the international LGBTQ+ community to portray itself as an exceptionally safe haven and sexually free oasis where everyone, regardless of their gender or sexuality, is welcome and valorized; in the words of the Israeli Ministry of Tourism, Tel Aviv is a "gay capital," "a dashing piece of gay heaven" encircled by homophobic Arab countries. Beginning in 2010, a number of gay travel guides (for example, "Happy Gay Israel," whose website displayed photos of muscular Israeli men in Speedos spreading Dead Sea mud on one another's bodies, or riding camels together) catering to the international LGBTQ community were produced by the Ministry of Tourism as part of Israel's marketing strategy; images from the travel guides were exhibited on public urban banners and as online ads.[42] The international "gayfication" of Israel followed the country's record of civil rights achievements from the late 1980s until the 2000s, such as the decriminalization of homosexuality (1988), the possibility of state-funded sex reassignment surgeries (1988), the implementation of antidiscrimination laws in the workplace and in the army (1993), the recognition of same-sex marriages performed abroad (2006), and, more recently, the guarantee of adoption rights for gay parents (2008) and surrogacy rights (2022).

In the view of the Israeli state, homosexuality is a discursive means through which to reproduce the nation and related feelings of national belonging, in



FIGURE 4. Trashy Clothing's spring/summer 2021 Pride for Pay collection advertising campaign. Photo by Omar Braika. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

accordance with a gender (cis), racial (white), and religious (Jewish) triangulation. The (white) gay refashioning of Israel as a hub of gender and sexual freedom is a form of pinkwashing—a rhetorical tactic that, in Sarah Schulman's formulation, was used by Israel to redeem its tarnished reputation in the eye of the international public.[43] Pinkwashing operationalizes the country's deeply entrenched "homonationalism" (i.e., the logic through which LGBTQ constituencies are co-opted into the dominant, nationalist public sphere) by capitalizing on both local and foreign LGBTQ individuals' desires for acceptance, tolerance, and equality. Such a strategy also xenophobically demonizes and pathologizes Palestinians for their allegedly barbaric, primitive, regressive, homophobic, and extremist religious views.[44]

Trashy Clothing's spring/summer 2021 collection, Pride for Pay, shows through the lens of fashion how the queer struggle is intertwined with the anti-occupation movement in Palestine. It explores the ideas of pinkwashing and branding, namely the way Israel has endorsed and capitalized on the LGBTQ+ community as a way to rebrand itself as a progressive country, and in so doing has deflected attention from, or has sugarcoated, the violence of the segregation of the Palestinian people. As the State of Israel incorporates Israeli LGBTQ+ people into a nationalist discourse of belonging, the queerness of its racialized others is debased.[45] In the Pride for Pay collection, "pride" refers to Israel's gay pride narrative enacted at the expense of Palestinians. The advertising campaign (fig. 4) was styled and shot by Shukri and Omar in a rented hotel in Azraq, Jordan. In the words of Omar:

> What we did for the campaign was to stage a pool party that calls to mind the pool and beach parties that take place in Tel Aviv. We played with that idea of a Tel Aviv pool party as an emblematic image of "Brand Israel," using the iconic imagery of luxury excess created by Steven Meisel for Versace in the 1990s as a visual reference, and contaminating it with elements like handcuffs and Molotov cocktails. The models look like they are having fun, posing, hanging out, and lying on the floor, but if you look closely you see they are actually being arrested. We wanted the polished and perfect branding, landscapes, scenery, and fashion to distract the viewer, but if you observe more deeply you notice that there's something really fucked up and unexpected with what you're looking at.[46]

Relying on their own lived experience as queer Palestinians, Shukri and Omar pinkwatch and expose, through image storytelling, the hypocrisy of the ethnostate of Israel, which, with its fantasy of multiculturalism, diverts media attention from its racialized taxonomies, taxonomies that are reflected in this photo shoot, where models of different ethnicities are shown as a supposedly cosmopolitan and cohesive group; however, the only subject who is being arrested is "Arab-looking." The photo shoot employs the visual tropes of pinkwashing (e.g., the multiethnic casting and the paradisiacal setting), but at the same time unveils its racist, militaristic underpinnings. I read the reproduction of this seemingly conventional fashion scene as a thoroughly orchestrated disidentificatory critique of the ethnoracial tenets of pinkwashing and, by extension, of the very apartheid conditions that pinkwashing rigidifies.

I construe Trashy Clothing's disidentificatory genre of fashion-making as *anti-apartheid*: first, because it exposes the brutal infrastructures of the occupation (as shown, for instance, through the photo shoot at the Separation Wall [see fig. 2] and the Berlin fashion show [see fig. 3], where a facsimile of the Wall was constructed); and second, because while depicting desirable and ostensibly progressive scenes, it lays bare the ethnocratic and queerphobic logics of the Israeli apartheid regime. Furthermore, I define *queer anti-apartheid fashion* as a genre of fashion storytelling that contests colonial optics through a centering of queer racialized bodies (in this case queer Palestinian Arab bodies) confronting occupation and apartheid. Indeed, thinking about Israeli policies as those of an apartheid state allows for an accounting of the ways in which Palestinians are segregated—separated from each other through the architecture of the occupation, such as roadblocks, watchtowers, and checkpoints, as well as through temporal tactics of enclosure—according to a specific Zionist, ethno-nationalist, gendered ideology.[47]

Elements of an anti-apartheid aesthetic surface in queer work produced in other art genres in contemporary Palestine. In the same period in which Shukri and Omar released Trashy Clothing's Pride for Pay collection, their friend and collaborator Bashar Murad, a queer pop artist, released one of his most popular tracks, "Maskhara" ("bullshit," in the English translation). The song and its music

video came out in 2021, during the demonstrations against Israel's targeted evictions of Palestinian homes in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, after the Jerusalem District Court had ruled that six resident families were to be forcibly expulsed and replaced by Jewish settlers. Bashar was born and raised, and currently lives, in East Jerusalem under Israeli military occupation. In response to the "mockery"—as Bashar put it to me—that Israel and the West make of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, he wrote "Maskhara," a catchy hyperpop song that reverses the dynamic of mocker vs. mocked through a satirical depiction of the Zionist state's violence.[48]

In the self-directed music video, Bashar wakes up in watermelon-print pajamas and sings, "Two steps forward and ten steps back," in reference to the achievements and setbacks of the Palestinian struggle.[49] Next, the camera zooms in on a television showing scenes of Israeli army soldiers hanging out at checkpoints; a ticker beneath the images reads "maskhara" to suggest that what we're seeing is a farce. Bashar pulls up the blinds and stands by the window, through which we can see the visual and material landscape of the occupation exemplified by the Separation Wall and the Jewish settlements.[50] Since Bashar's room is on a very high floor, we can see (through digital cinematic effects) both the Wall and what is behind it. The view unsettles what Eyal Weizman refers to as the "verticality" in the occupation's topography: In this case it is not the Israeli who, from higher up, watches the Palestinians, whose sight is occluded by the Wall; instead, it is the Palestinian (Bashar) who proudly looks down over the cement blocks that make up the architectural extensions of the Zionist project.[51] The occupier–occupied spatial power relation is subverted, and, with a gesture of anticipatory imagination, the occupied has turned the visual field of the occupation upside down.

In the following scene Bashar walks alongside the Wall, singing about soldiers intimidating Palestinians at checkpoints ("The soldier approaches with a machine gun, what a terrible sight! 'Going where?' He says, 'Take a step back!'"). The video cuts to Bashar lying on a psychiatrist's couch. Standing over him is a Trump-like doctor writing a prescription for him; beside the doctor are two nurses who point and laugh at Bashar's face. From the couch, Bashar sings that he has been depressed for two years and has been trying to figure a way out: "What's next? What's more? Where's the sweet escape? My brain is tired, my patience is over." Then we see Bashar in a small room fighting two men, a policeman and perhaps a settler, who are forcing him into a straitjacket. As the second chorus begins, Bashar is passing a checkpoint and is stopped by an enraged soldier who is yelling at him from a watchtower: He orders Bashar to come forward, show his identity card, and let himself be scrutinized from head to toe. In the scenes where Bashar walks by the Wall, lies down at the psychiatrist's office, and engages with a soldier at a roadblock, he is wearing an all-white outfit. On the shirt is written, in Arabic, "Stand on the edge of the dream and fight," a quote attributed to poet Mahmoud Darwish. Darwish's invocation to resolutely pursue the dream of liberation is a response to



FIGURE 5. Still from the music video for the song "Maskhara," directed by Bashar Murad. Photo by Fadi Dahabreh, 2017. Courtesy of Bashar Murad.

the various attempts to diagnose, inspect, or arrest Bashar—humiliations that all Palestinians in the region undergo.

We next see Bashar climbing onto an abandoned Israeli tank, wearing a fuchsia outfit made for him by designer Shady Majlaton. It is composed of camouflage army pants and a see-through buttoned-up tulle shirt with a matching headband. He is holding a bouquet of pink flowers, which he inserts into the cannon (fig. 5).[52] Finally, he jumps off the cannon and flies over Jerusalem, hanging on to pink balloons.

The video exposes the daily violence of the occupation, with each still working as a visual metaphor of insurgence. The pulsing beat and synths are high energy. The muted hues of the concrete of the military checkpoints are contrasted with the highly saturated colors of the interiors of Bashar's bedroom and clothing; the juxtaposition of the desolate, minimalist, gray homogeneity of the military infrastructures (the Wall, the watchtowers, and the tanks) with the upbeat maximalism of the decor and fashion signifies the embrace of a campy aesthetic of refusal of the settlers' attempt at debilitating Palestinian life. Bashar sings about his frustration, his depression, and his fantasy of escape: These feelings coalesce in provoking a queer iconography that implies that the Palestinian resolve cannot be obscured, muted, contained, or shattered.[53]

The music video can be construed as a sequencing of satirical depictions that mock the very agents who control, surveil, separate, atomize, taxonomize, and incarcerate Palestinian bodies. Bashar's racialized and feminine demeanor in the video collides with the white hypermasculinity of the occupiers (i.e., the doctor,

the soldier, the cop, and the settler): He is inspected, laughed at, and attacked. But every act of aggression is ridiculed by means of hyperbole: The laughter and looks of disgust that Bashar receives are grotesquely exaggerated, the postures and gestures of the characters robotic; such acts are counteracted by an explosive camp energy that reveals, like a reflection in a fairground mirror, the normalized absurdity of the characters themselves. Bashar humorously yet seriously lays bare how their self-presentations are part and parcel of an ideologically racist, heteronormative system of classification and suffocation of the subalternized population. Bashar signals through his performance the unequivocal imbrication of "queer" and "Arab" in the fight against the very queerphobia and racism that lie at the core of Zionism. By centering his own body, Bashar makes of himself a potential threat to the gender–racial matrix of Zionism, and in so doing he triggers the violent reactions that unveil the repressive ideology that animates them.

The queer(ed) body is a site of projection of Israeli fears. Israel, or, better, Tel Aviv, might be generally LGBT-friendly, yet the self-queering—performed through fashion—of the "Palestinian Arab" is sufficient to unmask the vulnerability and hypocrisy of the Zionist state's liberalism. Gender or sexual nonnormativity is understandable to the Zionist state and its actors only as long as it does not disturb the boundaries of legibility through which the queer body can be domesticated. Queer Arab bodies, as Jasbir Puar observed, are systemically delegitimated and/or equated with terrorism due to their seeming uncontainability and their excess of normative classification.[54] What makes the queer Palestinian body threatening is the imbrication of its gender and racial nonnormativity. Put another way, Zionist queerphobia is undetachable from its racism: The suspicion, or even hatred, of the Palestinian is heightened when their body upsets the racist, Islamophobic presumption that Palestinians cannot be queer in view of their alleged backwardness. In the eyes and logic of the colonizer, their brownness makes them Muslim, and their being Muslim makes them queerphobic.

The changes of clothes—many of which were designed by Shukri and Omar of Trashy Clothing throughout Bashar's video index particular relations with power, and, more specifically, with different sets of normativity (gender, sexual, and racial) that govern the everyday life of Palestinians. If the tank, with its cannon, is a symbol of hypermasculine military violence, Bashar mounts it and dominates it in his flamboyant pink attire. Hetero-nationalist tropes and signs are "fucked with" (for example, the camo pants are in fuchsia rather than in conventional green and tan tones). Bashar visually confronts the colonial-imperialist pinkwashing discourse according to which gender and sexual nonnormativity in the Middle East is only acceptable in Israel: He rises above the phallic violence of the Zionist state itself, which in the video is emblematized by the tank and is performed by the aggressive, hypermasculine-presenting, white, and, supposedly Ashkenazi characters who strive to subjugate Bashar's brown queer body. In virtually counterbalancing,

through dress and bodily comportment, the power relationship that exists between the Palestinians and the state, Bashar sutures a queer aesthetic sensitivity to anti-colonial resistance. Zionist hegemony—with its white supremacist and patriarchal features—is satirized through a kitsch visual and sonic language.

The pink of his victory outfit, of the cinematic lighting and filters, and of the roses stuffed into the tank is a reference to pinkwashing, yet pinkwashing has no space in the queer decolonial struggle for Palestine espoused by Bashar: In the video, the color pink is not "washing" anything away; rather, it is exhibiting the very whitewashing of Zionist violence. In other words, pink is used as a sign of disidentification from pinkwashing: It semiotically nods to pinkwashing only to clock and lay bare its oppressive aims. In this sense, the color pink holds a *pink-watching* function. Bashar's performance echoes Trashy Clothing's claim about the indivisibility of the queer struggle and that of the decolonial struggle for liberation. Through foregrounding the clothed body in multiple ways, Trashy and Bashar deploy fashion to excavate the discursive, material, and visual operations of Israeli oppression.

In the lookbook of Trashy Clothing's Pride for Pay collection, the garments signify the reclaiming of Palestinians' bodily agency and the need to assert their rights of self-determination, dignity, and autonomy. This is epitomized by the "inspection trouser" (fig. 6), the staple item of the collection. Shukri recounts: "A big part of Palestinian daily life revolves around going through checkpoints and being randomly stopped and searched. Our bodies are always touched by the unwanted hands of Israeli soldiers, which is a violent, intrusive, and uncomfortable experience, especially for queer people. We wanted to confront that through our designs and to reclaim our bodies and our agency, so we decided to put big zippers on front, making the area of the zipper visible, as a way of saying '*we* decide *where* and *how* to unzip!'"[55]

It is with these regular encounters between the surveilling Israeli soldier and the surveilled Palestinian subject in mind that Trashy Clothing designed the inspection pant, making of it a fashion tool through which the Palestinian body messes with the soldier's gaze. In light of the Israeli army's anxiety about clothes covering terrorist explosives, and the ensuing, enforced strip-downs at the borders, designing clothes that disrupt bodily inspections and disorient the military personnel who conduct them is a recurrent practice among Palestinian fashion makers. The long, thick, asymmetrical zipper, strategically placed on the "inspection trouser," can concomitantly attract and confront the gaze of the soldier, thereby disorienting it: Due to its dual function as an opening and a closing, it can both enfold and occlude desire. In playing with the soldier's gaze and desire, the zipper visually and materially endows the Palestinian body with agency. From the sexualizing and racializing vantage of the Israeli army, the Palestinian body might become a site of ambiguous, indeterminate, and undefined pleasure and fantasy.[56] I am not suggesting that through the inspection pant Trashy expresses libidinal



FIGURE 6. “Inspection trouser” from Trashy Clothing’s spring/summer 2021 Pride for Pay collection. Photo by Omar Braika. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

desire for the occupier's body, but rather that the material and visual capacity of the pant allows "the occupied's body," provocatively, to become—in a corporeal process in which the occupier's gaze is folded in and then projected back onto the viewer—the active protagonist (as opposed to the passive recipient) of a theatrical performance of undressing that typically accommodates Israel's attempt to humiliate the Palestinian subject undergoing inspection. Conversely, the zipper (the top of which is tucked beneath a buttoned belt) attracts the attention of the inspector, potentially triggering a range of ambiguous affects that reveal the capacity of the inspected body to ironically disorient and destabilize the violent practice of having one's clothes stripped off one's body. The muscular physique and light skin of the model wearing the trousers in the campaign (see fig. 6) further aid in imagining the unforeseen confusion and desire that might result from and shake up the daily operations of the Israeli army.

Pride for Pay was not without inspiration. When I first saw the pieces that would make it into the collection, during a 2021 visit to Trashy Clothing's design studio, I mentioned how their aesthetic resonated with fashion I had seen in some video work by Sharif Waked, a Nazarene multimedia artist. As we were looking over the garments, Shukri went into another room and came back with a large bulletin board: Photos and clippings of Sharif Waked's early work were juxtaposed, in a kaleidoscopic collage, with colorful sketches of silhouettes and keywords. This was the mood board for Pride for Pay. Omar eagerly concurred that Sharif's work had been a major influence on them and that his humorous playfulness has become the key register of Trashy Clothing's aesthetic. During the Second Intifada, Sharif staged and filmed *Chic Point: Fashion for Israeli Checkpoints* (2003), a fictional haute couture show with a dozen male models of different ethnicities who stroll down the runway in seductive, flamboyant outfits exposing their flesh to the viewer, and, as we infer from the title, to the Israeli soldiers at checkpoints.

The models in Sharif's show, walking to the rhythm of fast-paced, upbeat music, each don a different outfit (designed in large part by designer and scholar Yigal Nizri) that combines traditional Arab garments (e.g., hijabs) with Western dress items (e.g., miniskirts). The first model who comes toward the camera wears a cropped suit and holds a hard plastic bag commonly seen in Palestine for grocery shopping or picnics; the second model wears a white *jalabiyya* with a circular opening on the belly; the third model wears a "curtain top" that can be pulled up via an invisible string and become a fanny pack, where the model keeps a plastic water bottle (supposedly for when he is tired and thirsty at the checkpoint)—his abdomen, which he sensually strokes for the viewer, is bare; the fourth model wears a reversed shirt unbuttoned on the lower back; the fifth wears a kitsch "I Love NY" T-shirt with a hole on the nipple; the sixth is in a shirt with a cavity on the back in the form of a hanger with a towel hanging from it; the seventh opens his shirt through a horizontal zipper on the chest; the eighth is in a dress

composed of a hijab, a fishnet top, and a skirt; the ninth opens his shirt to show his chest, which is wrapped in strings; the tenth is in a tubular dress with a metal porthole in the middle; the last closes the show in a dress made of a mesh T-shirt and a net worn as an overshirt, with boxers underneath.[57] Then, abruptly, the screen goes black, and there is a brief intermission. After that, we see black-and-white archival photographs. These are stills from footage taken at various Israeli checkpoints, each showing a different scene of humiliation: Palestinian men of different ages are taking off their clothes or lifting up their shirts—at times blindfolded, with their wrists zip-tied, or on their knees—as Israeli army soldiers point and laugh at them while holding them at gunpoint.[58]

The fashion show ascribes agency to the Palestinian body by charging the models with an erotic ebullience: they walk confidently on an "occupied catwalk" toward the camera/spectator, which also stands in for the eye of the soldier at the checkpoint. The models look lustfully at the camera only to walk away after having displayed and touched parts of their bodies. In this intimate theatrical performance, the Palestinian models establish a mutual desirous exchange with the imaginary soldier who is at the end of the catwalk, perhaps watching through the viewfinder. The extravagant, androgynous clothing—with its hybrid blend of references to both traditional Palestinian garb (e.g., the *jalabiyya*) and more "contemporary," cosmopolitan dress codes (e.g., cropped see-through garments)—invites, with its apertures and cavities, a voyeuristic gaze. Yet the body of the wearer is not simply the object of sexualization, for the models appear in charge of what they want to show and for how long: They tease and taunt the spectator-soldier, tickle his desire, and then leave. In this erotic spectacle, the imagined soldier is rendered vulnerable by his desire to look: The Palestinian body's in-your-face sensuality captures the soldier in the very act of watching, and the soldier lets go of his gaze only for the next model to come in and draw his attention toward yet another un/dressed body. Agency is embodied and performed through fashion.

Through this fashion spectacle Sharif imagines, or suggests, that there is a libidinal exchange that underwrites the (counter)terrorist regime of visuality emblematized by the daily routines at checkpoints. The quotidian pleasure that the soldier takes in seeing and inspecting the bodies of the Palestinians at the checkpoint is at the same time violent and desirous; the body of the Palestinian is, in fact, a site onto which the colonizer's fantasies of sex and/or sexual assault are projected. In *Chic Point* this desire becomes palpable for the spectator, who quickly realizes that they have been put in the position of the inspector: This identification solicits a consideration on how the catwalk qua checkpoint is a space in which desirability is played out. We—the spectators—know that such desirability is, in real life, often unidirectional, namely it is directed by the occupier to the occupied, as soldiers systematically channel their desire for the other into physical abuse; yet *Chic Point* asks us to consider whether such desirability can prompt a shift in agency and

whether sexual fantasy can be manipulated by queer modes of self-fashioning. Queer desire is mobilized via dress: that is to say, dress is the medium through which the desire for the other can be enacted or redirected.

Gil Hochberg has compellingly observed how, in Sharif Waked's fictional checkpoint, heteronormative nationalist masculinity is visually rearranged along ethnic-racial lines.[59] Indeed, the Palestinian bodies confront the predominantly white Israeli soldiers with their queer, brown masculinities that lure and unveil the soldier's attraction to the very markers (femininity and brownness) that are theoretically incompatible with the Zionist ideology, rooted as it is in a cult of white hypermasculinity.[60] In their gender-crossing outfits, the ethnic(ized) and queer(ed) bodies in the fashion show trouble hierarchical conventions of masculinity. Hochberg persuasively proposes that the bodies on the catwalk enact a protest against the racial and national segregation practices constitutive of the Israeli apartheid agenda.[61] The fashion performance can be read as a scene of renegotiation and redistribution of agency—one that frees the Palestinian body from its calcified, suffocating representation as dangerously empowered or hopelessly disenfranchised, and that prefigures a future unbridled from the gender and racial violence integral to the nation-state apparatus.[62] What emerges in *Chic Point* is an ambivalence between the Palestinian body as an object of oppression and as an object of desire—a desire that, in the fashion show, is brought to light by the Palestinian fashioned body. In addition to exposing the desire of the Israeli soldier, the Palestinian embodies and performatively reclaims his agency through fashion. The "monstrous," suspected terrorist-martyr body of the Palestinian, to use Jasbir Puar's language, is hereby reframed as both an object and a subject of pleasure: In his erotic agency, such a subject of pleasure is disobedient, for he upsets the way in which the colonizer normally codes him.

In Pride for Pay, on the other hand, Trashy Clothing is not queering the already erotically charged and affect-laden encounter with the Israeli army. Rather, inspired by Sharif's video, the very designing, staging, and wearing of garments such as the inspection pant gestures at the queer ingenuity through which Palestinian creatives question, via their own bodies, the power dynamics that are at stake in what Yael Berda has referred to as "the erotics of the occupation."[63] The racializing and sexualizing hierarchies that set the encounter, whose dynamics are driven by the Israelis, are interrogated by Trashy through a self-fashioning that denotes a refusal to fully subject oneself to the debilitating biopolitical mechanisms of Israeli security.[64] In the Pride for Pay catalog, the models' bodies and looks are attractive, but the models look straight into the camera in a confrontational yet nondesirous way: They stand still, geared with clothes that can disorient and poke fun at the imagined gaze of the soldier. Through fabrics, shapes, and folds, Trashy Clothing's designs bring to the surface how the allegedly counterterrorist strategies of the Zionist state are erected on and rigidified by an obsession with the Palestinian clothed body, that is, with the psychic as well as physical disturbance this might

pose. The attraction (whether in the form of fear or pleasure, or both) that those clothes provoke is an indicator of said fixation.

From *Chic Point* Trashy Clothing took the inspiration of the multifunctionality of garments that simultaneously conceal and reveal the flesh; but in attracting the possible desire of the colonizer's gaze, Trashy's models are not reciprocating: Their clothes pique attention only to confound the violent operation of the sexualized gazing. In other words, Shukri and Omar are not interested in the work of the unconscious in the scene of the encounter at the checkpoint; for them, there cannot be any kind of mutual recognition of the other.[65] From their vantage as designers, they insist on the queer "fashion-abilities" of garments to navigate the boundary of legibility and illegibility, intelligibility and unintelligibility.[66] The model exposes himself through tactical garments only as a way to disorient the viewer's ability to read and understand him: In this sensorial confusion, the sexualizing, "othering" colonial vision of the Israeli army is glitched.

Trashy Clothing's Pride for Pay, Bashar Murad's "Maskhara," and Sharif Waked's *Chic Point* evince how the body of the Palestinian is agentic in its capacity to both attract and unsettle the gaze of the Zionist military apparatus, an extension of the Zionist state. In the aforementioned works, the regulatory gaze of the Zionist state actor is consistently mocked and revealed as fragile. The way in which the state seeks to domesticate what exceeds its logic is paradoxical and likely to be destabilized by the self-fashioned performances of undomesticated bodies. The queer counter-conduct of the Palestinian subject expresses a refusal to be shattered on a daily basis. Its resistance to humiliation is transposed onto the creative plane via imagery that ostensibly privileges dress as the carrier of an insurgent affectivity that troubles power asymmetries consolidated by the apartheid state. Trashy Clothing, Bashar, and Sharif, using different media genres, enact a queer anti-apartheid aesthetic that, through fashion, disturbs the hegemonic gender, sexual, and racial scripts of the Zionist state.

DISORIENTALISM AND THE SPECTACLE OF COLONIALISM

In addition to shedding light on the pinkwashing of the Zionist ethno-state, Trashy Clothing critically engages with the Israeli televisual and photographic spectacles of colonialism epitomized by internationally broadcast entertainment events, events that obliterate any trace of Palestinian existence. Trashy Clothing's fall/winter 2021 Errorvision collection plays with the iconography and political meanings of the music and sport events as well as beauty pageants that take place on occupied land and are promoted to the world as Israeli in a way that spectacularizes Israel's "modernity"—what Shukri refers to as "Zionist artwashing." The Errorvision collection marshals a critique against Israel's marking itself as Western by hosting mainstream events such as Eurovision and Miss Universe, while at

the same time appropriating Palestinian culture. Shukri explained: "We imagined and created characters like the soldier-popstar, the soldier-sport competitor, and a Miss Universe that we call Miss Apartheid. It's a satirical critique of those figures who infiltrate arts and sports spaces, using art or sport to spread their political agendas. Shiny competitions like Eurovision, Miss Universe, and the Olympics partake in the branding of an apartheid state."[67]

The decision to hold the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest in Israel provoked an international media controversy; nevertheless, it took place in Tel Aviv, following the victory the year prior of right-wing, Zionist pop singer Netta Barzilai, widely considered a music ambassador for Israel. Through the lyrics of her song "Toy" and in her victory speech, "Netta," who had served in the Israeli army during the 2014 war on Gaza (known as Operation Protective Edge), presented her music as an anthem of Israel's commitment to social justice, feminism, and equal rights, hence whitewashing her country's besiegement of Palestine.

According to a statement released on October 30, 2018, by the leaders of PACBI (the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel), the recruitment of Netta—an outspoken supporter of Israel's occupation regime—was part of the government's pinkwashing efforts: She performed at the Tel Aviv Pride parade as well as other state-sponsored LGBTQ events in the city. As a songwriting competition featuring representatives from European countries, Eurovision is in itself a nationalist contest; more problematically, its inclusion of Israel perpetuates what Rebecca Stein has called "the fiction of Israel as a homogenously European nation-state," evincing Eurovision's ideological foundations as well as its participation in a gay camouflaging of Israel's apartheid regime through Netta's *pop* presence.[68] Israel's "Europeanness" is validated further by the country's membership in the European Olympic Committees (since 1994) and its participation as a nation in the Olympic Games (since 1952), following the establishment of Israel's National Olympic Committee in 1933, during the British Mandate of Palestine.

Miss Israel, a national beauty pageant that, since its first edition (in 1950, right after the Nakba) has been sending its winners to compete for the title of Miss Universe, has also been the target of pro-Palestinian criticisms over the years. The outcry surrounding the 2021 edition, hosted in Tel Aviv, echoed that of the Eurovision controversy two years earlier, with the BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement calling for a boycott. As part of the event, international contestants were invited to participate in the "Visit Israel" campaign, where they were photographed during a day of cooking and eating traditional—Palestinian, yet marketed as Israeli—dishes (such as *maftoul* and *warak enab*), posing in Palestinian thobes, and dancing dabke. This appropriation of Palestinian identity, disguised as an authentic Israeli experience, was paraded by several international contestants on their social media pages, standing out as another example of cultural theft backed up by the contestants' countries.[69]



FIGURE 7. "Identity hood" jacket from Trashy Clothing's fall/winter 2021 Errorvision collection. Photo by Omar Braika. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

In Errorvision, the "identity hood" jacket (fig. 7), a staple item of the collection, is a faux fur piece that can be worn in multiple ways, with each way suggesting a different meaning. Worn as a hoodie, it conjures both protest sweaters and the Israeli military practice of masking the faces of Palestinians when they are being arrested. If unzipped from the head, the jacket transforms into a big collar; if unzipped further, it takes the shape of an eagle's wings from the back, becoming a symbol of freedom. The fur in this collection hints at the glamorous looks worn at parties organized around the competitions, which Shukri and Omar deride, and implies that the same superficiality of participating in events on stolen land is reflected in the careless use of animal skin for the purpose of looking fashionable. As Shukri described it, "The models embody various oppressive ideologies, including environmental oppression, and meanings which we tried to expose and toy with at the same time."

The Miss Apartheid sash encapsulates Trashy Clothing's polemic attitude toward the colonial logic that underlies the Miss Universe contest. The heaviness of the pile fabric used to make the artificial fur and its train hint at the burden and the legacies of a violent enterprise that, typically personified by beautiful models, is presented as glamorous. In the lookbook of the collection, the Miss Apartheid sash is worn by a male Palestinian model (fig. 8). Presenting him as a "Miss" Apartheid adds a queer critical layer to the design collection, conjuring—through an image that upends the fantasy of heteronormative femininity promoted by Miss



FIGURE 8. "Miss Apartheid" look from Trashy Clothing's fall/winter 2021 Errorvision collection. Photo by Omar Braika. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

Universe—the pinkwashing mechanism imbricated with Israel's colonizing project. The collection was presented in March 2020 through a live-streamed fashion show with no physical audience, set in an abandoned factory outside Amman. As Shukri observed: "We wanted the location to be somewhat of a factory, a camp, to convey the idea that these soldiers and imperial popstars are on a mission: They are on their way to 'artwash' Israeli policies in Palestine." The choice of a filmed fashion show to display the collection references those popular pageants whose ethics are hereby called into question.

The seven-minute film opens with a soundtrack by Icelandic punk rock band and performance art group Hatari, who put techno beats to the iconic Olympic theme song. The first model to walk down the runway in the bare industrial setting is a young man wearing a white cape, flared white trousers with embroidered Palestinian motifs, and heeled leather combat boots. He is followed by another male model, this one wearing a long white regal coat with motifs matching the pants of the previous model. Next comes the first Miss Apartheid model, who introduces the key theme of the collection. The show proceeds to reference dictators like Saddam Hussein and Muammar Gaddafi through looks that incorporate such items as their respectively iconic colonel hats and uniforms: These looks highlight how beauty and sport competitions look like spectacularized presidential elections with their national flags and nationalist discourses. The models—their gait fast and austere, their expressions confident and confrontational—are marching. They are protesters: In wearing garments imbued with aesthetic-political significance, they immerse themselves in the show only to mock, through fashion, the very symbols of Israel's colonialist entertainment. This disidentificatory gesture consists of wearing colonial symbols in a way that simultaneously exposes their camouflaged meanings and gives voice to an anticolonial stance, embodied by models whose gender nonnormativity and attitude potentially destabilize the joyful affectivity that characterize the hetero- and/or homonormativity of televised political events.

As the fashion show continues, the pace accelerates. Masculine-presenting models walk the runway in the same outfits as their feminine counterparts. Bodies of all sizes move closer and closer to the camera (held frontally by Omar) and look straight into it. The camera speed varies from slow motion to hyper-fast: the models/protesters stand proudly still, and then they run away—the hijab is tightly worn by the femme-presenting models to keep their head covered while their hats fall off. The show ends with a brown model in the "hooded look" walking out of the room to an empty street, with her chin up. The task is complete: Israel's colonial spectacle has been parodied and reworked. The masquerade of its oppressive logics and symbolisms has been dismantled by models who, via clothing, manifest their unwillingness to succumb to Israel's representational regime. As Omar laid out, "The casting is 99 percent Palestinian models, because having Palestinian models showcase our pieces is part of this idea of reclaiming and asserting our stories" in the face of the spectacle of Israel's system of representation. Since,

as Hochberg argues, the Israeli occupation is very much a "visual occupation" in that the uneven distribution of Israeli and Palestinian "visual rights" indexes their asymmetric relation, the idea of taking charge of one's own representation is a powerful way to confound and problematize the dominant gaze to which Palestinians are subjected and/or by which they are often made invisible.[70]

Colonial spectacles, however, can take less sensationalist forms; such is the case of lay people, like tourists, who inadvertently participate in normalizing or, conversely, exceptionalizing the occupation by extracting visual pleasure from the documentation of Palestine and the purchase of souvenirs as progressive evidence of their solidarity. Inspired by Rebecca Stein's essay "Souvenirs of Conquest: Israeli Occupations as Tourist Events,"[71] Trashy Clothing's spring/summer 2022 collection, Souvenirs of Conquest: Visit to Colonize!, explores, in the words of Omar, "how banal cultural practices such as tourism can function as appendages of occupation. . . . The collection highlights the ways leisure and militarism have been intertwined." Looking at Israeli print media coverage of the post-1967 boom in the number of Israelis visiting the newly occupied Palestinian territories, Stein has examined how narratives detailing the affective rewards of mass consumption, coupled with feelings of euphoria and surprise, animated the mobility of Israeli tourists qua consumers while simultaneously obfuscating the settler colonial military aggression and the hierarchies of travel that made local consumerism possible.[72] In other words, picturesque, celebratory narratives of tourism undercut the history of Palestinian dispossession. In painting tourism in Palestine as an innocuous leisure activity, the press blurred the scene of Israeli conquest. The souvenirs, such as photographs, food, and clothing, that Israeli tourists took back home, tethered their consumer desires and pleasures to the fantasy of a free, safe, and thrilling environment rich with utopic opportunities. Whereas in Stein's work what is put under scrutiny are Israeli consumerist practices, a sort of "conquest" in the wake of Oslo (i.e., in the mid- to late 1990s), in Trashy Clothing's collection conquest stands for the colonial dimension of Western solidarity tourist practices in Palestine. That is, Trashy Clothing's critique is extended to international solidarity tourism. The solidarity tourists' experience of sightseeing and consumption, shielded as it is from visions of the Israeli army's brutality, implicitly justifies and consolidates the Israeli state's investment in further expansion and dispossession.

Each model in the collection campaign impersonates a tourist visiting Palestine. Set in a depopulated land (per the Zionist motto "a land without people for a people without a land"), the models exhibit on their bodies the icons that shore up tourists' fantasies of Palestine as an Oriental destination. One model (fig. 9) is wearing the "tourist wrap skirt," which, if said aloud, sounds like "tourist trap skirt." Trashy Clothing's use of this homophone is meant to implicate the tourists in the Israeli state's ideological masquerade wherein tourism is assumed to be a harmless activity. The skirts are a printed tapestry portraying Palestinian fauna, monuments, and farming scenes that are styled and shown as souvenirs. Throughout



FIGURE 9. Look from Trashy Clothing's spring/summer 2022 Souvenirs of Conquest collection. Photo by Omar Braika. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

the prints, Trashy Clothing has added a small stamp pattern that ironically reads "Trashy Ministry of Tourism." In the photos the skirt is paired with a T-shirt printed with the image of a tourist visa stamped on the passport of Lebanese music artist Elissa (Elissar Zakaria Khoury), a charismatic personality who has long been vocal about her support for the Palestinian struggle. The "Elissa's visa top" is ironic: It symbolically juxtaposes her popularity within the MENA region with the fact that simply for being Lebanese she is not granted access into Palestine. The print indicates how absurd it is that the citizens of neighboring countries are banned from entering the occupied territories, whereas Western tourists are encouraged to visit. Tourist pilgrimages to Palestine are tied to colonialism insofar as mobility, access, and sightseeing are made possible by the racialized policies of the Israeli state, policies that deny the same opportunities to the Palestinian people, who are unable to travel freely across the West Bank, into Gaza, and to other countries.

In depicting Palestinian flora and fauna in their print Trashy Clothing also pays homage to the Indigenous indivisibility of human and nonhuman beings—a relationship that is constantly threatened by the settler colonial invasion and land annexation. This gesture is not merely performative, inasmuch as Trashy produces sustainably and also redirects much of its funds to local communities that tend to and preserve the land. More specifically, they use both organic fabrics and deadstock fabrics (to reduce waste) for their collections, and most of the logistics involved in the collective's clothing production, such as garment sampling, are handled digitally.[73]

Another staple piece of the Souvenirs of Conquest collection is the "stolen souvenirs vest," a crop top; its two large pockets are useful for stealing and hiding Palestinian souvenirs and, synecdochically, Palestine itself. Trashy's aesthetic operation here can be read as a gesture of, to utilize an expression from Gannit Ankori, "dis-Orientalism," through which the Israeli and Western symbols and practices of Orientalism are reproduced and worn as a way of humorously asserting the Palestinian ability to recognize what is at stake with touristy visits and depictions of Palestine, and to appropriate it as a way of transcoding the naive meanings of Orientalist representation into *counter*-meanings for a critique of the normalization of Orientalism. Ankori has theorized dis-Orientalism as an artistic approach that deconstructs the scopic regime of Western (Orientalist) art while at the same time confounding, with the attempt to shatter, dichotomies such as West/East, masculine/feminine, and hierarchies of art and media forms, ultimately disorientalizing the Western regime of visuality.[74] Furthermore, dis-Orientalism inevitably implies a feeling of "dislocation, . . . disorientation [and] 'unsettledness'" related to the introjected transgenerational trauma of dispossession and exile endured by Palestinians, their constant negotiations of a sense of "belonging and non-belonging," "disorientation and the desire for reorientation," and the projection of same into aesthetic objects.[75] I see this disoriented ontology being transfigured in the Souvenirs of Conquest collection, a collection in which dis-Orientalism works as a

technique of disidentification: While the skirts reproducing Palestinian bucolic scenes or the tops with prints of souvenirs encode the embodied effects of Orientalism on Palestinian clothed bodies, those same Orientalist images are thereby transcoded in order to expose the colonial nature of tourism in Palestine.

Trashy Clothing's collections seem to suggest that gay tourism in Israel (as shown in Pride for Pay) and solidarity tourism in Palestine (as shown in Souvenirs of Conquest) are, essentially, two sides of the same coin, despite their antithetical intentions: Whereas LGBTQ tourism advertised by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism deceives the international queer community into believing that Israel will celebrate them and keep them safe from alleged Islamic queerphobia, the tourists who visit Palestine are tricked into believing they are actively supporting Palestinians rather than merely witnessing the devastation of the land.[76] The members of Trashy Clothing, by seemingly apolitically referencing popular culture in their collection, take the idea of tourism *as* colonialism to the extreme, by turning a thought experiment into a piece of clothing. In the Souvenirs of Conquest catalog, they satirically associate tourists with colonizers through a T-shirt reading "I Hate Colonizers," which reiterates Trashy's assertion that tourism in an occupied territory is inherently bound with participating in colonization. Also, the "souvenirs shirt"—a white T-shirt with a constellation of prints showing objects such as the *misbaha* (prayer beads), the hookah, and a postcard of Jerusalem—is a fashion-political statement that mocks the oblivious tourist with images of typical souvenirs they can take home from their visits. From the same lookbook, the "Fulla tours" shirt derives its name from the Muslim fashion doll produced in Syria in the early 2000s and subsequently marketed to children across Middle Eastern countries as an alternative to Barbie. Dressed in Islamic clothing and a flowy fuchsia hijab, makeup meticulously applied, in the collection designs she sits elegantly on the wing of an airplane taking international passengers to Palestine/Israel. Trashy Clothing imagined the doll character Fulla as a flight assistant and head of the "Fulla Tours & Travel" agency. She is another figuration of a marketing scheme that glamorizes tourism and involves international audiences without their knowledge in an ideological plot.

Dis-Orientalism is thus yet another formulation (alongside bootlegging and hacking) of disidentification through which Trashy Clothing inflects anti-apartheid fashion. By reproducing in their own style Orientalist tropes and repurposing them as mirrors of colonialism, the members of Trashy Clothing ironically return Orientalist attitudes of gazing and visualization to the tourist/traveler. More broadly, Trashy's work makes use of both popular culture and everyday material objects to poke fun at symbols, the ideologies these stand for or conceal, and the individuals who embrace them. It turns fashion inside out with garments that at first glance might appear merely ridiculous and fun, but that ultimately disclose appalling realities. Icons and symbols are reshuffled by Trashy Clothing so as to mess with the perceptions of the viewers/consumers and spur their

interest (through colorful and originally designed clothing items) in exploring the political function that fashion can assume. Bootleg, fashion hacking, and dis-Orientalism are techniques of disidentification through which Trashy Clothing stages anti-apartheid fashion, namely a genre of material and visual storytelling that disavows colonial visuality through a strategic self-centering and styling of queer Palestinian bodies. Anti-apartheid fashion is a queer decolonial critique, mobilized through clothed bodies and their representation, of the Israeli's organization and control of the territory as well as of the classification and disciplining of Palestinian bodies; consequently, it is also a critique of the media representations that lead the public's attention away from the material reality of the oppression Palestinians endure.

I see anti-apartheid fashion, at work via acts of disidentification, as materializing an ethics of decolonial cultural production that by unmasking colonial spectacles challenges audiences to investigate the oppressive structures within which the designers' work and lives are embedded. Trashy Clothing uses a satirical register to convey visual statements against an apartheid state that continuously attempts to foreclose Palestinian creative resistance by making the local conditions of living and working so difficult that creativity is often considered irrelevant by Palestinians themselves. Trashy's anti-apartheid fashion proves that Palestinian fashion storytelling, in its multiple forms (e.g., digital artworks, photographs, and performances) is an expression of the ingeniousness through which Palestinian youths can assert a joyful and resilient stance against settler colonialism.

During a visit to Trashy Clothing's studio, in 2023, the three of us chatted about the relationship between the fashion of the day and the Palestinian struggle. Shukri, in a lively optimistic tone, said:

> I think every Palestinian does what they are able to do to help the Palestinian cause. As designers and image makers, Omar and I are making our contribution in the fashion space. We think fashion can educate, can create conversations, can highlight stories, and can address issues that people have never even known about—think about our fashion show in Berlin, where we recreated the Occupation Wall on the runway. So, we are highlighting a cause within a space where this kind of issue is not usually talked about. We think that has power because education can be very powerful, especially when it's done through visual storytelling and clothes. When people are wearing clothes, they're also carrying the story behind them on their body. That's a very intimate thing.[77]

With this, Shukri summarized, at least partly, how fashion, from his and Omar's perspective, can contribute to mitigating the Palestinian plight. Shukri and Omar invest fashion with an adjoining and nuanced yet nevertheless powerful pedagogical capacity: that of teaching about the occupation through aesthetic projects that use fashion to connect with their audience, whether customers, social media followers, or fashion show attendees. The material and visual storytelling of

their collections intimate the affective and political capacity of fashion to humorously and cunningly advance queer decolonial statements and sentiments that can unite people across borders, spark their consciousness, and, ideally, mobilize them toward liberationist goals.

With a focus on pinkwashing, heteronormativity, and homonationalism, Trashy Clothing experiments with garment design, photography, and film to reveal the Zionist tactics through which Palestinian lives are dehumanized, while remaining realistic about the effects such experiments might have on the current order of things in the short term. In fact, if queer decolonial fashion practices like those examined so far can be seen as a way to resist Israel's attempted evisceration of any growth or prosperity for Palestinians, it would in any case be an error to lump them together within a facile, monolithic understanding of "resistance." It is more helpful, I contend, to posit on-the-ground militant actions as a crucial and inevitable strategy of resistance against settler colonial occupation. Meanwhile, the creative practices of young Palestinians, such as fashion design and image-making, constitute a compounding set of strategies that by asserting a survivalist and steadfast attitude toward the occupation might embolden or even act in tandem with more concrete acts.

As argued earlier, Trashy Clothing, as well as Bashar Murad and Sharif Waked, inure customers, viewers, followers, and attendees (through design collections, videos, catalogs, social media posts, and runway shows) to what I have called queer anti-apartheid fashion, a genre of fashion that consists of a queer disidentification with the discursive and visual grammar of Zionism as a means to bring to the surface its discriminatory and segregationist ideology. By unmasking the interlocking systems of oppression underlying Israel's settler colonial occupation, their queer decolonial fashion practices share (with dramatically different means) the armed resistance's ultimate purpose of dissolving Israel's apartheid regime. In fact, in Palestine, fashion is always and inevitably imbricated with the logics, discourses, and politics of settler colonialism as well as with the struggle against it, and it can thereby function, to borrow an expression from Rebecca Stein, as a "political placeholder" for the Palestinians' imaging of social worlds under military occupation.[78]

Fashioning the body can serve to assert agency under oppressive political circumstances and power structures by signifying one's subject positioning and its relation to conventions of self-presentation;[79] in the words of Wendy Parkins, fashion "could be deployed within a sphere of political communication by those unenfranchised by or opposed to existing political formations as a means of contestation or critique."[80] Along these lines, essential to Trashy Clothing's mission is the very act of coming together to conceptualize a communitarian project that calls attention to their lived reality. Shukri stated: "We focus on experiences that affect our bodies and our minds; we draw from our everyday lives as queer Palestinians." The process of designing clothing together or producing a photo shoot or a

runway show offers them a sense of agency as producers of knowledge in a context in which both fashion and queer practices are usually dismissed or neglected, and provides the rationale for community-building: a key feature of creative activism.

Rather than allow themselves to be disenfranchised through a Western reifying lens, all of the creatives discussed in this chapter perform queerness as a strategy for shaping an anti-apartheid political aesthetic. They use fashion design and media work as platforms whereby the anti-occupation and the queer struggles are inextricably connected. In other words, their practices make explicit the inextricability of the occupation with queer oppression, and the need to experiment with creative ways of centering queerness in the fight against ongoing settler colonialism. Their decolonial praxis is, at least in part, inspired by broader conversations that have been occurring among grassroots queer-feminist Palestinian activists and that have shaped their understanding of aesthetic production as a means of championing and fueling the liberation struggle.

Certainly, fashion can be instrumental for envisioning ways of transgressing logics of occupation and separation as well as for fostering alternative modes of coming together. More specifically in the case of Palestine/Israel, fashion has become a tool through which Palestinians narrate their experience as something simultaneously undetachable from and oppositional to the gender, sexual, and, as the next chapter will bring into focus, environmental politics of Zionism.

2

Against Ecocide

Toward an Indigenous Fashion Justice

In a live-broadcast conversation on sustainability in Palestine, which took place on Instagram TV in 2022 between Bashar Murad, the founders of the Ramallah fashion collective SYKO Project, and Palestinian Kuwaiti journalist Ahmed Shihab-Eldin, Bashar mused: "We are fighting to get our land back, sure, but what's the good of it if we finally get it . . . I mean, if we finally get it back and it's ruined? What are we fighting for if the land is not livable? What's the point?" The questions posed by Bashar are key to understanding how a decolonized Palestine could possibly be imagined in light of the ecocidal brutalization it has undergone for over a century. Palestinians have been made to witness their land's dispossession and ruination, its ecological overhaul, as well as its partial redesigning as an archipelago of Western colonies.

Much of this devastation has been carried out by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), the authority that since its establishment in 1901 has bought up property in Palestine for exclusive Jewish settlement, thereby preventing native inhabitants from accessing their previously owned land.[1] Initially, the purchasing process was done through absentee landlords; however, during the British Mandate (1920–48), when Palestinians refused to sell their land, what ensued were insidious and violent strategies of land expropriation. After the 1948 Nakba and the establishment of the State of Israel, the confiscation of territory accelerated even further through the destruction of homes, the expulsion of the Palestinian people, and the replacement of the latter with mass migrations of Jews from all over the world.[2]

Apace with the cleansing of Palestinians the JNF has attempted to "fashion a European-biblical landscape" aimed at shaping a new collective memory.[3] Beginning in 1948, the JNF has marketed its colonial mission as an ecological endeavor: On the grounds of the Palestinians' putative inability to care for the land, Zionists have conducted a brutal planting campaign consisting of burning, uprooting,

or poisoning native trees and orchards so as to replace them with settlements, spa resorts, field crops, and recreational parks;[4] the numbers of settlements and reserves continue to grow as the ongoing fragmentation of Palestinian territory, the land grabs, and the extraction of water all grind on with impunity.[5]

While driving through the countryside surrounding Ramallah in 2019, I noticed a plant that struck me as quite different from the native olive trees and oaks I had seen in other places in Palestine. I mentioned this to Sim Sim, founder of the Palestinian self-defined "intersectional feminist fashion collective" Nöl (which means "loom"), who summed up for me Israel's environmental agenda:

> In the countryside across the West Bank, you can see that the entrance to many Israeli settlements is shrouded by trees which don't appear elsewhere in Palestine. This is because they are not native to Palestine and are instead imported by Israel for one main reason: eco-terrorism. These trees render the agricultural and farming land infertile, which means that any stolen territory they grow on can no longer be farmed. Often, the seeds of these trees will make their way to Palestinian farmers' lands, and the farmers are not allowed by Israel to cut the resulting trees down for "environmental preservation" reasons. If the farmers try to save their land by cutting the harmful trees down, they are fined thousands of shekels.[6]

As Sim Sim explained, to ensure that Palestinians are not planting new trees, Israel conducts aerial surveillance. If farmers are caught, not only are they fined, but their land is confiscated as well.[7] This practice reflects how the "vanishment" of Palestine, to use Lila Sharif's term, has been achieved, albeit only in part, in two ways: first, through the dispossession of Palestinian land and the expulsion of its native inhabitants; and second, through the devastation of ecological habitats via the importation of nonnative flora, i.e., through settler technologies amounting to "eco-occupation."[8] Extinguishing local ecologies is a way to eradicate any natural trace of previous Indigenous inhabitation of the area (whether people, flora, or fauna) as well as to undermine contemporary Palestinian life itself.

Indeed, this process of "ongoing ruination" of the land and its livelihood is part of a nation-building project wherein drafting a topography of occupation becomes necessary in order to dictate how Palestinians should live.[9] The reconfiguration of the Indigenous landscape is more than a concerted effort to disrupt the Palestinians' agricultural economy and render the Palestinian people dependent on wage work in the Israeli settlements.[10] It is an attempt to break the Palestinians' attachment to their land by forcing them to stand by and watch as it is violated, or worse, by severing them from it permanently; it ideologically seeks to erase the historical presence of Palestinians, threatening their national identity, separating them from one another so as to erode their resistant collaboration (*ʿawna*), jeopardize their unity (*tawhid*), and impede their return (*awda*).

The ruination of Palestine is manifest in the sensory atmospherics of the West Bank, where toxic waste is dumped all around by Israeli settlers, choking

the sensorium of Palestinians and confining them thereby to a realm of abjection.[11] Paradoxically, while Israel has been turning the West Bank into an open-air landfill, Palestinians are considered responsible for the accumulation of litter. The dirtiness of the West Bank is projected onto Palestinians themselves, who are, for the Zionists, disposable, like the waste. This is resonant with dominant descriptions in early Zionist medical literature of Palestinians as filthy.[12] Indeed, today's settlers continue to address them in such demeaning terms, which is a key discursive aspect of environmental racism, a kind of racism through which the colonized Other is harmfully exposed to constant pollution. It is the poorer, oft-displaced communities that, as in all settler colonial contexts, are more directly impacted by environmental threats.[13] The chief effect of environmental racism is not necessarily death, but rather a debilitation of bodyminds through air, water, and land pollution aimed at compromising the Palestinian psychic and physical ability for resistance (*muqawama*).

In order to hide its crimes, Israel has shrewdly devised greenwashing tactics predicated on the argument that Palestine was "a land without a people for a people without a land," which Zionists would finally make bloom.[14] By consistently professing a modern ethos of environmental care in opposition to Palestinians' supposed neglect and lack of stewardship of the land, they continually accrue "green capital" in the eyes of the West.[15] It is no surprise, then, that such sustainability credentials have been at the forefront of the Brand Israel campaign, along with the parading of LGBTQ rights. Indeed, pinkwashing and greenwashing go hand in hand. What's more, embedded within the Israeli occupation is a rhetoric centered on a gendered conceptualization of the land, a rhetoric that can be traced back to early Zionist writings in which Palestine was described in masculinist-misogynistic terms as a land to impregnate or rape.[16]

INDIGENOUS ECOLOGICAL IMAGINARIES

In the feature-length movie *Men of Israel* (2009), a gay pornographic film produced and directed by Russian Israeli entrepreneur and filmmaker Michael Lucas, a group of carbon-copy Israelis—all tanned and muscled-up once shed of their military uniforms—have sex among the ruins of homes in Lifta, a dispossessed Palestinian village. According to Rana Barakat's historiographic account, the expulsion of the Palestinians from this village in April 1948 was followed by the destruction of large parts of it and the building of Jewish settlements. Interestingly, however, Lifta was not completely razed to the ground and rebuilt; rather, the buildings that remained underwent a slow, overzealous process of preservation and restoration. This plan was promoted by Israel as a project of cultural heritage conservation in the last "abandoned Arab village."[17] Barakat highlights how this "museumification" of the Palestinian village is ironically and disturbingly predicated on the "disappearance" of the local Arab residents, that is, of the forced exodus of the Indigenous people

that occurred in 1948. The ruins of Lifta have been used by Israel as instruments with which to activate a revisionist archaeological narration—namely, a myth-making re-memorialization—for the purpose of Zionist nation-building. *Men of Israel* takes place in this larger framework of depraved, museumified ruination of the land and violation of Indigenous memory; the sex scenes are staged in varying settings: near a beach by the Dead Sea, inside or outside the remnants of demolished homes, or amid the rubble against the backdrop of barren terrain. As Sa'ed Atshan has argued in his analysis of the film, Lucas's "desecration porn" is the epitome of pinkwashing insofar as the intended audience (i.e., the casual Western gay viewer, probably unaware of Palestinian history) would be led to believe that the film was shot in some remote Israeli village, a curiously empty and ahistorical space.[18]

In the film, the ongoing history of the Nakba is hidden via acts of desecration, by which I mean that the very staging of sex scenes involving Israeli soldiers in a landscape of ruination is designed to conceal the uprooting of Palestinians. Whereas the ongoing historical drama and trauma of the 1948 catastrophe is tangible in the material evidence of the ruins that frame the sexual intercourse, the meaning of those same ruins is foreclosed to the general audience by a homonationalist sexual violation. This violation conjures up what Scott Lauria Morgensen, in referencing the imposition of gender and sexual norms in Indigenous contexts, calls "settler sexuality," namely a set of "modern," "civilized" sexual formations that are enforced according to the bio-geopolitics of colonial regimes at the expense of local "deviant" gender and sexual arrangements.[19] The bodily fluids of the actors symbolically humiliate the environment; the ejaculating or pissing on Palestinian stones has a twofold function: It evokes the "rape of the land" allegorized in early Zionist literature, and it symptomatizes the pernicious, military eroto-nationalist invasion of Palestine. The visual politics of the film reveal, by means of the very obliteration of Palestinian lives and territorial history, the sexualization of the Israeli military enterprise. The performance of the actors qua soldiers analogizes the settler colonial desecration regularly executed on the environment by the Israeli army. Within the homonationalist framework of *Men of Israel*, queerness lies in the very absence of the Other (the Palestinian) symbolized by the silencing of the stones, made invisible through a visual language of concealment in plain sight and a seemingly carefree profanation of the environs.

The ruination of the Palestinian land is the precondition for the Ashkenazi "Sabra" masculine figuration that, in its more contemporary media iterations, has been fabricated through pornographic visual enactments.[20] In Zionist discourse, the Sabra was entrusted with the honorable mission of appropriating the land and making it fertile. The Sabra (a name paradoxically derived from the Arabic word for a cactus native to Palestine) refers, in early Zionist propaganda, to the healthy, virile Jewish man born in post-1948 Israel. Also known in Hebrew as a *halutz* (pioneer), he is tasked with the duty of redeeming the presumed

effeminacy of the diasporic, educated Jew (or "ghetto-Jew")—an effeminacy accorded him in eugenicist, antisemitic, scientific-medical narratives harking back to nineteenth-century Germany. This task is achieved by working and metaphorically impregnating the land. This "macho Jew," or "new Jew," as Zionist thinkers Theodor Herzl and Max Nordau referred to him, embodied the colonial fantasy of the nation-state as well as the dream of racial superiority over the Arab enemy, the diasporic Jew, and the Mizrahi Jew from North Africa.[21] As Ella Shohat has further articulated, the Zionist Sabra, with his blonde hair and blue eyes, was an exemplum of a nationalist youth outside of Europe who emancipated himself from, and transmogrified, the *haluti* (the "European" Jew of the diaspora) into a heroic, superior Jew fighting in the East (i.e., the "Orient") for Jewish liberation; in other words, the Sabra personified the civilizational mission of Zionism, a mission inspired by the rhetorical logic of the European powers "exploring" new feminized lands.[22] The myth of the Sabra incarnated the Zionist-Ashkenazi colonial ideology according to which the darker bodies of Palestinians were fixed into a position of subalternity, perversity, savagery, and primitivism—in other words, of racialized queerness, as opposed to the normativity and whiteness of the Ashkenazim.[23]

This violently gendered construal and visualization of the land demonstrates how environmental ruination in Palestine/Israel is intimately linked to sexualization: In addition to being a key tactic of settler colonialism, ruination in Palestine/Israel is also a sensory aesthetic within which settler colonial bodies are eroticized. Adi Kuntsman has analyzed how media renditions have stereotypically depicted Israeli men as patriotic soldiers and Palestinian men as crazy martyrs: figurations that are associated, respectively, with "the sexiness of nationalism and the queerness of violence."[24] For Kuntsman, these two figurations, each with a synecdochic relation to the nation, are interconnected: They mirror each other in constructing masculinity as undetachable from war and nationalism. While the parallel may be persuasive, it is crucial to underline that the figure of the Israeli soldier has been aestheticized within the media and popular culture, whereas the image of the Palestinian man, due to the disingenuous narrative that equates him with Islamism, has remained one of unglamorous extremism and uncontainability. As the case of *Men of Israel* shows, the gay mainstream erotic imagination has been embedded with fantasies pivoted on a fetishized imagery of Israeli soldiers that has only solidified over the last decade due to the global success of Israeli gay pornography.

Vis-à-vis this sexualized visual rendition of camouflaged ruination, contemporary fashion designers and photographers in Palestine are proposing a counter-homonationalist imagining of the land, linking its history with environmental brutalization and rethinking their relation to it via a queer anti-Zionist lens. During the already mentioned Instagram broadcast, Bashar continued: "Sustainability should be part of the narrative for a free Palestine, and it's crucial that local fashion

people are advocating these values. We should all be doing our part. . . . I talk about it [sustainability] on my digital channels. For me it's very important in my performances to showcase the work of Palestinian fashion designers whose work is truly sustainable and takes into account gender and sexuality." As Bashar implies in the above quote, both components—the environmental and the gender-sexual—factor into the decolonizing potential of fashion.

Censored Arab (2021), a collection by Nazareth-born fashion designer Shady Majlaton, concisely addresses the fear of vanishment of Arab identities in Palestine/Israel, due to their conflation with terrorism: a human vanishing that proceeds hand in hand with the ruination of the landscape. The first time we spoke, Shady told me that "Arabness has become in the dominant Israeli and Western narratives a symbol of primitivity or a threat that ought to be hidden from sight."[25] The imperial violence perpetuated against Palestinians involves the environment as much as gender and sexual embodiment. Shady titled his collection Censored Arab to allude to his daily experience of being under threat and often having to censor himself in Nesher, the conservative majority-Jewish town (situated in an area of 1948 Palestine that was ultimately annexed by Israelis) in which he lives.

The inspiration for the collection stems, more deeply, from a number of traumatic experiences that Shady endured, leading him to use self-fashioning to work through his pain and reflect on his identity. As he put it: "Fashion became for me a way of figuring out how to survive," that is, how not to vanish amid the vanishing of an entire land. During our conversations, Shady repeatedly used the term "rape" to describe the occupation as well as the pain inflicted on Palestinians by their current predicament. At one point, he stated clearly: "Through my clothing and their visual representations I talk about our political circumstances. I do so through a body language and a language of rape which applies to the occupation as well." The photo shoot of Censored Arab took place in Lifta.[26] As Shady recounted,

> Lifta was not an *abandoned* village, as Israelis claim; it was a place full of life which was occupied, and its inhabitants were subsequently evacuated from it. If you go to Lifta today you will find signs telling you that those houses had been there for so long, and if you pay attention to the houses you will also notice the distinctly Ottoman style in which they were built. Lifta is now the site of [Israeli] "Lifta Boutique Hotel & Spa." You can still see the evacuated houses. They have created a trekking path around them which takes you inside, on top, or underneath them. There are a lot of hateful, ultra-Orthodox graffiti in Hebrew on them. It's like *ruining the ruins*. In the period in which I did the photography, the hotel was under construction and there were daily protests all around; it was about the same time as the intensification of the protests in Sheikh Jarrah, but things were happening all over the place: Israelis were destroying houses in Silwan and there were constant attacks on Gaza, Ramallah, Nablus, and Jenin.[27]



FIGURE 10. Shot from Shady Majlaton's Censored Arab collection. Designs and photographs by Shady Majlaton, Lifta, 2021. Courtesy of Shady Majlaton.

Shady's narration of Lifta's aesthetic of ruination is germane to the devastation of the Palestinian landscape and to Israel's green reconfiguration of it, a tactic of de-Arabizing and gentrifying the land, land which has endured roughly one hundred years of abuse.

The main look from the design collection and photographic catalog is a palimpsest of Palestinian symbols (fig. 10). The outfits in the collection revisit the traditional style of dabke dress. The dabke (from the Arabic *dabaka*, meaning foot-stomping) is a Levantine folk dance performed at festive events. Shady and I discussed how this dance, its name, its etymology, and the traditional clothes associated with it were shrewdly altered and appropriated over time; Israeli settlers have been performing this dance not just for weddings, birthdays, and similar occasions, but also to celebrate the building of a settlement or a house demolition. Shady, in an abrasive tone, exclaimed: "After all, when you occupy a land you occupy its culture, including its fashion."[28] The aesthetic inspiration for the outfit in figure 10 came from the keffiyeh.[29] In 2022, Shady showed me his most treasured keffiyeh and the different ways in which it can be worn, going into detail about how resistance fighters use it during uprisings. The keffiyeh has an intricate history involving culinary and geographical references. Essentially a tablecloth, it has small patterns evoking olive leaves, a staple of Palestinian cuisine, and straight, bold, symmetric lines conjuring the historic trade roads that once connected Palestine to the major cities in the neighboring Arab countries, with the corners of the cloth standing for crossroads where people would meet. He explained the technique he used when making this outfit:

> I left the olives out [laughs] but I took an actual fishnet, I made it look kind of destroyed, like ruined, and I dyed it black. Then I made those strips, which you can see horizontally on the belt and vertically on the pants, very wide, and created a whole belt out of them; I then connected the belt to the fishnet. The whole outfit is a *dabke nonbinary outfit*. It's the nonbinary outfit of the national dance. The top part looks like the women's thobe without the sleeves, and the lower part shows the men's shalwar. I also took in the idea of the multiple-sided buttons, you know, the trend that started in the 1990s—pants with buttons down the side. I decided that this needed to be a single piece. The whole outfit is a look, and you can enter it only from the side: So, basically, in order to wear it you have to open the buttons, sneak in, put your hands in place, and then close up the buttons. This sneaking in and out was also meant to remind me of my own experience of having to get into many different characters to navigate certain spaces safely.[30]

The photo shoot depicts a model walking through the landscape, entering what remains of the original houses, now evacuated, looking into them, standing before them, and finally acting out ambivalent feelings of unease, discomfort, and un/belonging. In sharp contrast to the desecrating behaviors of the actors in *Men of Israel*, here the sensual encounter with the ruins acquires an almost spiritual value:



FIGURE 11. Model performing for Shady Majlaton's Censored Arab collection photo shoot. Designs and photographs by Shady Majlaton, Lifta, 2021. Courtesy of Shady Majlaton.

The model is surrounded by stones, he wanders in and out of the ruins like a dancer whose movements honor the environment (fig. 11), and symbolically brings its history back to life. The ruined, vandalized site of Lifta becomes the vanishing environment whose forgotten history and meanings are reactivated by Shady through fashion and, more precisely, through proximity to the ruins and the embodied relation of the clothed body with the nature they (the clothes and the body) are native to and part of.[31] For Palestinians, learning is a process that is intimately connected to the environmental injustice wrought by historical events, and in particular by the ongoing Nakba; such a process testifies to the need to generate resilient worldviews to oppose the occupier's attempt at annihilating imagination.

I interpret the proximity of the model's body to the stones in this photo shoot as indicating a human/nonhuman *de*-desecration in response to the physical and psychic debilitation of land and bodies engendered by the occupation. Alex Wilson, writing from a Cree native perspective, has tied body sovereignty to land sovereignty, a theoretical linkage that is necessary especially when accounting for the cultural disruption, wielded by colonialism, that throughout history has disproportionately harmed queer people.[32] She invokes an epistemology of "coming *in*," as opposed to "coming out," that welcomes queerness in order to center values of relationality and respect for kin: Coming in is, in this sense, an act of being "fully present in our selves," "resuming place," and "[being] in connection with all our relations."[33] With this photo shoot Shady "comes in" to symbolically resume native

presence in Lifta. His body (that is, the model's body) finds a space for itself in a location of dispossession, invoking land sovereignty by reoccupying such a site. Censored Arab is thus readable as an attempt—paraphrasing Barakat—to save Lifta from the Zionist preservation and remythologization enacted by means of erasing Palestinianness, and to revitalize its Palestinian indigeneity by prefiguring a physical return of Palestinians to this land. The model's queer, sustainable outfit signals his need to think through and experiment with symbols of Palestinianness. The lines of the blouse and the trousers seem to reach out in all directions: Shady's being is connected to the ground, the sky, the rocks, and the sea.

Shady's aesthetic operation gestures to what I call *queer Indigenous fashion justice*. "Indigenous" refers here to the Palestinian land and its native inhabitants; the backstory of Censored Arab shows, in fact, how, in the emblematic example of Lifta, Palestinian indigeneity has been abstracted and damaged through a neoliberal plan of gentrification that led to the construction of a luxury hotel amid the ruins of the Nakba. "Queer" refers to both the queerness performed by the model, and more broadly to the queer potential of nature, namely its agentic ability to "return"—invoking the right of return—and reflourish against all odds in the most unexpected places; in the case of Censored Arab, remnants of houses signify the indelibility of Palestinian indigeneity. In this sense, Censored Arab can be read as part and parcel of a collective project of eroding what Elizabeth Povinelli calls late liberal "geontopower"—a dominant mode of governance that understands life and nonlife as ontologically discrete, in consequence of which marginalized communities can only achieve sovereignty by destabilizing this separation.[34]

In 2021 Sereen and Yasmine Khass, sisters and cofounders of Haifa-based fashion sustainability collective SYKO Project, filmed a fashion short titled "Pure Love," by a lake in al-Auja (fig. 12), a village in the Jericho governorate.[35] Al-Auja is known for its freshwater spring and agricultural richness, but over the years it has suffered because Israeli authorities have imposed severe water restrictions and because Jewish settlers harass local farmers, factors that have made life unsustainable for the locals. Filming here is, according to Yasmine and Sereen, a way of participating in the local struggle against Israeli sovereignty and vandalism in the Jordan Valley, where the land and access to resources are constantly under threat. In the film, a long-haired man in a meticulously hand-embroidered, black silk crop top walks through the sedges surrounding the water spring. His gait is slow, meditative, his eyes are cast down. The camera zooms in on his bare abdomen, only to quickly rotate back to capture the countryside, then the silhouette of the mountains in the distance, and, for a moment, the water reflections. The camera frames the body briefly before moving up to show bare feminine legs first and then the entire body of a young woman wrapped in a black vegan leather harness dress. As with the clothes of the young man in the first scene, the tactile quality of the fabric is enhanced by the close-up: the leather is shiny, soft, and it solicits a haptic pleasure in the viewer. In a third scene, shot from below, a woman in a light, black



FIGURE 12. Still from SYKO Project's "Pure Love" fashion film, directed by Yasmine and Sereen Khass, 2021. Courtesy of SYKO Project.

thobe appears; she is standing before green mountains, the wind gently ruffling her hair, the dress delicate, like chiffon. In the fourth and final scene, the three models enter the water together, look around, and cling to one another so tightly that they seem to hug and compress the water; the mountains and the grass that frame the image join in this final human/nonhuman encounter.

The video could be a dream or a projection. It envelops the spectator in an atmosphere of suspension: Time slows, and the bodies move gently through nature. Finally, the three figures close their eyes and remain there, as if rooted in the water. The affectivity that stems from the collective immersion into the water suggests a calm communion to counteract the sensory harm caused by the settler colonial ecocidal agenda. The models create and find beauty and pleasure with each other, in their clothes, and within nature, phenomenologically reclaiming their determination to remain steadfast, with all their senses, when confronted with Israel's ecological ruination. Using Ann Stoler's language, sensitivity can "actualize connectivities," which are helpful to avoid succumbing to the damage wrought by colonization on bodyminds.[36] Thus, in light of the affectivity lodged in and conveyed through the clothed bodies and their contact with nature, the fashion short can be seen as a carrier of a decolonial sensibility, insofar as it embodies a critique of the actual colonial attempt to suppress Palestinian sensitivities—something that Stoler would call political "insubordination in sensory form."[37]

In SYKO's aesthetic imagining, the sustainable garments—a cropped silk top, a vegan leather dress, and a cotton thobe—and the bodies that wear them come close together sensually; the film ends with a still that congeals the queer harmony of the bodies' physical hold within nature.[38] As mentioned in the introduction, I center

queerness not only as a vibrant affective, aesthetic, and political denominator, but also as a rhetorical instrument with the potential to deconstruct strictly gendered concepts such as nation and land. Indeed, queerness, as queer Indigenous studies teach, can be formulated as disturbing the normalizing heterosexual and/or cis-homonormative boundaries of sexual colonization; that is, it can undermine the institutionalized infrastructure of sexuality that upholds settler coloniality. In this sense, queerness is not intended as a mainstream umbrella term for non-cis and/or nonheterosexual embodiment, but rather it connotes a disavowal of the very economies of desire that underlie the settler colonial imposition of normalizing ways of being—ways of being that must be intelligible in order for subjects to be welcomed and find a sense of belonging, home, and even freedom within the constraints of the state. Making room for queerness in the anti-occupation struggle allows for mutual support and healing while dealing with the consequences of the colonial process of forcing binaries onto the land and onto human bodies; along these lines, the embracing and foregrounding of queerness allows for more fulsome relationships to land and beings.[39]

By looking at the entanglement of fashion with the human body from a queer standpoint that is attentive to body–land relations, queer Indigenous fashion justice can be construed as an active and activist process of reasserting an attachment to land. Queer Indigenous fashion justice might take shape by crafting fashion practices, grounded in ancestral worldviews, that counteract Zionist ecological violence—a violence that is undetachable from environmental racism and a gendered, sexualized connotation of the land—as well as the ensuing impact of such violence on textile and clothing production. In view of the material and epistemic perturbations wrought by settler colonialism on human/nonhuman relationships, the cultivation of connections with other environmental entities can be practiced through fashion designs rooted in a celebration of the land and its relationality.[40]

Correspondingly, fashion storytelling practices such as the fashion films/performances of Shady and SYKO can document the aesthetic and affective mutuality with the land, thereby endorsing forms of alterity from anthropocentric, colonial, hierarchical, patriarchal, and reproductive taxonomies of subjectivity—in other words, they can illustrate the various modes in which bodies can move in the world while simultaneously embracing their potential queerness as well as their relation to the land. By confronting the ecocidal, racializing, and sexualizing features of settler occupation, and foregrounding the environmental, racial, and gender/sexual nexus that lies at the core of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, fashion and fashion representation in Palestine participate in aesthetically and affectively endorsing a decolonial agenda.

In wedding environmental justice to fashion justice, Alice Payne and Rowena Maguire have argued that understanding fashion justice *as* environmental justice allows us to consider "the multiple and intersecting ways in which fashion systems impact both human and more-than-human capabilities."[41] Significantly, and

coherently with what I have been maintaining, Payne and Maguire have recognized that to think of fashion justice in these terms means to address fashion as a site where not only environmental but also gender and racial concerns come to light. This argument can be taken further to suggest that building on this understanding of fashion justice, queer Indigenous fashion justice, as an analytic, can allow for a broader understanding of how Palestinian fashion, by attending to place-based economies of gender and race, carries with it the aspiration for decolonial justice. Queer Indigenous fashion justice does not give in to colonial forms of governmentality (epitomized, for instance, by Israeli policies that control and repress Palestinian creative production and object circulation); rather, it is concretized in land-based actions that are aligned with local Indigenous values and that thereby reaffirm Palestinian agency. The practices that fall under the rubric of queer Indigenous fashion justice call attention to and critique the colonial structures that, on different levels (environment, race, gender, sexuality), consolidate a systemic state of injury for Palestinians by disfiguring the environment in which they live (and make clothes). Justice can be imagined only to the extent that it can be operationalized, i.e., if it is understood as praxis—in this case, through clothing production and circulation as well as through practices of storytelling. Among the Palestinian fashion collectives engaged in carrying out such an endeavor, a decolonial imagination is crafted through communitarian, place-based eco-aesthetic gestures that tackle the history of the present by critically reflecting on the past and speculating about yet-to-be materialized futures.

Most certainly, fashion does not have the capacity to bring about decolonization itself. After all, as Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang famously stated, "decolonization is not a metaphor" and should be pragmatically attained: In the case of Palestine/Israel this would mean the end of Israel's occupation and apartheid, Palestinian sovereignty over their former land, and the right of return to such land for all Palestinians. Decolonization, however, is a goal as much as it is a process, as Frantz Fanon put it.[42] As a process, it needs to operate along different tracks as well as at different scales (for example, military resistance to the occupation, civil rights protests, community organizing, and cultural production) and in multiple locations (across the entirety of historic Palestine, with the support of allies in the diaspora and beyond). Meanwhile, cultural production is part of decolonization-as-process, for it can provide visions for a liberated future beyond the psychic constraints imposed by the colonizers. Therefore, fashion-making and fashion storytelling—in the forms of films, photographs, and performances—constitute, in the case of Palestine, a genre of decolonial cultural production. They have a pedagogical function in that they generate knowledges and imaginings that might strengthen alliances and solidarity networks toward the goal of liberation. Put differently, creative practices such as fashion-making and its representations tell stories, both material and visual, that can shape the ways in which, following Antonio Gramsci, people make sense of the world and thus acquire power vis-à-vis

hegemonic politics and cultures.[43] Fashion design, film, photography, and performance amount to an alternative and often overlooked and unremarked upon praxis through which Palestinian youths find their agency and activate the collective imagination for a better lifeworld in spite of the horrors of the occupation.

As a praxis, the fashion eco-gestures described in this chapter have a twofold aim. First, they cultivate and reclaim the attachment to the very land on which the makers' and designers' sense of indigeneity is pivoted—that is to say, they operationalize a queer Indigenous fashion justice in opposition to the Zionist state's mission to render the land uninhabitable. Second, such fashion eco-gestures encapsulate a decolonial pedagogy: They tell and teach about localized stories of survival, struggle, pleasure, and community, showing how creativity can be put to the service of liberation. In this sense, they also carry the seeds for a decolonial imagination. To apply Ilan Pappé's meditation on cultural production in Palestine to the case of fashion: Nonheroic, everyday "projects of Indigenous cultural resistance . . . [are] employed to contest and combat a dominant power, often constructing a different vision of the world in the process . . . outside the framework of national resistance."[44] These projects, which have indigeneity as a key motif, are also beneficial, financially and emotionally, to the communities on the ground.

THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF PALESTINIAN FASHION

Just as Palestinian land has been largely polluted and, as a consequence, many heirloom seed varieties have gone or are going extinct, Indigenous sustainable dressmaking techniques have also been threatened with extinction due to the devastation of the Palestinian ecosystem, to the forced uprooting of native peoples, and to their separation from both natural resources and each other, all of which are vital to clothing production. In Palestine, sustainability is nothing new; fair and sustainable production has been part of its textile economies for centuries. Prior to the encroachment of Israeli companies in the local textile industry, Palestine had long been well known for its weaving and dyeing, with many of its textile practices centered on the loom.[45]

In discussing sustainability during one of our conversations, Sim Sim of Nöl Collective reflected:

> In Palestine sustainability is especially nuanced because it's not just fixed on what you're doing now; it has to do with our living history, the fabrics that were locally woven and the lives of the weavers . . . where did they go? What happened to them? Why and how were both fabrics and weavers, who were carriers of knowledge, mostly erased? Practicing sustainability means researching and archiving this Indigenous ancestral knowledge that was nearly made extinct. In sustainability fashion discourse there's a lot of talk about the conditions of the garment workers, but what about their social histories and the historical context, most likely colonial, from which they come?[46]

As part of its ethical mission, Nöl Collective is devoted to engaging with scattered archival sources, such as pictures found on the internet, in family albums, and in old books. Sim Sim continued: "There were once natural dye houses all over Palestine. Under the weight of industrialization and ethnic cleansing, these practices of natural dyeing, spinning yarns, and handweaving were pushed to the edge of extinction." After much research Sim Sim found out that some of these dye houses were located in Nablus. She came across the travelogues of an Orientalist British traveler and Bible scholar named Henry Baker Tristram, who had traveled to Palestine to document the native wildlife and population in the second half of the nineteenth century; in *The Land of Israel*, a book he published in 1865, he vividly recounted that during his trip to Nablus he came across a dye house that had indigo dripping from yarns hung to the ceiling to dry.

While doing further online research, Sim Sim discovered photos taken in the early 1970s by American reporter Thomas J. Abercrombie for *National Geographic*, and discussed them at length with me. The photos were almost certainly shot on the beach of Gaza. They show men surrounded by vibrant bundles of yarns. In Sim Sim's reading, each bundle in the pictures had just been washed in the sea in the background to preserve the colors. Before ending up on the beach, the yarns had presumably been dyed naturally with plants and spices that were native to Palestine. Once cleaned, the yarns would have been carried to weavers all over Palestine to be woven into clothing, i.e., in Sim Sim's words, "the fabrics of Palestinian heritage." Such photos reveal the intimate historical relationship between Palestinians and their land, and offer a glimpse into the history of colonization: When Palestinians were expelled in 1948, entire towns, such as the village of al-Majdal—once the epicenter of the local textile industry (with over five hundred active looms until the mid-nineteenth century)—were razed to the ground, their inhabitants forced to move to refugee camps in Jordan, and their traditions threatened with extinction due to the artisans' lack of means and their meager living conditions. Consequently, not only did many handmade techniques become less common, but the industrialization and globalization processes meant that manual looms were replaced with machines, weavers were prevented from moving their products across the borders, and the local textile industry was overwhelmed by Israeli companies that established exploitative relationships with textile workshops in Palestine. At the same time, such photos testify to the ability of some Palestinians to keep alive Indigenous textile practices despite the catastrophic events of 1948 (as well as the 1967 Six-Day War, or Naksa). In the face of Palestinian displacement, artisans in Gaza succeeded in continuing production, to the extent that—despite all the difficulties of obtaining and shipping fabrics in and out of Gaza as well as the regular bombings and incursions of the Israeli army into the Strip—Gaza remained a point of reference for textile work, a place where a few older artisans managed to stay active. It is perhaps Gaza's location on the Mediterranean, and the importance of water and good climate conditions for sustainable artisanal

practices such as dyeing, that made it possible for crafts makers there to carry on Indigenous modes of textile production. And it is to these crafts makers that many Palestinian fashion designers, including Sim Sim, have reached out to learn about and often purchase fabrics for their own collections.

As per Nöl Collective's work, the retrieval of historical, ancestral traditions of fashion sustainability in contemporary Palestine indexes how Palestinians belong to and embody their land; in other words, sustainable fashion practices rooted in the care for the land attest to an attachment to the land that is integral to the claim of Palestinian indigeneity. Practicing fashion sustainability can be seen as an invocation of a principle of Palestinian indigeneity grounded in the enduring relationality with the land and its inhabitants, and can therefore be understood as a means of operationalizing queer Indigenous fashion justice.[47] As Jamal Nabulsi has articulated, the land of Palestine inheres in the body of the Palestinian as much as the body of the Palestinian inheres in the land of Palestine; in his words, Palestine "is embedded in the [Palestinian] body through the senses."[48] It is by collectively embracing what is primarily an inchoate sense of being in the world that Palestinian indigeneity can be understood as a political identity: This *sense* is shared by Palestinians across identity axes (e.g., gender and sexual) and colonially imposed borders, and can be endorsed and mobilized through practices of resistance against the settler state's attempts at, for instance, separating Palestinians, evicting them from their homes, polluting the land, and even maiming and killing them.[49] Palestinian indigeneity is affectively felt and politically deployed as an enduring oppositional stance against settler colonization.[50]

Sustainability, as it pertains to fashion in Palestine, is ontological, epistemological, and political: It is ontological inasmuch as sustainable fashion practices are experienced by Palestinian fashion makers as inherent in the land, that is, their very enactment is indivisible from their existence on the land as well as on their very being-together-in-the-world with said land; it is epistemological in that such practices regenerate old knowledges and use them to produce new ones; and lastly, it is political because these same practices strengthen in the consciousness of the makers their belonging to the land and remind them that this is where their identity should be predicated for the purpose of decolonization, namely, of relentlessly fighting the settler state with its fabricated claim of sovereignty over Palestinian land.[51] In light of these considerations, Nöl Collective's work is firmly anchored to indigeneity as both a feeling of belonging and a political positioning.

Nöl Collective's identity is coherent with, and is readable through, its modes of production. For its fashion-making process, Nöl works with small family-run businesses across the West Bank and the Gaza Strip to support the local craftsmanship and economy. For example, they regularly collaborate with a group of elderly female weavers who live in Samou', a village south of al-Khalil, near the Naqab desert at the southernmost border of the West Bank (fig. 13). Two of these women, Um Salem and Sitt Roqaya, shear the wool, clean it, spin it by hand,



FIGURE 13. Master weaver Um Issa weaving with local wools spun and dyed by the women in her cooperative in Samouʾ village. Photo by Sim Sim for Nöl Collective. Courtesy of Nöl Collective.

dye it, and finally weave it. The historical dimension of their work can also be seen in the rudimentary way in which they put together the loom, which in their case is not the wooden structure one would probably think of; rather, its frame is made of upcycled pipes and discarded paint cans, indicating how after the Nakba they had to use what they could find in order to keep working and pass their knowledge on to their daughters. The methods used by these women today are as close to the origins of Palestinian weaving that Sim Sim has been able to trace; for this reason, Sim Sim told me, "it feels really special to work with them: it feels the most intimately connected to the land and my ancestors that I can get in terms of production."

She goes on to say:

> By slowly incorporating ancestral practices like natural dyeing, working with women who handweave and hand-embroider, and sourcing natural fabrics, we [at Nöl Collective] hope to spark a more conscious conversation about the intersectional impact of fashion on the environment, politics, and identity. . . . Centering Indigenous knowledges and practices is a nonnegotiable part of building a radically different and truly sustainable future. . . . However, these practices should not be mistaken for mere relics of the past . . . but rather [should be seen] as a lens with which to explore the intricate intersections of labor, earth, art, colonization, industrialization,

> displacement, and persistence. The women, families, and workshops are no less than revolutionaries in the face of a global industry—one that continues to prioritize production and profit over people and planet.[52]

The act of witnessing the work of and listening to the stories shared by Palestinian weavers has come to imbue and shape the very ethics of Nöl's Indigenous conceptualization, production, and storytelling, all of which are couched in a spirit of intergenerational relationality. The relations established in the fashion production process in Palestine facilitate a strong sense of movement across time, that is, an intergenerational affectivity. In *Braiding Sweetgrass*, scientist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation Robin Wall Kimmerer has narrated her own experience of learning from the elders in her community how to weave, and she has posited that the learning process is key to environmental justice for it transmits to younger generations the ancestral values that emerge from engagement with the land. In the case of Palestinian fashion creatives, the values of their elders are redeployed as cross-generational tools of resilience in the face of eco-terror.

The 100 percent natural fabrics used by Nöl Collective are primarily the *majdalawi*, from Gaza, and the *shoqet shatara*, a Mansouri natural cotton woven in al-Khalil and cut and sewn in a tiny workshop run by Khaled and Amin, two brothers who live in Askar, a refugee camp on the outskirts of Nablus.[53] Nöl Collective originally manufactured their clothing exclusively in Gaza, but over the years they expanded their production to include more communities in their creative network: They went on to produce in Bethlehem, Ramallah, Nablus, Jericho, and Beit Duqqu. Sim Sim also collaborates with an eleventh-generation Sufi apothecary in the Old City of Nablus. Abdullah, the owner, collects herbs, spices, and plants from all over the Middle East, and is very knowledgeable about their medicinal properties. Sim Sim purchases from him the elements she uses in her home experiments with botanical dyeing. For instance, the madder root is used to obtain the color orange, pomegranate for red, desert insects for vermilion, walnut shells for black, grape leaves or saffron for yellow, and sumac for green. He grinds these for Sim Sim, who brings the resulting dyes back to show him. Theirs is a collaborative exploration through which new knowledge is produced and shared.

Prior to founding Nöl Collective, Sim Sim trained under Vivien Sansour, an artist and anthropologist who has renounced views common to the older generations who understood art within the epistemology of a resistance historically linked to a nationalist framing of the Palestinian struggle.[54] Sansour's Palestine Heirloom Seed Library project consists of researching, recovering, sharing, and experimenting with food crops and ancient seeds (no easy task considering the complex system of borders). By giving new life to Palestinian biocultural heritage, the project visually circulates stories of agriculture and human relations that have remained buried during decades of occupation. From Sansour, Sim Sim has learned, in her own words, "the intersectional and political dimension of the Palestinian engagement

with the land as well as the importance of using food, in her [Sansour's] case, and fashion, in my case, for knowledge retrieval and storytelling."

Sim Sim was also one of the leaders of the #NotYourHabibti movement, a Ramallah-based youth activist movement organized locally to reflect on and respond to gender-based harassment in Palestine. BabyFist, a collective producing a clothing line launched by Sim Sim in 2017, functioned as a catalyst for a burgeoning women's network of support. The collective comprised twenty-five women, and 10 percent of the profits from the clothing's sales went to the Palestinian Working Woman Society for Development (an NGO working in Palestine to eradicate forms of discrimination against women). The BabyFist looks featured pieces with statements like "Not Your Habibti," "With No Shame," or "Femme *Khayal*," as well as hand-embroidered motifs of natural elements. BabyFist slowly became a unisex clothing line, incorporating into the movement men who would wear the BabyFist clothes both in photo shoots and their everyday lives.

Within the more conservative segments of Palestinian society BabyFist was harshly criticized, insofar as, in the views of its detractors, it was distracting from, and potentially even undermining, the struggle against the occupation by shifting the focus from Israeli violence to internal Palestinian violence. Attending creatively to societal issues that are indeed linked to the occupation is one of the ways in which gender and sexuality can be foregrounded in the Palestinian plight. Sim Sim understood that campaigning for women's dignity and rights is interdependent on the struggle against the occupation.[55] The fashion collective espoused, in Sim Sim's words, "an intersectional approach": It extended its mission to fighting against all forms of gender and sexual discrimination; for instance, it produced unisex sustainable shirts with the embroidered phrase "My Freedom Is Your Freedom" and featured in their photo shoots queer-identified Palestinian figures such as Bashar Murad.

Using clothing and the digital tools with which her generation is equipped, Sim Sim saw it as her duty to raise awareness about and counteract the effects of Palestinian patriarchal discourses and behaviors on women's mental health. The BabyFist project allowed Sim Sim to build a community of young women who would regularly meet at her design studio to share their experiences and organize campaigns, using the garments as a wearable connector through which to facilitate advocacy and empowerment. BabyFist's entire production was handled in collaboration with factories in Gaza via WhatsApp. In fact, while the design studio was based in Ramallah, the manufacturing was done in Gaza: Sim Sim would design a piece, scan it with her phone, and send it to her team in Gaza, where a family-run workshop would bring the clothes to life. As Sim Sim could not enter Gaza, everything was coordinated at a distance, and the garments, once produced, would often be held up for months by the Israelis at land crossings. This operation shows how sustainable fashion production, gender struggles, and the occupation are interwoven in the experiences of Sim Sim and are channeled in her fashion work.

BabyFist gradually evolved into Nöl Collective, a project grounded in an Indigenous, capacious understanding of and commitment to the recollection of local fashion and textile history from a feminist vantage. Similar to Trashy Clothing's, Nöl Collective's clothes are sold primarily through the collective's online store, though in this case the customers are mostly Palestinian women living in Palestine as well as in other Middle Eastern countries, with a solid consumer base among the Palestinian diaspora in the United States and Europe. Their products are chiefly promoted to customers and followers in two ways: through photo spreads (for their lookbooks and ad campaigns) showcased on Instagram, and through TikTok videos of behind-the-scenes sneak peeks of the clothes at photo shoots.

Nöl's politics are firmly rooted in the acknowledgment that the struggle against the heteropatriarchy, a policing system in all the imperial projects that have spread misogyny and queerphobia, is part of the struggle against the occupation, with decolonization as the ultimate goal; thanks to the affective affordances of both clothes and their visual representations, fashion can contribute to such a goal by attuning consumers/wearers to Palestinian demands. Sim Sim described to me the rationale behind Nöl Collective as follows:

> Beginning as a community-based initiative to bring people together over shared struggles, we have grown into a collective dedicated to illuminating the interconnectedness of nature, fashion, and politics. Nöl Collective works at the intersection of feminism, Palestinian culture, ethical fashion, and social justice. We started with the idea of practicing "intersectional fashion" and wanting to think about the people who are making our clothes and about the land that's giving us the means to make those garments in the first place. I also wanted to celebrate Palestinian heritage by incorporating it into the garments. Our goal is to do everything hyperlocally, which means everything from sourcing fabrics to cutting and sewing. Obviously in Palestine we have limited resources, which means that we have to do what we can with what we have and where we are.

To my request to expand on "intersectional fashion" as it relates to her fashion collective, she explained: "You cannot think about sustainability without thinking intersectionally. Sustainability is inherently feminist, inherently environmental. It relates to justice in a more holistic sense . . . to the way we should be thinking about humanity. Adopting an intersectional approach to design means thinking about how land and people come together. It means thinking beyond the garment itself, thinking about the land, how it 'gives us' the means for fabric and color, and how the garment will feed or harm the land once it returns to the earth."

Here Sim Sim theorizes what Trashy Clothing, in a less explicit manner, gestured at with their Pride for Pay, Souvenirs of Conquest, and Errorvision collections. While Trashy Clothing, too, in their unmasking of the multimodal violence of Zionism, engages on some level with sustainability and Indigenous values

(e.g., in their sustainable production, their donations to organizations that preserve the land, and their commentary on the use of fur in the fashion industry), Sim Sim takes it a step further by positing sustainability as intrinsically feminist-queer and an Indigenous understanding of the land as foundational to the ethics, politics, and aesthetics of Nöl Collective. Nöl's fall 2021 collection, produced in Bethlehem and Nablus and shot in Bethlehem, visually evidences how, per Sim Sim, Nöl Collective attends to the imbrication of gender, race, and environment—a nexus that contemporary Palestinian fashion creatives, despite their differences in (gender, sexual, class, ethnic, and racial) positioning and locality, share at their core. The photo shoot features differently gendered and raced bodies, with femme-presenting models wearing more conventionally masculine clothes (fig. 14), and the collection itself comprises only natural fabrics (for example, discarded orange peels have been processed to extract cellulose, which is spun to form a soft, silky, biodegradable yarn) and organic dyes. Nöl's photo shoots always take place outside, with makeshift sets that include props and often animals.

While discussing the collection with Sim Sim, the concept of "reorientation" came up. In the poetics of Nöl Collective, to "reorient" might suggest that multiple yet interconnected ways of being in the world can serve to reassess the fight for the decolonization of Palestine. For Nöl, reorientation conjures a kind of unity grounded in a plurality of beings; it is about finding familiarity within the discomfort of having one's sense of home and belonging consistently jeopardized by the occupiers. Orientation is a synonym and a descriptor of *sense*—intended concomitantly as direction, connotation, and sensation. I suggest that reorientation, in Nöl Collective's work, acquires a polyvalent political meaning: It is about coping with the disorganization of the senses imposed by the Israeli architecture of immobilization by way of nurturing a fully Palestinian web of production that spans all across Palestine; it is an invocation for an intersectional assessment of decolonization through an attentiveness to the interplay of different axes of identity in the collective struggle; and it is about generating new synesthetic arrangements through naturally dyed, haptically pleasurable fabrics in the face of the encroaching atmospheric infrastructures of waste and pollution that cause sensory harm.

Despite the continual debilitation of Palestinian life, what Jane Bennett calls nature's "vibrant matter" (i.e., the very sentience of the land) has not been shattered.[56] Ecological ruination has not inhibited, for example, the growing of grape vines out of rubble or the sprawling of poppies—which Sim Sim described to me as "a sign of reemergence, a reminder to embrace our pain without ever letting it crush us, and to power through it, encouraging others to do the same . . . because beauty comes out of collective strength and resilience"—and the regrowth of cacti and fruit trees in the most unexpected places.[57] In the face of pollution, military destruction, settlers' vandalization, and targeted extermination of Palestinian seeds, nature reveals its affective and political resilience.[58] This unruly resurgence and endurance of nature amid waste and wreckage indexes a past, Indigenous



FIGURE 14. Model wearing the "Hani" hand-embroidered *tatreez* shirt and "Najla" cargo pants, both by the Nöl Collective, made of locally sourced banana silk. Photo by Sim Sim for Nöl Collective, 2021. Courtesy of Nöl Collective.

habitat. It also enables new enmeshments that unsettle the colonial mission of degrading both humans and nonhumans.[59] Human/nonhuman entanglements suggest the potential of alternative visions of the present and future: They are the seeds of imaginative forms of sovereignty. In light of Israel's imperial ecological agenda, the resistance of nature inspires Palestinians' everyday acts of *sumud* (steadfastness).[60] Within Israel's environmental regime, aesthetic-environmental practices of *sumud* produce joy, beauty, and value that are embodied and carried forward by Palestinians, often in artistic and creative forms.[61]

RETHINKING PALESTINIAN HERITAGE THROUGH DRESS AND JEWELRY

The project of funneling Palestinian textiles through sustainable fashion is also at the core of Taita Leila, a "feminist, artisanal streetwear clothing line" founded in 2017 by Noora (from Jerusalem) and Shahrazad (from Haifa) to honor the work of Noora's grandmother, Leila El-Khalidi, a famous embroiderer, dress collector, and author. Taita Leila's mission is to contribute to the making and remaking of collective Palestinian identity by weaving the Palestinian dress heritage into more "contemporary" garments and ideas. When we first talked, Noora told me that while growing up she was frustrated seeing the traditional Palestinian dress as something overly precious, not to be worn but to be collected and exhibited in museums: an object of memory belonging to a long-ago time, something to keep intact and untouched to preserve a sense of Palestinian identity.

Taita Leila experiments with complex Palestinian embroidery techniques, patterns, and styles and brings these into the everyday lives of young Palestinians. Parallel to fashion design, Taita Leila organizes in different parts of Palestine (Jericho, Jerusalem, Ramallah, and Haifa) embroidery workshops run by local artisans and catered to people of all genders and ages; during these workshops, the artisans teach the attendees the same techniques—which Taita Leila has detailed in notebooks and brochures circulated at these events—and provide the materials they use to make the Taita Leila pieces. They also host online workshops, something that began during the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, together with Wafa Ghnaim—one of the most respected Palestinian cross-stitch embroidery specialists in the diaspora—Taita Leila started producing embroidery kits to be sold primarily online. These kits had an unexpected success among the Palestinian diaspora and beyond; thus, the educational aim of the collective was extended beyond Palestine: The workshops became a vector of knowledge for Palestinians and non-Palestinians alike, a place to learn about the Indigenous histories, values, and meanings of dressmaking in historic Palestine. In such learning environments, Palestinian crafts makers pass on their knowledges to other, usually younger, practitioners: Fashion knowledge and heritage circulate among the younger generations of creatives, anchoring them through textiles

to their collective struggle for liberation. Through these workshops Taita Leila's pedagogy of Indigenous Palestinian dressmaking takes a tangible form.

Taita Leila is a fashion collective comprising artisans, designers, and photographers based in different areas of Palestine: The embroiderers, for instance, are located in Jenin; their most trusted fabric merchants are in Ramallah (although, occasionally, they also managed to source fabrics from Gaza); and the chief designer, Marwa Asbi, and the photographer, Julie Dakwar, live in Haifa. With a "collectivist" approach, Taita Leila simultaneously, in Noora's words, "enforces 'made-in-Palestine' by championing local talents" and creates a decentralized network of people with different skills and across different locales. As they are based in 1948 Palestine, Marwa and Julie, unlike Palestinians in the West Bank or Gaza, have the freedom to move with relative ease across the territories and meet the embroiderers and the models in person. Nonetheless, their main challenges, as for all the fashion collectives in Palestine, are production and circulation, since the raw materials are difficult to source and it is nearly impossible to produce entirely in one location due to the fact that the few remaining fashion workers and workshops are scattered across Palestine.

The work of Taita Laila is situated in this context. The founders slyly navigate the restrictions imposed by Israel's permit regime, and they often use social media platforms to coordinate production and circulation with the members of the collective. They consider fashion a medium through which to both honor a political Palestinian heritage and craft styles of being and fashioning that reflect and embolden the intersectional vision for a free Palestine shared by the younger generation of Palestinians. In so doing, they discard or deflate the encroachment of dominant politics on grassroots fashion work. The lack of local infrastructures and the passivity of the Palestinian Authority instilled in them a sense of frustration that they have turned into a pragmatically optimistic approach to their work. This takes the form of building an active network where designers, photographers, filmmakers, artisans, and even artists from other fields can participate; of devising strategies to minimize Israeli interference; and of helping each other accomplish projects in the name of a shared emancipatory struggle.

Noora told me that when they were starting out, even communicating with each other was complicated: Because the telecommunications network is largely controlled by Israeli companies and the connection is severely limited, speaking over the phone to brainstorm and coordinate the logistics proved extremely difficult (for instance, when Noora called her collaborators in Palestine, some of them, perhaps unwilling to accept the charges or worried that their phones were being tapped, were reluctant to answer). To move the products around, Taita Leila, depending on the severity of border controls, and on the availability of couriers, rely on a network of contacts, including friends who are willing to help out by taking products along during their travels and delivering them to the various actors involved in production. Thus, in addition to the bonds between those who are

officially part of the collective, their work is also contingent on a number of unofficial players with whom the fashion collective has established solid relationships. The circulation of Palestinian fashion requires the devising of collaborative tactics: Overcoming or circumventing the obstacles posed by the settler colonial entity is, in Noora's words, "a testament to how much resilience we, Palestinian designers and crafts makers, have."[62]

Taita Leila's reviving of Palestinian textile knowledge goes hand in hand with a commitment to disassociating fashion-making from its traditional gendering within dominant Palestinian discourse and representation. For instance, many of their embroiderers are men, and the founders of the collective are vocal, both through the aesthetics of the brand and its social media channels, about embracing a queer-oriented approach. Noora told me that in their work such an approach is visible on two planes: On the level of design, they purposely create, in her words, "genderless" pieces, detaching embroidery from its association with traditional female dress and labor; on the level of photography, the styling of models disrupts the expectations that are placed, both in the West and the Middle East, on young people in terms of the dress conventions one should conform to.[63] Taita Leila's fashion design and image-making gestures might seem minor, yet they are courageous in a context in which the disruption of gender codes is likely to receive harsh backlash; like Trashy Clothing's, their gestures are grounded in a vision that is informed by the work of activist organizations such as alQaws, which advocates the need to think of Palestinian life and experiences along multiple intersecting identity axes vis-à-vis the conservative views of the political leadership and the hypocrisy of the occupier's liberal propaganda. Akin to Shady Majlaton, Nöl Collective, and SYKO Project, Taita Leila has a design approach and philosophy that encapsulate how Indigenous values of care for the land and other beings can work in tandem with, and even shape, via fashion, their understanding of social justice as well as, relatedly and even more ambitiously, their creative vision of the decolonial struggle: Gender, racial, and environmental justice are indispensable conceptual and material prerequisites in the struggle toward a decolonized Palestine.

In their Street Taita collection, models wear silk skirts, which look like the bottom part of thobes, with suspenders embroidered in crisscross patterns (fig. 15). Other looks include hip-length jackets with vents on both sides and embroidered cuff straps cinched to the sleeves with olive wood buttons. In these outfits, traditional embroidery patterns from various regions of Palestine—such as the "Muftah al-Khalil" (key of Hebron), the "Hummus wa-Zbib" (chickpeas and raisins), the "Hujub" (amulets), and the "Khaymat al-Basha" (Pasha's tent)—are applied to garments inspired by women's traditional dresses, are revisited through cuts and lengths typical of urban wear, and are combined with sportswear accessories such as sneakers, T-shirts, and denim jackets. The collection's visual campaign is a "hitchhiker photo shoot," as Noora described it to me. As an homage to the extension and connectedness of the collective's members, it features models in



FIGURE 15. Shot from Taita Leila's Street Taita collection photo shoot. Photo by Julie Dakwar for Taita Leila, 2022. Courtesy of Taita Leila.

different locations across the Jerusalem–Haifa route posing in different settings, from parking lots to highways to street markets and countryside locations.

The inclusion of men as members of the collective, whether in the capacity of embroiderers or models, debunks the folkloric myth of dressmaking as being the sole domain of refugee women in Palestine and the Middle East at large. Indeed, as Rachel Dedman has pointed out, in recent decades Palestinian embroidery

and weaving have been reclaimed as a practice of disruption of the mainstream gendered representations of male and female workers that were contingent on embroidery's historic association with femininity;[64] while embroidery has been historicized as a gendered craft, Palestinian fashion designers have conceptually repurposed it to shake the gendered norms and production structures (typically reflecting the family's gender roles) according to which male and gender-nonconforming fashion workers have been rendered invisible. As Noora summed up, "Palestine is a bit of a microcosm for all the problems in the region (and even around the world), including gender relations. With Taita Leila we try to attend, in our own way, to these issues as they are played out in Palestine."

One of the main concerns for Taita Leila, in their design and photographic work, is to avoid commodifying Palestinian identity. As Omar Nasser-Khoury, one of the leading experts of *tatreez*—an Indigenous Palestinian craft traditionally practiced by rural women for their personal use, consisting of embroideries in different styles that incorporate a variety of motifs and specific colors to indicate regional provenance—observed: "It is problematic that the arena for Palestinian dress has become the museum, private collections, coffee table books, and incompetent political discourse, rather than the bodies of Palestinians! To actually make and produce symbols, the embroiderer has to be consciously investing ideas in the embroidery."[65] When talking about the commodification of Palestinian dress, and more specifically of cross-stitch embroidery, both Noora of Taita Leila and Omar Nasser-Khoury refer to artists, whether Westerners or Palestinians in the diaspora, who have built their careers by reproducing the *tatreez* as the key, recognizable motif of their art, delinking it from its sociopolitical context and without consulting the Palestinian holders of this textile knowledge.[66] They also have in mind international social enterprises that have set up workshops in countries such as Lebanon and Jordan with the mission to "empower" Palestinian female refugees by employing them as embroiderers: These ventures, often conceived by Western investors, have not only contributed to the depoliticization of Palestinian crafts-making but have also capitalized on the labor of the embroiderers, remunerating such labor only minimally and eventually disempowering it. Projects of this kind have reified the work of Palestinians, extracting their knowledge for financial gains and requiring laborers to produce at a fast pace—something that is in contradiction with the ethos of Palestinian dressmaking, which is a slow, sustainable, and intentional practice.[67]

Following the Nakba, as displaced women were living in unsustainable conditions, their *tatreez* practice acquired a denser political valence: Their embroidered thobes indexed their attachment to land and the struggle to return to their villages.[68] Living precariously in makeshift camps, however, the refugees needed to make an income. That's when the newly founded State of Israel promptly leveraged their poverty to take advantage of their crafts-making skills by appropriating Palestinian dress and/or by commissioning their manufacturing

activities to informal Palestinian workshops.[69] Thus, embroidery shifted into wage-generating work in a capitalist system. Rural women and their work were fully integrated into a sellers' market largely for the benefit of the occupier; personal embroidered garments had become merely products for Israel to sell.[70] During the same time period, the Palestine Liberation Organization established embroidery workshops in refugee camps in Lebanon and Syria. In the *PLO Bulletin* it was declared that, since Zionists were trying to co-opt "Palestinian folklore" for their own use, the PLO had decided to found textile workshops to celebrate the steadfast militancy of Palestinian female embroiderers. The PLO symbolically associated the image of the Palestinian refugee/craftswoman with the nationalist resistance. While the PLO-sponsored organizations gave jobs to refugees and attempted to rehabilitate their craft from Israel's devaluing of same, they nevertheless pursued their own nationalist interests: They used the image of the woman embroiderer to their advantage, romanticizing it as yet another visual testament to the nationalist-statist struggle for independence.[71] In other words, Palestinian textile and fashion knowledge were relegitimized and repoliticized, but only inasmuch as said knowledge served the Palestinian political authorities' statehood project.[72]

When the Israeli Knesset in 1980 passed the Tamir Law, an amendment to the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance with which it had banned the showcasing of symbols associated with Palestine (e.g., the olive branch, the keffiyeh, the Palestinian flag, and clothes in the colors of the flag), Palestinian women began developing a particular style of *shawal* dress (made from preembroidered linen, which is then sewn onto the main fabric of the dress) called the "Intifada dress." This kind of dress featured embroidered symbols such as the patterns of the keffiyeh, the Dome of the Rock mosque, motifs of boys throwing stones, or "Filasteen" and other Arabic text.[73] During the First Intifada (1987–1993) it was stitched mainly by women in refugee camps and in the al-Khalil area, and was worn at protests: It became a site of embodied agency and dissent, a nonverbal tool of shared political consciousness, ethnic pride, and emotional resilience.

Despite the co-optation, appropriation, and commodification of Palestinian textile skills and traditions by multiple actors, such as the State of Israel, the PLO, and liberal Western social enterprises, embroidery still represents for Palestinians, in Dedman's words, "a resistance of the imaginative. . . . A vehicle for the constitution of resilience and continuation of memory."[74] In addition to opposing the erasure of Palestinian heritage and identity, Taita Leila see embroidery as a craft that constantly remakes Palestinianness, insofar as it is fluid and evolves over time: It is not fixed in the historic symbolism of Palestinian nationalism, rather it is used to shape new ways of self-fashioning that are incompatible with the nationalist aesthetic scripts of "Palestinian identity." As Dima Saad compellingly sums up, Palestinian dressmaking practices are about "weav[ing] the past into the present, the past into the future," insofar as garments "entangle belongings with longings

for a lost homeland, as metonymic fragments of home and of the self, as vessels of identification and belonging."[75]

In retrieving embroidery techniques, Taita Leila does justice to them (and to their ancestors, the original artisans) by holding on to a slow, anticapitalist process: Their collections are produced at a pace that is manageable for the artisans, who work according to the rhythms dictated by their occupation. What's more, Taita Leila source organic fabrics from Palestinian owners in the territories. Fabric sourcing is contingent on scarce availability, which slows down production time. To minimize stock and, consequently, waste, they employ a preorder system. They make one sample, and potential customers view it on the collective's website and place their orders. Once Taita Leila have received enough orders to match their supply of fabrics, they proceed with production, never exceeding the number of items that have been ordered.

The crafts-making skills of the Taita Leila collective are put to the service of aesthetics that reflect the tastes and demands of Palestinian youths, youths who are attached to the Palestinian land and culture and at the same time are open to global styles and trends. Chiara De Cesari has observed that artists in Palestine "refuse to be trapped in a conservative localism and a stifling attachment to essentialized traditions" and instead "understand heritage as a terrain on which they can forge transnational alliances and produce transnational connectivity."[76] Indeed, Taita Leila's garments both honor Palestine's sartorial heritage, thus functioning as documentary evidence of Palestinian Indigenous culture, and operate as vectors for new fashion imaginaries; they have translated a rural and relatively stagnant dress heritage into a material reservoir of styles that can be resignified in the present and in the service of the future.[77] Traditional crafts-making is restored and actualized, thereby allowing for the emergence of new visual languages that challenge the more trite, folkloric tropes of "heritage."

Such intermingling of sustainable ethics principled on Indigenous values and the revitalization of "heritage" are also essential to Palestinian jewelry designer Mai Zarkawi. She is by all means part of the Palestinian fashion scene: She collaborates closely with fashion designers, providing jewelry pieces for the visual documentation of their clothes and soliciting outfits from them to match the jewelry for her own photo shoots and promotional materials. Mai is based in Majd al-Krum, a small, primarily Muslim village in the upper Galilee. All the Arab villages in the area are essentially camps surrounded by Israeli settlements. This means that the local Arab population has no rights whatsoever. For instance, when Israelis need to fix electricity issues or need a warmer environment during winter, they shut down the Arab neighborhoods, leaving them with no electricity or heat. As if that weren't challenging enough, in order to get her products to customers in the West Bank Mai has to drive for over two hours to reach Jerusalem and, once there, send the jewelry to the West Bank through a courier. That is because shipping companies from the north don't work with the West Bank due to safety

concerns: They avoid the zone so as not to find themselves in the middle of clashes between the Israeli army and Palestinians.

If Mai wants to ship to America or Europe, the process is simpler, if not always reliable: She can go to the Israeli post, located near the Israeli settlements that encircle her village, and arrange the shipment. For Mai and other Palestinian creatives in the region, this poses an ethical conundrum. Even jewelry-working tools and materials in the area can only be found in Israeli metal stores, and Mai has at times been forced to resort to them when she could not get to Jerusalem or when the shops there were not active. To avoid having to obtain the essential materials for her work from Israeli settlements creates, according to Mai, further incentive for slow production. When we first met, she told me: "One thing that I love about jewelry is the fact that metal can always be reused. There are a lot of techniques and ways not to throw away any metal. When I'm making a silver piece and I clean it, I collect the dust of the silver so that I can cast it again."[78] Embracing this circular model also allows her to minimize as much as possible contributing to the Israeli economy.

The collection Majd al-Krum consists mostly of copper and silver pieces created with hot enamel, made to represent the original maps of her native village before the land was stolen by Israel in 1948; the black parts of the brooches are what is left to its inhabitants today. Among these cartographic objects, a brooch made of olive wood painted in black and held together by silver thread stands out (see fig. 16). Olive trees have been consistently uprooted by Israeli settlers; this form of environmental vandalism has largely destroyed the agricultural economy on which the vast majority of the native population once relied. In a photographic image from the collection catalog (fig. 16), the brooch is pinned on a male model who has his eyes closed. The man is holding a burnt piece of olive wood close to his chest as a sign of mourning, suggesting that to be Palestinian means, to borrow an expression from Lauren Berlant, "feeling historical in the present," namely to have to continuously trace back the story of one's sensorium to a history of trauma that keeps living through them.[79] The brooch, resembling a piece of black tourmaline at first sight, shows the intricate webbed pattern of the underlying bark. Hundreds of olive trees, spread out mostly in hilly terrains and at higher altitudes, once dotted the Galilean landscape and were tended to by Palestinians. This was before the Galilee was annexed by Israel (in 1948, following so-called Operation Hiram) and Jewish settlers took charge of the local landscape. The vast majority of the land in Majd al-Krum was expropriated based on the 1949 Absentees' Property Law, which granted Israel the right to lands that had belonged to Palestinians prior to their expulsion. Mai's brooch is a tribute to both the stolen land and to the remaining olive trees that are still looked after by the Palestinian inhabitants of Majd al-Krum. By caring for those trees (from which the locals produce oil) and then, after the pruning season, using remnants of the cortex to make jewels, Mai feels that she is in a reciprocal stewarding relationship with the land. Her collection is



FIGURE 16. Brooch from the Majd al-Krum collection by Mai Zarkawi. Photo by Raya Manaa, 2019. Courtesy of Mai Zarkawi.

about both cherishing the memory of her native, shrinking territory, and imbuing her pieces with the affective traces of their history.

The brooch in the Majd al-Krum collection is a knowledge-making device for the historical presence of the village: an object through which to mourn the loss of parts of the village and to celebrate the persistence of what remains. It is

the kind of object that Stephen Sheehi would refer to as *techné*: a tool of knowledge production, an object resulting from social and subjective practices within conditions of settler colonialism. In writing about the act of "forging revolutionary objects" in Palestine, Sheehi has evocatively argued that "good objects"—psychoanalytically understood but also material objects to which the owner/wearer is attached—can "anchor the *mechanics* . . . that facilitate Palestinian life, livability and revelry"; in other words, objects "can become invested with psychosocial power" of positive collective affirmation within social worlds that persist in defiance of conditions of colonial unlivability.[80] This reasoning well applies to Mai's work and, by extension, to any object that, in Palestine, is crafted as a localized effort to produce knowledge and beauty (or knowledge *via* beauty)—knowledge that stands in the face of systematized violence, especially ecocidal violence, which grinds down both external and internal worlds for Palestinians.[81] Mai's olive wood brooch functions as a pedagogical tool for a decolonial sensorium: It carries a story, the legacy of which informs her present way of inhabiting and understanding the meaning of her environment. It is a material-affective seed of a decolonial consciousness emerging from the relentless Israeli attempt to foreclose Palestinian relationality.

In narrating to me her creative process, one collection at a time, Mai pointed at a multilayered brass earring and said: "All the pieces in my collections have openings; if you look at this one, for instance, you're looking through it: through all these cracks you can simultaneously see parts of the body and what is behind or around it. Every piece is like a movement, an attempt at opening oneself and one's identity to the other."[82] Before becoming a designer, Mai was a dancer. In one of our conversations, she told me that "in dance every gesture is an opening to the other . . . I believe that with fashion and jewelry every piece can become personal and embodied the same way a gesture is in dancing, and like in dancing it can be an opening to the others and to a world, real or hoped for." Contact—to use a term that recurs in Mai's reflections—is integral to her jewelry-making practice: that is, the contact that the piece establishes with her own body and with the body of the wearer, as well as, symbolically, the contact between the (hi)story of the object, including the environment in which it was produced, and the (hi)story of the wearer. The sustainability and circularity in the production process are the ethical conditions that enable jewelry as a form of affective, historical, and political contact to come into being.

In a collection from 2020 titled Cracks, silver earrings, bracelets, and necklaces all reveal intentional imperfections (fig. 17). Tiny cavities suggest both the artisanal quality of the pieces and the impossibility of their full completion: Each rupture signifies a temporal interruption in the making of the piece caused by Israeli attacks on the Palestinians. Each fissure in the metal is a wound that is held together by the surrounding parts of the piece. Geometric asymmetry and imperfection characterize Mai's design aesthetic, which, in her explanation, has



FIGURE 17. Bracelet from the Cracks collection by Mai Zarkawi. Photo by Fadi Dahabreh, 2020. Courtesy of Mai Zarkawi.

to do with the natural beauty of the area she grew up in. In looking at her jewelry pieces, still in the making, Mai and I concurred that those cracks also evoke the "contact" she referred to as the main aim of her practice: The crack is an opening to other beings and, more specifically, an opening and a symbolic return to the environment. In her promotional videos and photographic catalog for the Cracks collection, we see bejeweled hands and arms gently floating in the water and caressing the trees, which recall SYKO Project's atmospheric videos. Cracks are physical and emotional breakages, but they are also possibilities for mending and reparation, a sign of fortitude. The cuts and lesions of ecocidal violence are transposed onto the jewelry pieces and rethought of as a testament to the impossibility of destroying attachment to the land.

When talking about contact, Mai also refers to the transgenerational affective relationship with her ancestors—a relationship that, she feels, is central to her practice. Each jewel she makes, she says, "promotes my heritage as a Palestinian." Many of her pieces are made using traditional jewelry-making techniques and often translate *tatreez* patterns onto her metals through asymmetric designs. In so doing she symbolically affirms how the cultural meanings and aspirations of the Palestinian people have remained firm for the present. Akin to the cross-stitch embroidery, which over time became relegated to the museum, jewelry also served as family heirlooms to preserve Palestinian heritage through generations. Such custodianship of Palestinian artisanal knowledges is a source of pride for Mai. However, in the same spirit as the other members of the Palestinian fashion scene, she also wants to create, through her pieces, new material archives for a future that is inextricable from heritage: Her designs ferry the jewelry tradition from the realm of heritage into a creative sphere of aesthetic experimentation and engagement with the concerns related to the occupation.

Among the silver- or gold-plated brass rings, earrings, and necklaces in large asymmetrical shapes that Mai laid out for me, the piece that aroused my curiosity was a jewelry mask, which had been created as part of her graduation collection from art school; the process of making it was what cemented her commitment to becoming a designer. The artsy piece (fig. 18) is a Dadaesque silver sculpture with two round circles, like glasses, connected by a round frame and attached to a long bar with a number of metal threads hanging from it. The collection is titled Who's Behind the Veil? The veil does not refer to the hijab, as one might surmise; rather, it suggests that Palestinians, and, in the case of the model on which the piece was styled and photographed, Palestinian men, often have to take on different roles, or, in Mai's words, "live double lives," adjusting their behaviors to their surroundings, which are shaped by the occupation with its material and psychological restrictions. This idea of the double—seen also in the glasses, one side of which is covered—extends, according to Mai, to all Palestinians: They have to navigate the multiple dimensions of their identity, be it religious, racial, or sexual, within a widely diverse society that often pursues a sense of belonging through univocal forms of affiliations with, usually, a religious group or a political faction.

As I leafed through the catalog, full of images illustrating her work, I came across the Who's Behind the Veil? collection and noticed how that need to navigate and negotiate multiple identities was reflected in the photo series there. Models of different races and genders, displaying these statement-pieces on their bodies, often looked at the camera with an air of confrontation. The models, with their faces covered in part by the "jewelry masks," as well as their affect, suggested the idea of walking the line between visibility and invisibility. In the photographs composing the lookbook of this collection, we cannot see the eyes of the models. Their poses and skimpy clothes can easily invite in the Western



FIGURE 18. Sculptural jewelry by Mai Zarkawi. Photo by Ronin Zeen, 2020. Courtesy of Mai Zarkawi.

viewer a queer reading of the models; yet what's more interesting here is how the revealing nature of the garments clashes with the covered faces. Mai invites us to consider and inhabit nuance and ambivalence as modes with which to engage with the emotional illegibility of the posing model; ambivalence is a register through which Palestinians frequently negotiate visibility/invisibility in their daily lives—a double bind that disappoints the Orientalist gender, sexual, and racial projections onto Arab bodies.

Mai told me that a lot of pieces she creates are intentionally "unisex." Admittedly, as one might guess, not many people would actually wear such edgy art pieces in their everyday lives. But, she said, "I design according to my own vision of what men in my jewelry could look like, not based on what most Palestinians, particularly from older generations, like." She conceives of her pieces as invocations of different ways of looking, being, and feeling; making jewelry is for her an embodied process of reflection about identity, society, and the relation between them under occupation. Mai's stories and views of Palestinian history and society are affectively embedded in the objects she produces, but it's only by the means of the photographs and videos found respectively in collection catalogs and social media—that is, by means of visual storytelling—that some of these ideas might be conveyed to the viewer and, eventually, to the potential wearer. Outlandish pieces such as the sculptural face covers resonate with many Palestinian fashion creatives of her generation. As she put it, "They get them, they get what they're about . . . but I realized that those pieces might not actually need a lot of explanation." Being part of a community that shares or grasps her aesthetic codes is comforting for Mai. She told me that creating fashion and jewelry strengthens their community and evokes in her "excitement," a sense of joyful militancy deriving from finding pleasure in the force of a group working and living creatively for the same purpose, seeing said pleasure as a form of counter-hegemonic power.

BACK TO THE FUTURE

In one of our conversations about Palestinian fashion heritage and sustainability, Yasmine Khass of SYKO Project brought up an issue similar to the one raised by Bashar Murad in the live broadcast mentioned at the beginning of this chapter: "How can we, Palestinians, make our life more sustainable within the confines of the occupation?"[83] Yasmine and Sereen showed me brochures, leaflets, and short films they produce on behalf of their collective to share stories about the history of Palestinian dress and corresponding traditions of sustainability. One of their publications, a "research booklet" titled *Fashion in Palestine: A Snapshot*, was circulated from 2021 to 2023 at local Palestinian events as well as online. Illustrated by Yasmine, with text by writer Elias Rizek, it features the expression "Back to the Future" on the opening page. As Rizek states in the pamphlet, "Collectively, we must understand

the roots of our ancestors' choices in the production of their garments to guide us. Instead of looking forward, towards a reactive 'global' trend, let's look inward!"

Sim Sim of Nöl Collective had made a similar point: "In order for us to actually have a sustainable future, we need to look to the past. We need to look to ancestral and Indigenous knowledge because our ancestors have been working harmoniously with the earth to produce what they produce for millennia." This statement resonates in turn with the ethos of Najla Abdellatif's popular fashion sustainability blog *Zero Waste Palestine*. As we chatted apropos of sustainability, Najla told me: "Our ancestors' way of living was always sustainable. An ethics of sustainability has always been integral to Indigenous Palestinian life and heritage. The idea of Palestinian environmentalism is historically intrinsic to our DNA: We don't need to look back that far to be inspired to live more sustainably. Especially if we think about how our elderly used to 'consume' clothes. For them it was about slowness and caring for the elements of the earth and what you could make out of them through an 'eco treatment.'"[84]

Indeed, historically, Palestinians did not participate in overconsumption of clothing; quite the opposite, for the most part, they—especially women—would make their own clothes and buy new ones only for festivities (once a year, maximum twice, during Eid), and even in those cases they visited local tailors who hand-sewed more sophisticated dresses. However, designers such as Shady Majlaton, SYKO Project, Nöl Collective, Taita Leila, and Mai Zarkawi are not reminiscing about a lost, precolonial past; their vision of fashion as a sustainable endeavor is centered on the acknowledgment that, borrowing from Nabulsi, interiorizing the past by drawing from former knowledges is crucial for imagining decolonial futures.[85]

The designers' understanding of sustainability reveals that in order for sustainability practices and discourses to be mobilized, the systemic colonial injustices that created the need for sustainability-driven fashion in Palestine must be reckoned with. As Sim Sim adamantly asserted: "Fabric is not just fabric and fashion is not just fashion. History, racial, and gender power dynamics, as well as politics, make it so much more than that. That's OK, though, because what the oppressors use to erase us, we can weaponize to unleash the very power of our collective heritage and story."[86]

Palestinian fashion makers have devised ways to return to their Indigenous roots by retaining full control of their local production as well as by documenting and disseminating their heritage-inspired work through visual storytelling. Palestinian fashion is not only sustainable due to the traditions of its textile heritage, now being recuperated by contemporary designers, but can also be seen as queer insofar as it participates in the struggle for liberation by foregrounding how the fashion collectives and their respective aesthetics defy the colonial presuppositions of what, from a Zionist viewpoint, characterizes Palestinians, namely their disregard for the environment and queerphobia.

Sim Sim talks about Nöl's collections as "visual manuscripts," an image that echoes the affective power of history and its present documentation. Other times she refers to Nöl Collective's collections as odes to nature, to craft, and to ancestors. In a TikTok video from 2022 chronicling the entire process behind the making of a shirt, Sim Sim's voiceover placidly narrates: "Garments are storytellers to those who know how to listen. As beautiful as a piece may be, it doesn't do much for us if it doesn't have a soul. We find this meaning primarily in the people behind a garment and the land that has brought everything to life." In defining garments themselves as "storytellers," Sim Sim hints at the agential capacity of clothes, that is, their potential to link the body to the natural and social fabric—what Otto Von Busch refers to as the "fashion-abilities" of clothing that connect our bodyminds to "the skin of the social."[87] Indeed, clothes can participate, thanks to their *feeling-potential*, in the claim for sovereignty vis-à-vis uprooting and elimination. In the face of Israel's ongoing ecological colonization, an ecological decolonization can be buttressed by enlisting eco-aesthetic practices rooted in ancestral knowledge to produce new environmental imaginings and, in the process, embody what it means to be Palestinian *as, in*, and *with* the environment.[88]

The clothes and jewelry produced by Palestinian designers not only circulate across the different areas of Palestine, bursting with a material vitality that is perceptible by touch, smell, and sight, but they establish links, inviting the customers who wear them to collectively (if only virtually) engage their sensorium. This sharing can be construed as facilitating an ethical model of being-together-in-the-world, one in which the animacy and sentience of matter, paired with the ontological vitality of our being, anchors humans and nonhumans together. Clothes indeed have the capacity to envelop us in an affective ecology, and the materiality of clothes can trigger our senses and thus our consciousness, making us more aware of the need to reassert human/land relationality in the face of ongoing colonization.

Due to clothing's imbrication with the materiality of bodies and nature, it is intimately connected to issues of belonging to the land. Fashion storytelling documents such issues by attending to the visual and material politics of sustainable production and textile heritage. In strengthening the relationship between clothes and land, fashion (and its storytelling) in Palestine offers a way to resist the assimilation and normalization of the social, economic, and political predicaments that perpetuate environmental injustices; in this sense, as I've argued, Palestinian fashion creatives advance a queer Indigenous fashion justice as part and parcel of their ultimate vision of decolonial liberation. Fashion work in Palestine is an active and activist means of promoting an ethics of sustainability, a valid alternative to letting narratives of injustice dominate. It can advance an anti-apartheid ethos by producing eco-aesthetic imaginings wherein the nexus of queerness and the environment is consolidated: It has in fact the capacity to illustrate how the environment is inseparable from racial, gender, and sexual concerns and to yield a kind of fashion

justice rooted in queer and Indigenous values that encompass the intermingling of land, body, and identity.

The work of the designers discussed so far testifies to the ability of many Palestinian creatives to retrieve Indigenous textile and crafts-making techniques and to rely on the ethos of sustainability to shape their own understandings of the relationship between fashion and the environment. Furthermore, such sustainability—understood in terms of respect and appreciation for the land—is positioned within a queer framing of the Palestinian struggle for liberation, a struggle that opposes the ethnocentrism, heteropatriarchy, and environmental racism of the Zionist settler state. The creative work of Shady Majlaton, SYKO Project, Nöl Collective, Taita Leila, and Mai Zarkawi, centered as it is on an indispensable interconnection of environmental, racial, gender and sexual economies, expands the imaginative range of what fashion might "do." From their design collections and visuals, queer Indigenous fashion justice emerges as a generative optic through which to understand how fashion production and storytelling in Palestine have responded to the ecocidal workings of settler colonialism. Queer Indigenous fashion justice is, thus, a key principle in the broader decolonial aesthetic praxis of Palestinian designers and image makers; it is an intrinsically intersectional optic through which we can grasp how creative producers take the sustainability of Palestinian heritage further, into a collective project of producing and documenting their own version of Palestine.

If queerness plays a role in the materialization of a communitarian, decolonial ethics of fashion production and consumption, and if, in light of the fashion practices shown thus far, a decolonization of the imaginary associated with Palestine is ever to materialize, one might well question the nature of the relationship between different genres of resistance in the territories, considering on the one hand Israel's pinkwashing and greenwashing propaganda and, on the other, the Palestinian Authority's dismissal of queer-feminist experience. And consequently, one might ask if a queer decolonial epistemology rooted in Palestinian embodied creative practices could help us rethink liberation in more communal ways. These are the questions I turn to in the next chapter.

3

Stealth and Fugitivity in Jenin and Umm al-Fahm

Anyone who manages to access the Jenin camp, a stronghold of the Palestinian resistance in the West Bank, will most likely be struck by two things: the sight of young people, dressed in black, racing around on their scooters; and the posters of martyrs, interspersed with Palestinian flags and graffiti, plastered across the walls. Some of these posters are new, their colors still vivid, others hark back decades or are reprints meant to keep alive the memory of those whose portraits have faded with the passage of time. As hauntingly affective traces of never-ending resistance, the posters are material ephemera with a life of their own. This visual landscape, intimately uniting the mobility of living humans and the immobility of the dead, composes a sensory palimpsest that in Jenin is more affectively perceptible than in other parts of the West Bank.[1] The posters depicting martyred civilians, fighters, and political prisoners are a rich tapestry that symbolizes the affective value of devoting one's life to the struggle for liberation, which is what many of the scooter drivers are doing.[2]

Apropos of these posters, Israr, cofounder with her friend Sumud of the Jenin-based fashion collective Dababeer Nest, told me that whenever a "martyr" (*shaheed*) dies they search for biographical information—including photos and videos—and share them in person and online.[3] Israr and Sumud's decision to make clothes was inspired by a desire to celebrate these—in their words—"heroes": "It's our way to honor them. Clothes are so intimate, they wrap your body. And at the same time they are visible and direct, they're the first thing you see about someone." When they formed their fashion collective in 2021, the two Palestinian friends wanted to show, in Sumud's words, that "the young people who have *no* direct connection with the armed resistance are somehow still a unit within

it, because even if you don't use weapons you can have other creative ways with which to resist."

In September of that same year, six members of the al-Aqsa Brigades had escaped from Gilboa, an Israeli maximum-security prison, and managed to elude immediate capture. The fugitives were all from Jenin, where a refugee camp was set up by the United Nations in 1953 and was inhabited by approximately twenty-five thousand residents who had been expelled by the Israeli military from the north of historic Palestine in 1948. Following the 2021 jailbreak, Israel entered the camp on a daily basis to search for the Jenin escapees, indiscriminately arresting anyone who potentially knew them. These constant invasions meant that the tension in the camp, a hotspot for Israeli attacks going back twenty years at that point, further increased. The new wave of physical and emotional violence reminded the locals only too well of the trauma the camp had undergone during the 2002 Jenin massacre, a brutal invasion that had been part of a larger plan of executing a crackdown on areas where Palestinians had partially exercised self-rule under the peace deals of the 1990s, when the camp's status was technically put under the administrative control of the Palestinian Authority.[4] In light of the heightened violence wielded against Palestinians in the years preceding the massacre, Jenin's residents gradually revived their spirit of resistance; in fact, it was the Second Intifada that created the conditions for the formation in Jenin of groups of young combatants who willingly took over the task of protecting their community.[5]

While watching videos on Palestinian social media of the celebrations occurring in Jenin on the heels of the Gilboa jailbreak, Israr and Sumud were struck by the fact that every resistance fighter was wearing a bucket hat. The hats reminded them of the "worker hats" that have a long tradition in the history of Palestine, as they were typically worn by farmers to shield themselves from the sun. In the videos posted on social media the excitement of the crowd celebrating the victory of a prison escape is contagious; it hooks the viewer to the bodies, even if their faces are masked. Inspired by the videos they had watched, Israr and Sumud came together with their friends to do something creative. They called their fashion collective Dababeer Nest, from Ush al-Dababeer, or "wasps' nest," a nickname for the Jenin camp.[6] They went on to produce an entire clothing line—T-shirts, sweatshirts, vests, pants, and bucket hats (fig. 19)—all printed with their logo: a white wasp.[7] Most of these items are in black (with occasional khaki pieces). "Black stands for mourning," Israr told me, "mourning about the situation we live in. But we chose black also because the resistance always wears black." Dababeer Nest's clothes are material vessels through which nonviolent creative resistance and armed resistance are linked.

Sometime later, after the launch of their first collection, Israr and Sumud came across images on Telegram of fighters dressed in clothing items that looked just like theirs. Indeed, the fighters now wore bucket hats that had a white wasp in a white circle (an almost exact reproduction of the Dababeer logo) printed on the



FIGURE 19. Models posing for a Dababeer Nest photo shoot. Designs by Nour Heib, photo by Fadi Dahabreh. Courtesy of Dababeer Nest.

front, as well as entire uniforms deliberately nodding to the Dababeer style.[8] As Israr told me, "We had never really intended for our pieces to become a whole uniform." Dababeer Nest had been inspired by the clothes worn by the resistance, which in turn was inspired by the clothes made by Dababeer.

In one of our conversations, Israr enthused:

> When we saw pictures of them wearing our clothing, we were so happy. It made our hearts warm. It was like, "Oh you believe in us?! We believe in you!" It's a connection. They made the bucket hats themselves, applied a patch with a logo resembling ours, and then wrote "wasps' nest" underneath it; they even reposted photos from our social media. I mean, they made them themselves, they didn't get them from us. We basically unintentionally provided the design for them, and they went crazy with it. Now there's even a sign of the wasp at the entrance of the camp. The wasp logo that we created is becoming a revolutionary symbol. Many people in Jenin are wearing our clothes. Even militant movements outside Jenin have started wearing the bucket hats with the same exact middle circle, but they've altered the logo in it. So it's not only just about Jenin anymore.[9]

The militants' completely autonomous appropriation of designs from Dababeer Nest, as well as, and more importantly, the larger acceptance and support that Dababeer received from their community, was exhilarating for Israr and Sumud.[10] They realized that, in the first place, they themselves had been influenced not only

by the hats but also by the combination of black and khaki garments that militants usually put on to minimize the chances of being recognized and caught as they carry out their operations, which take place mostly at night.

Mutual and indirect inspiration of this sort is not uncommon in the Middle East. Laura Marks has historicized how, in contexts where electricity, and therefore media, are "glitchy," and governments are authoritarian, piracy is frequent, which can turn out to be both a curse and a source of creativity.[11] This view is echoed in the affective responsiveness of Dababeer to the piracy of their designs. In fact, the circulation of Dababeer's clothing items, which combine relaxed urban streetwear with the rigor of a uniform, might signify the coming together of creative and armed resistance, and the actual overlapping, if not the conflation, of the two, in the name of *tawhid* (unity). This unity in resistance is attested by the fact that the work of Dababeer Nest has moved beyond clothing: Their logo is now affixed on a banner hanging at the entrance of the camp, surrounded by painted names of the other militant factions from the West Bank and Gaza.

In the aesthetic economy of exchange, objects and signs, which are both carriers and producers of feelings, become, to use Sara Ahmed's vocabulary, "sticky": They move through and between each other and eventually "stick" thanks to "the intensity of their attachments."[12] Part of the fascination with the dissemination of meanings via style has to do, in Israr and Sumud's view, with the lack of verbal communication with the armed resistance, something that renders the resistance as a whole even stronger. Israr told me: "With Dababeer Nest we try to display our personal understanding of the Palestinian experience of resistance, of what it's like to live in Jenin. And we try to share this perspective. A lot of young people in Jenin adopted our outfits without us communicating with them. That's what is so fascinating to us: We have never really communicated with them, yet once we created something artistic, they were responsive to and approved of it. This is the way we communicate with them. . . . You don't have to talk to communicate."[13] Thus, with fashion as a vehicle, Dababeer not only participates in, but also animates, through an aesthetic register, the struggle for Palestinian liberation.

As Bhaskar Sarkar has written in relation to media piracy, forms of piracy and hacking have been historically yoked to (from the perspectives of European and American media outlets), and often criminalized as, "terrorism"; on the other hand, for the "pirates" involved, piracy in the Global South can generate new economies of value that call into question the norms of legitimacy within the purview of imperial and colonial legality.[14] In the case of Trashy Clothing (in chapter 1), bootlegging and counterfeiting are done satirically so as to question the global flows of fashion and stand as a reaction to the dismissal of Palestinian creativity (and Palestine itself) from the hierarchies of cultural production. Trashy Clothing produces "faked" goods (counterfeit) and customizes them in a way that is as visible and legible as possible to the potential customers. Instead, in the case of Jenin, what is at stake is a nonsatirical *re*-production of clothes without the permission

of Dababeer (piracy). This permission, in turn, was not necessary, and the implicit appropriation of their designs was interpreted by the fashion collective as a gesture of appreciation of, and trust in, their nonviolent activist practice—something that, alongside Sarkar on piracy in the Global South, can be read as an inchoate, para-licit coming-together against apparatuses of security.[15]

In Sumud's words, Dababeer is "a project made by Palestinians for Palestinians. That's why even on our social media channels we only use Arabic. We want to share our project with our people without being individualistic." In our conversations, Sumud repeatedly emphasized the importance of catering their work to Palestinians, and of doing so in Arabic. She stressed that creative practices developed by Palestinians in the region should, in their view, be attentive to and reflect local needs and goals—meaning, in the case of the West Bank and Gaza, on-the-ground resistance against the occupation. According to Israr and Sumud, making clothes that stylistically resonate with global tastes and selling them internationally would contradict their localized decolonial spirit. Although they are part of the Palestinian fashion scene, they are also critical of the ways in which other designers have addressed international markets, for instance, by setting up their communications in English. The Dababeer garments are sold exclusively in itinerant bazaars across Palestine. For them, working solely in Arabic and selling only to Palestinians is firstly an ideological stance and secondly a practical choice due to the territorial and economic isolation of Jenin from the rest of the West Bank and Palestine at large. Commercializing their own material and emotional labor beyond Palestine would contribute, in their view, to stripping Palestinians of their identities and their language, as opposed to strengthening the local community; the small profits that Dababeer makes from selling in Jenin are devolved back to the community in Jenin, and help bolster, both practically and symbolically, a communal spirit.

Sumud's point is a crucial one: It begs the question of whether the localized production and self-proclaimed decolonial stance of other Palestinian designers are deflated of their radical potential when the ensuing products are consumed abroad. This is more of a pitfall for Palestinian designers working in the diaspora than for those based in historic Palestine, who, with an intersectional mindset, value the transnational relationality and solidarity alliances the wider publicity of their work makes possible. Operating as they do in a particular location in which the militant resistance is physically and atmospherically more entrenched compared to the rest of the West Bank, Dababeer's uncompromising stance is coherent with the very conditions under which they live and work. Fashion designers and image makers based in less isolated areas in Palestine might have easier access to capital, which in turn favors their openness to communications that go beyond the region.

This debate about the relative importance of appealing to nonlocal markets and audiences is a fraught one among activists and artists, and one that has regularly come up in my conversations with Palestinian designers over the years. As seen

earlier, in the case of Trashy Clothing, the intermingling of global, cosmopolitan styles and Palestinian identity is at the core of their visual politics, and they benefit from such an appealing hybrid aesthetic. Some of these benefits are practical: raising international awareness about the Palestinian struggle and enabling them to financially support Palestinian activist organizations. In the case of Nöl Collective, opening to non-Palestinian markets happened gradually and was the result of much pondering; eventually, Sim Sim, not unlike Shukri and Omar of Trashy Clothing, recognized the relevance of having the Nöl Collective's garments circulate beyond Palestine in order to eventually "give back," both materially and emotionally, to the very community on which the manufacturing work relies. In fact, in Palestine, community and relationality can "circulate with the commodity form and the internet through increasingly global channels of commerce and culture," and in the process facilitate the formation of pro-Palestine alliances within the Middle East and the Global North.[16] In contrast, Dababeer Nest's priority is not to build alliances across or beyond the Arab world, but rather to manifest for their community the possibility of engaging creatively with the resistance and to use clothing as a means of visualizing, and thereby fomenting, their resolve to attain liberation.

Dababeer's style (e.g., its symbols, colors, and references to the local militant groups) is inextricable from the setting, economy, and spirit—or, as Jonathan Flatley would put it, the potentially "revolutionary counter-mood"—of the Jenin camp;[17] in other words, the Dababeer collective is the "product" of an atmosphere of living and a tradition of militant steadfastness that in Jenin is more patent than elsewhere, given its history as a hub of the armed struggle. In this sense, Dababeer's relation to tradition is tied to the experience of living in a tightly knit community and is connected to a viscerally felt iconography. It follows that also their understanding of and feelings about tradition are remarkably different from that of other fashion collectives. As opposed to Nöl Collective, SYKO Project, and Taita Leila, for instance, Dababeer's practice is not principled on a revitalization of ancestral dressmaking techniques, that is, of Palestinian heritage. This has to do with the specificities of Jenin's dress history and its political economy. Additionally, Israr and Sumud firmly believe that traditional techniques such as *tatreez* should remain connected to the thobe, namely to the original attire for which they were conceived, as opposed to being, for instance, printed on a T-shirt. This also explains why no representations of embroidery motifs appear on their clothes.

Jenin, situated in southern Galilee, was one of the few places in historic Palestine where Palestinian embroidery techniques were not widespread.[18] Before the Nakba, the area, with its vibrant markets, was popular with merchants and shopkeepers; though not one of the wealthier villages, it teemed with life.[19] Women in Jenin had been making their own style of dresses (usually in cotton and typically tied with a ribbon at the waist) without embroidery. The reason for the relative lack of aesthetic sophistication traditionally associated with *tatreez* can be attributed

to the fact that these women were mostly *fellaheen* (agricultural laborers)—too busy tending to the land alongside the men and without the financial privilege or time to embroider. Many women arriving in the camp in 1948 (especially from Haifa) formed a closed-off community that survived through the means provided by UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine). They had brought some of their embroidered dresses, but, given the conditions of the camp, they had no means of continuing or redeveloping their embroidery or knitting traditions.[20] Meanwhile, outside the camp, the town of Jenin continued to profit from a flourishing regional trade as well as from its proximity to Nablus, a city renowned for the cultivation and processing of cotton, for its handwoven wool, and for dyeing. Nablus was an industrial center where, in terms of dressmaking, the quality of the fabrics and the vivid colors took precedence over embroidery skills.[21] Thus, to the nearby Jenin arrived thobes whose handicraft was less rich and recognizable than those coming from other regions of Palestine. While to this day many women in Jenin—both the city and the camp—still own traditional dresses inherited from their own families, usually from weddings, there is no active practice of dressmaking. Moreover, being located at the foot of the northernmost hills of the West Bank where the soil is not suitable to fiber crops, there is not much raw material available for such practice. The isolation of Jenin from the rest of the West Bank, with one side favoring the development of local resistant networks, was further exacerbated by the regular Israeli invasions that ultimately jeopardized the possibilities for trade and commerce, including of clothes.

The geographical and temporal circumstances of Jenin are, thus, paramount to understanding the everyday politics of Dababeer's fashion practice. The isolation of Jenin demands that the local designers make the best of the fabrics that do arrive to the camp thanks to residents who individually manage to acquire them in other areas of the West Bank, or by way of the rare shipments, rarer even than elsewhere in the West Bank, to the generally unreliable local post office administered by the PA. In light of the double hostility (from Israel and the PA) toward the militant resistance in Jenin, the economy of the city—and even more so that of the camp—is severely hindered, and goods of all kinds (including fabrics) hardly enter or exit. Concomitantly, the designing and selling of clothes occur under a condition of high alert, one that accustoms fashion makers to an alternating and distressing rhythm of unpredictability.

QUEER STEALTH

In a forty-five-second video shot in the Jenin camp in 2021 by a member of the collective and uploaded on Instagram, we hear various layered and tense music tracks, with the voiceover of a man—taken from a news report from the camp—saying, "It is the wasps' nest that the Israelis fear." The video was shot in the area of the camp where the local militant resistance typically makes its announcements.



FIGURE 20. Model wearing the "wasp on a scooter" Dababeer Nest signature sweatshirt. Designs by Nour Heib, photo by Fadi Dahabreh. Courtesy of Dababeer Nest.

The camera briefly captures a lively crowded market; then, a high-angle shot shows heavy traffic at a standstill in Jenin. Next, in another crowd scene, the camera moves around and zooms in on multiple people masked with balaclavas and wearing mostly black Dababeer clothes. All these people are made to seem part of an impersonal-looking yet intimate collective. Their ages are undetectable and their genders left largely undefined, with the exception of an occasional close-up of a hefty watch, a hairy hand, or meticulously applied eyeliner. Some of them are on Vespas (which is also Italian for wasps), others walk around, others stand in front of the camera, smoking and waving a black flag with "Ush al-Dababeer" printed on it. These last individuals stare right into the camera, their bearing proud, their expressions implying an awareness of the power wielded by the collective gaze. A member of this fashion brigade is wearing a black high-neck sweater, on the front of which is printed a white wasp riding a scooter (fig. 20). This design pays homage to the Vespa, a fundamental tool with which young riders/fighters patrol the camp, deliver messages, and fulfill other requests, such as acquiring food or carrying the martyr to the cemetery for the families in Jenin.[22]

One of the riders is filmed from behind wearing a sweatshirt with an intricately designed, tattoo-like flower on the back (fig. 21). It is the Iris Haynei (or Faqqua Iris), a flower endemic to Palestine that grows all over the mountains of Gilboa.[23] In the design, the wasps stand above the iris: The wasps analogize the residents of Jenin who are devoted to protecting and preserving the iris, a symbol of the Palestinian land.



FIGURE 21. Models getting ready for one of Dababeer Nest's fashion films. The subject on the left is wearing the "Iris Haynei" top. Designs by Nour Heib, photo by Fadi Dahabreh. Courtesy of Dababeer Nest.

The flowers in the designs bespeak the human/nonhuman enmeshments that survive in the face of Israel's ecocide.[24] The iris symbolizes the resilience of nature itself in the face of military destruction and pollution, the unruly resurgence and endurance of nature amid wreckage that signals an Indigenous, ancestral living habitat in which humans, animals, and plants are inextricably related. Moving forward and backward, and alternating various low-angle shots, the camera seems to celebrate the bodies and the collective identity of the group. In the final shot, a child looks around in awe at all these lookalike members of the battalion in Dababeer clothes—a fashionable unity of bodies whose comportments and outfits signify agency, *sous-veillance*, as well as an assertion of affective and visual sovereignty in relation to the land on which they stand.[25] The sound of buzzing wasps closes the film.

In a thirty-second video shot in 2022, the soundtrack is the song "Aneed Ana" (a song by Palestinian band al-Fajer, originally released in 1989, during the First Intifada), reproduced for this video by a sound engineer (known as al-Octopus) who overlaid it with the buzzing of wasps. The fashion short is divided into two main parts, with quick scenes and multiple crosscuts. The first frame is an extreme close-up of a white wasp. Next, in a high-angle overhead shot, we see nine bodies, their clothes meticulously styled, their actions minimal and synchronized; they are lined up and equidistant, in military formation. The scene calls to mind the videos that the Jenin Battalion typically records and delivers to the press.



FIGURE 22. Still from the second Dababeer Nest video. The models hold stones, evoking Palestinian light-weapon resistance in one of their meeting spots. Designs by Nour Heib and Slowdecaying, video by Ahmad al-Khateeb. Courtesy of Dababeer Nest.

The site of this particular photo shoot is commonly referred to as "the settlement," as Israeli settlers used to live there but Palestinians succeeded in kicking them out following the 2002 invasion of Jenin. Now, it's a green area used by camp residents as a gathering space. The camera tilts down and pans to the front to frame the key scene (fig. 22): The models throw stones up in the air and catch them as they fall, in perfect sync, with the rocks stopping at the same height and dropping into the hands at the same instant. Conjuring the iconography of young Palestinian youths throwing stones at the Israeli tanks invading their land, the models are ready to fight with their only weapons. It's an army of civilians clad in Dababeer's recognizable outfits.

What semiotically epitomizes Dababeer's and the militants' shared commitment to the cause is the stealth(iness) of the clothing. Dababeer's practice contributes to the formation of "networks of joint struggle around the production of knowledge."[26] As Laila Shereen Sakr contended in relation to Arab media activists, centering a principle of "communal authorship," namely "a 'community-author' rather than a single subjectivity," reveals "the relational infrastructure" behind storytelling.[27] This is in line with Israr and Sumud's determination to make their fashion project communitarian. The sequencing of the film, with the screen occasionally split in half, and abrupt glitches and flashes of scenes in which a series of young men from Jenin engage in various activities (such as waving or adjusting

their keffiyehs), suggests that wherever in the camp they happen to be, they are looking out for one another as elements of a single entity.

In the second half of the video, each member is shown individually, albeit in the same setting: The camera follows them, framing them within the rural surroundings of Jenin. Some of the models pose to showcase their outfits. Characterized by their signature wasp logo, the clothing items also feature elaborately designed prints of snakes, birds, and deer to suggest interspecies communion in the liberation struggle. As Sumud commented:

> The Palestinian snake [printed on some of the tops from their collection which appear in the video] sits on the shoulders of those wearing these pieces. It's a sign of cooperation between us and our environment, but it also intends to alert our beloved people to the importance of protecting this amazing animal, one of the animals that is native to our homeland and part of the local biodiversity. The snake envelops the body of the wearer as well as the thorny Palestinian *Gundelia* plant, an indication of the strength and solidity of this animal as well as of its mingling with other beings. The Palestinian snake is highly venomous, but there are very few of them since they are threatened with extinction, and they only attack if exposed to danger. The snake is also, like the iris mentioned earlier, part of the national identity that the occupation seeks to destroy, so it needs protecting.

On a white top worn in the video, the sunbird (named as such for its bright colors and the orange-yellow spot under its wings) stands on the branches of a bright red pomegranate tree as the sunset glows behind it.[28] The Palestinian sunbird (or Tameer Palestine, or "father of flowers"), despite repeated Israeli attempts to appropriate it, is, in Israr's words, "a bird that refuses to Judaize." Another black T-shirt in the video features on its back a large print of the Palestinian mountain deer (fig. 23), the Palestinian "king of the mountains." It is shown tearing through the Separation Wall—a wall that, in the design, is made to look like the hundred-shekel bill on which the image of the Persian antelope is reproduced.[29] The Palestinian mountain deer chases the Persian antelope, an animal imported into Palestine by Israelis as part and parcel of the Zionist eco-occupation. Israr told me that the Palestinian deer suffer in the same way the Palestinian people suffer: The deer are separated from other deer across the West Bank and Gaza. The mountain deer is an allegory of the Palestinian who is physically separated from Palestinians in other areas of the territories, but who is often able to circumvent the material obstacles posed by Israel's regime of apartheid. Indeed, in the T-shirt print the deer breaks through the separation fence, rips the currency imposed on Palestinians, and frees itself from the Israeli infrastructures of segregation that asphyxiate the lives of both human beings and animals. As with the humans and flora mentioned earlier, for Israr and Sumud, and for the residents in Jenin and the Palestinians more broadly, humans and fauna constitute a unity. In their resistance against the cross-species effects of Israel's carceral politics, humans and animals



FIGURE 23. "Mountain deer" sweatshirt and handmade mask by Dababeer Nest. Designs by Nour Heib and Slowdecaying. Photo by Ahmad al-Khateeb. Courtesy of Dababeer Nest.

are "companions," inasmuch as, in Penny Johnson's words, "common lives . . . must mean a common struggle both against Israel's occupation and for the future of land . . . with all its living creatures."[30]

In the last scene of the video, the models are together again, in a circle. The camera rises, we hear a noisy buzz and, on the ground, next to the circle of bodies, we see the shadow of a camera drone that conjures up the shape of a wasp. The sonic disturbance of the buzzing wasps reinforces the idea that, in the Jenin "nest," human and nonhuman bodies combat the encroachment of the settler colonial gaze. In other words, the wasps—the people wearing Dababeer, the militants, and other nonhuman entities—form a rudimentary, *sousveilling*, counter-drone assemblage. Dababeer's films typically encapsulate the members/wasps' unity in the face of Israeli oppression as well as the PA's compliance with the normalization of the occupation; however, this unity includes the flora and fauna that have been increasingly endangered by the Jewish National Fund. All living and dead beings in Jenin are invoked by Dababeer through clothes that, at least virtually, in connecting all bodies, ultimately foment steadfastness. In Israr's words, "Human and nonhuman: We see ourselves as a unity."

This unity of beings by way of fashion can be understood through an optic of queer relationality. Not only humans but also humans and animals are connected, in accordance with Indigenous understandings of togetherness rooted in values of care and reciprocity with the land.[31] I use "queer" here as an ontic principle

invoking a being-together-in-the-world centered on the human–environmental nexus. Such use of queer is neither descriptive of, nor fully dependent on, gender and sexuality. Indeed, the gender of the Dababeer team as well as that of the individuals who support them by wearing their clothes in Jenin is almost impossible to detect (and of little relevance).[32] As the keffiyeh and/or balaclava covers their faces, and their garments wrap their bodies loosely, the Dababeer "members" reject the Israeli profiling and, using Sakr's words, the "dataization" of bodies to which all Palestinians are subjected.[33] Their designs invite an act of abstraction wherein the individual self is absorbed into the homogeneity of a multitude. Anchored to the collective ethos of the resistance, the singular must fold into the plural to *un*fold the political potentiality of a community fighting for the same goal.[34]

The clothes produced by Dababeer Nest appear to serve two goals: to symbolically trouble Israel's surveillance technologies by camouflaging bodily appearances, and to embrace illegibility as a means toward relationality in the struggle against settler colonialism. Through illegibility, the multiplicity of individual subjectivities is folded into the impersonality and sameness of the collective. This echoes Édouard Glissant's invocation of opacity as an ontological foundation of relationality. According to him, opacity, understood as an intentional escape from the Western obsession with transparency, signals a refusal to be "reduced" to a readable singularity, and such a refusal, if shared, can become a bulwark against the epistemic imposition of visibility and intelligibility. Along adjacent lines but in a queer vein, I refer to Dababeer's practice through the rubric of *queer stealth*, which I construe as a relational strategy of elusion from colonial surveillance as well as an act of collective disidentification with neoliberal epistemologies of representation; by this I do not mean that gender or sexual identification is dislodged from the liberation struggle, but rather that in Dababeer's case it is intentionally made invisible for the purpose of unity. In Dababeer's work, queer stealth is an intrinsically relational and decolonial aesthetic-affective tactic of (relative) illegibility through which Palestinian bodies can rebuke the systematized gendered and racializing monitoring of their bodies.[35]

My understanding of queerness in Palestine builds on indispensable scholarly and activist work that posits queerness as a crucial political denominator in the Palestinian struggle vis-à-vis Zionist pinkwashing and homonationalism as well as the PA's disregard of queer-related issues.[36] But while acknowledging the importance of queerness in the liberation struggle, I also wager that the decolonial fashion practices of a collective like Dababeer epitomize a slightly different model of queerness, one that hints at an Indigenous, capacious domain in which all beings are connected; this domain can (or even must) remain invisible as a gesture of disavowal of legibility. In other words, the queer stealth of Palestinian subjectivities can be helpful not only in refuting Western neoliberal expectations of what nonnormative gender and sexual embodiments would look like, but also and more importantly in the communal strengthening of unity itself in response to the

Jewish State's identification and reduction of Palestinian bodies to nonbeings. Further, what the Palestinian political elites perceive as a threat to unity (i.e., LGBTQ lives and rights) can actually be concealed precisely to embolden a collective unity grounded in the disintegration of pluralism into sameness.

My intention with this is not to deemphasize the importance of queer visibility in the envisaging of a free Palestine, but in focusing on Dababeer Nest as a case study, I see in queer stealth—where "queer" is understood as something that exceeds the parameters of gender and sexual identification and that relationally encompasses the natural world, and where "stealth" refers to the elusion of subjectivity (i.e., elusion in the form of "impersonality" or sameness) that results from styled uniformity—a style of decolonial aesthetic-political praxis.[37] In this sense, queer stealth, operationalized through fashion, can, in the aims of the fashion makers, disorient whom it should disorient (Israelis) and connect whom it should connect (Palestinians). Such a construal of stealth resonates with Jarrett Martineau and Eric Ritskes's argument that, in settler colonial contexts, "fugitivity finds its energetic potency in remaining illegible to power, incommensurable with colonialism. . . . That which is fugitive proposes an insurgent force of dissident visibility; it is the hidden that reveals itself in motion."[38] Fashion itself, in the context of Jenin, could be considered "stealthy" per se, inasmuch as it is largely seen as apolitical and thus can furtively enter the political arena and contribute to shaping the visual politics of the local resistance by, at least in part, foiling surveillance.

MEDIATING UNITY ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Individual stills from Dababeer Nest's videos, along with other photographs taken separately by the collective, are posted on their Instagram page (@dababeer_nest), a page that counts as followers fashion creatives from across the MENA region, environmental activists in both Palestine and beyond, and Middle Eastern cultural organizers, in addition to the residents of Jenin. The images they post occasionally carry captions that politically situate the shots, and by extension their work, in relation to what's happening on the ground. For instance, a photo of a T-shirt with the "Vespa design" is posted on Instagram with the following caption (translated here from the Arabic original): "The 'night-confusion operations' continue in Jenin . . . where the 'Night Confusion Unit' has been active since the events of Sheikh Jarrah, which were followed by the continuing targeting of the camp by the occupation forces. The 'Night Confusion Unit' consists of three groups: The main one is the monitoring unit, which wanders around Jenin, on their Vespas, thanks to their [the Vespas'] abundance in Jenin and their practicality for purposes of countersurveillance."[39]

Word and image on Dababeer Nest's Instagram channel are sutured to produce a verbal/visual coding of information that is readable only in Arabic and that caters to Palestinians in the West Bank. The interplay of the written word and the

visual image produces, to borrow an expression used by Diane Davis and Logan Smilges, a "rhetorical energy" that tethers fashion storytelling to the Palestinian struggle.[40] The reposting that can occur on Instagram, though, is strategically limited by politically active figures due to the absence of encryption there and the greater likelihood of being surveilled and even persecuted.

The queer stealthiness—as togetherness (qua sameness) and elusiveness—of Dababeer's fashion practice reverberates in their communication strategies. They communicate obliquely and indirectly with militants on the ground in two ways: through Instagram stories in which events happening in Jenin and the West Bank are shared by Dababeer, and through the reposting of messages that are spread by their fellow Palestinians.[41] The indirect, virtual kind of engagement between the Dababeer team and the resistance could be seen as turning both parties into what Tarek El-Ariss would call "leaky subjects"—camouflaged social actors who compose a network of bodies and whose (mostly cyber) creative actions can be illegible to and therefore perceived as threatening by state powers.[42] On an aesthetic-political level, the subjectivity of the leaky subject is dissolved in the name of the collective project of unity in resistance.

As a cloud-based, encrypted instant messaging platform, Telegram is generally the preferred platform in Jenin (compared to Instagram), in that it can broadcast unlimited messages through private channels and hence minimize control thanks to a feature that unsends or auto-deletes messages.[43] In view of its partial evasion of digital censorship, Telegram has functioned for many years as an ally in the formation of affective connections and a tool in the struggle against repression.[44] However, although a larger and more strategic dissemination of information can unfurl there, Telegram is not completely safe either, for the communication among individuals who might (or might not) be militants has been increasingly intercepted by Israeli intelligence, which has led to mass arrests as well as incursions into their homes.[45] For this reason, the platform is now primarily used in Jenin to follow the news or to post and repost news items. As Sumud told me, "We mostly use Telegram because all the local news channels use it, disseminating information live so that users/followers can see the evidence of what happens without it being censored." Israr and Sumud elaborate that not only do the families of the martyred use Telegram to connect with each other, but the various official and unofficial reporters in Jenin from different news stations use it as well to engage with these same families: They interview them and share collective grief through videos. Israr said:

> We always screenshot the videos. It's a way for us to experience the emotions of the families of the victims. By saving them, their stories [via images and recordings circulated via Telegram] go on and on and on so that we don't forget them. We also do our part in honoring their memory by doing some digging about their lives, searching for their pictures, etc. They [the martyrs] are all over the place: on our screens, on posters, on the food stalls, in the photos worn as necklaces. It's a way for us not to

separate from them. Social media are everything in Palestine because they do such a great job in delivering our truths and our stories.[46]

In the case of Dababeer Nest, social media, and especially Instagram, enable them to consolidate a community network across the West Bank with the aid of fashion images. The digital mediation and circulation of said images make them affectively salient. Amahl Bishara has argued that social media are affective spaces through which Palestinians collectively negotiate mourning; the sharing of videos and photographs is, according to Bishara, a way to mourn collectively, beyond border lines (yet with state violence always in the background), and, more broadly, a way "to cultivate emergent Palestinian intimacies of loss," as well as, I add, more hopeful intimacies that have to do with a shared sense of belonging, mutuality, and strength. Dababeer's images are also politically useful.[47] Being self-representational, they can be used as a site of insurgence and documentation in that they can creatively motivate and, at least potentially, mobilize grassroots operations.

Dababeer Nest's aesthetic use of queer stealth is coherently reflected in the cloaking of their presence on social media: Their word–image assemblages are arresting, but, paradoxically, it's their quality of being hard to apprehend that makes them "stick." Precisely because they are being repeated, their verbal and/or visual messages are difficult to capture and monitor. Indeed, according to Sara Ahmed's economic model of emotions, signs and feelings are made to stick in numerous ways, one of them being iteration.[48] In the photo shoots and short films produced by Dababeer and recirculated anonymously, the black looks mediate collective ambivalent feelings of anger (against the occupation), sadness (for the loss of martyrs), and joy (for the invigoration of a spirit of unity and belonging in the Jenin camp).

In our most recent interview, Israr asserted: "Dababeer Nest represents how we live politics, how we live our political predicament in Jenin, as we're always under attack. We produce a cultural and political clothing line as a way to emotionally participate in the resistance and produce ideas and visions. . . . We cannot separate what we do and our lives from the resistance, because every day we risk death. And when you're forced into the siege and the occupation, you have to make any effort to strengthen unity."[49]

In the form of sharply captioned videos and photographs shared via social media, storytelling can afford the cementing of an embodied relationality between the members of the collective and those who, to different degrees and in different ways, participate in the struggle against the Israeli invasion and apartheid system. Such unspoken relationality (in the form of visual images and/or material garments) suggests that different forms of resistance can embrace the same liberationist spirit, regardless of and beyond the liberal, diplomatic, humanitarian language and approaches advocated by the international political elites as well as by mainstream media. More specifically, due to the imbrication of fashion with the

body and with the land, as well as the general perception of fashion as something apolitical, fashion is an effective medium through which messages of resistance can be diffused.

Fashion storytelling can slip past the attention of cybersurveillance systems and forge concrete localized connections. In the scheme of Palestinian creative-cultural resistance and activism, Dababeer's fugitive connections are markedly distinct from, yet not perforce incompatible with, the transnational solidarity alliances and support networks that other members of the Palestinian fashion scene have established with their followers/consumers in the diaspora and the West. With respect to the different kinds of anti-occupation networks developed by Palestinian fashion creatives, Dababeer's fashion storytelling stands out in that it more pragmatically unsettles a distinction between different styles of struggle in the name of a principle of unity and mutual support. The unauthorized appropriation of Dababeer's designs and the self-staging of the Dababeer models as akin to fighters is evidence of a model of aesthetic politics according to which the nationalist dreams of statehood fostered by the present-day unreliable PA are sidelined in favor of a communitarian determination toward a grassroots, ingenious genre of activism.

Through an aesthetic of queer stealth we can not only grapple with a holistic understanding of relationality that encompasses all beings, but also understand an activist fashion praxis in its fugitive yet intimate envelopment with the armed struggle. A kind of fashion that is queer and stealthy—which could be called *queer fashion stealth*—has the capacity to dislodge creative resistance from the common understanding of same as completely disassociated from the militant struggle. Dababeer's fashion storytelling is ultimately an emerging symptom, or perhaps a sign, of a longing for Palestinian visual sovereignty in Jenin, namely a sovereignty that refuses the dominant (imperial-colonial or international-humanitarian) visuality predicated on legibility, identification, and recognition, and that simultaneously informs and is informed by the Palestinian struggle. It produces a new iconography of the resistance, one that might make the promise of liberation more viscerally tangible.

ALGORITHMIC TEXTILES

Queer stealth, as a camouflaging or glitching decolonial technique of collective fashioning, is used by other Palestinian designers in multiple ways and with dramatic differences according to their respective geographical and political coordinates. Hazar Jawabra, a knitwear designer based in Umm al-Fahm, a Palestinian town northwest of Jenin but within the '48 territories, has developed a unique style of queer fashion stealth.

When I first spoke with Hazar in 2020, she told me: "I grew up in a big traditional Palestinian family. My grandma knits everything in the house. It's something that's

been a part of my family history and not just of my family's. It's everyone's families in Palestine." Hazar knits not only to keep this tradition alive in her familial lineage but also to keep the very history of dressmaking alive in Palestine more broadly. Hazar's clothes burst out with an aliveness that is visually and tactually perceptible (see fig. 24): They draw the maker, and potentially the wearer, as near as possible to the land. To use her words, "I feel every fiber that I build from zero—it gives me a sense of joy and attachment to place." Hazar also told me: "Every time I knit and use a lot of colors, I experience new feelings, especially in relation to how volatile our grim reality is. As a Palestinian and as someone who does not want to work for the Israeli apparel industry, I cannot and I would never design in the same way in which the Western fashion system, including Israel, would expect me to design."[50]

She is adamant that her practice remain materially and affectively entangled with the occupation. Designing and making clothes is, for her, a way of sustaining herself and her community through the horrors of the Israeli occupation. It ensues that both the underlying process and aesthetic basis of her designs inevitably, yet nevertheless intentionally, clash with the capitalist principles that underlie the Western fashion industry. The compass for her knitting practice is the emotions she experiences in her life under the occupation. In one of our conversations, Hazar asserted: "My collections tell the story of my feelings: colorful, radical, joyful, funny, and hard. All these contradicting feelings and characteristics are joined to make a collection. In my Different Skin Tones project, the knitted pieces were born from threads that became knots, and the inter-twirling within them metaphorically expresses the accumulated feelings that build my existential experience."[51] Hazar uses knit to articulate the complexity and messiness of these emotions, which, transposed onto the clothed bodies, escape the rigidity of representation.

In the fashion film *Skin Tone* (shot by Dina Hamin), which documents Hazar's Different Skin Tones collection (fig. 24), we hear Hazar talking about her longing for a freer existence ("the difference between my hopes and the expectations surrounding me . . ."); her yearning to flee "societal predations and expectations" (". . . so I declared the struggle within myself, declining any life boundaries set by others and any dam to stop my rivers from flowing") and to live out her youth with a more positive outlook ("I want to have fun and play with colors to transform them into energies of happiness and positivity"); her desire to make her clothes sustainable ("I would like to urge my generation to reflect and produce more transparently"); and her discovery of fashion-making as a way to stitch together and hopefully heal traumas related to identity, adjustment, and belonging, by ultimately designing "a new skin," a new tissue through which to navigate her reality. As she speaks, four figures clad in her outfits are posed amid nature: Their bodily contact with trees and stones and their proximity to water signal an affective attachment to land and invoke the right of return. The models/characters are wrapped in bundles of yarns and adorned with headcovers stitched with pre-1948 coins and balaclavas made of pompons.



FIGURE 24. Look from Different Skin Tones collection by Hazar Jawabra. Photo by Fadi Dahabreh, Fauzi Azar hostel, Nazareth, 2019. Courtesy of Hazar Jawabra.

In this fashion video, filmed at a freshwater spring near al-Walaja (a Palestinian village on the outskirt of Jerusalem annexed by the Israelis and renamed Ein Lavan), the contact between the models and the trees, as with some of Dababeer's work, indicates an ancestral human–nonhuman bond in response to the physical and psychic debilitation of land and bodies engendered by the occupation.[52] To knit her pieces, Hazar uses cotton or, occasionally, polyester. She is committed to not using animal fibers: not merely an animalist position but more broadly a stance against the disruption of human–animal commingling that has been consistently enacted by Israel's environmental agenda. In Hazar's words:

> The theme of sustainability in Palestinian fashion is a difficult one. We know that the threads that everyone used earlier in history were from sheep. For me, today, this is a mistake. I'm aware that if I use polyester threads that's not going to be good for nature. But I know that at least we're not killing animals for the purpose of using their fur. Animals and their feelings are too often neglected in our creative practices and liberation projects. I believe that a strategic, moderate use of polyester is, in the big picture, much less damaging to nature and to our "being human" than using animals to make clothes.[53]

In reflecting on sustainable production, Hazar conflates the use of sheep's wool with their killing. While according to some animal rights activists, sheep are exploited as mere wool-producing entities for the fleece trade, there is no such thing as highly developed fur farming in Palestine, and moderate sourcing of wool does not automatically imply animal mistreatment. Certainly, within a traditional agricultural economy such as the Palestinian, there is little evidence that shearing sheep's wool is a harmful practice to the animals' well-being. Yet Hazar's position, which I take as a stance for animal agency, evidences the myriad perspectives, among like-minded Palestinian fashion designers, on the issue of sustainability. While there is a widespread consensus around the importance of inheriting ethical, ancestral, sustainable practices of garment production, the emphasis any given designer places on these practices in their work may vary in nature or degree (or both).

While Israr and Sumud of Dababeer Nest share Hazar's profound sense of caring for animals within the scope of the liberation struggle, their concern for animals—which can be seen more in their visual storytelling and less in their garment production process—does not imply equating the use of animal fibers with animal mistreatment. Additionally, the sourcing of natural, organic fabrics is prohibitive, if not practically impossible, for Dababeer, given the isolation of the Jenin camp, where they must make do with what fabrics are available. Despite the proximity of Jenin (where Dababeer is based) and Umm al-Fahm (Hazar's town), the latter is located in the '48 territories, where people have a freedom of movement and access to resources that are denied to and unimaginable for the West Bank residents, especially in Jenin; it follows that in fragmented Palestine, the possibilities of

producing sustainably are unequally allotted, and thus the value and meanings of "sustainability" end up connected to different dimensions of fashion-making—the representation of the human/nonhuman "commons" in the case of Dababeer, and the preservation of inherited knitting techniques in the case of Hazar. However, even though not all of Dababeer Nest's garments are fully handmade, and thus are not materially "sustainable" in the same sense as those made by the other Palestinian designers, they nonetheless offer an adamant commentary—with their flora and fauna imagery—on the wearers' Indigenous belonging to the land, together with all its species, in reaction to Israel's ecological terror.

Hazar's *Skin Tone* is an immersive sensory narration of Hazar's thinking about and experiencing of land: The extremities of the knitted pieces brush against and are almost incorporated into the natural elements. Through a visual disentanglement of the figures in the fashion short, we can intuit the structure of feeling Hazar has been working in.[54] The mood is suspended. The elongated cords ground the figures; they are carriers of feelings connecting the body to the earth and animal life, or, in the words of Ariella Azoulay, vessels of an "anticolonial sensorium," an affectivity that comes to imbue objects, for objects can be extensions or reflections of our being in the world.[55] The tilted head of one of the models might signal fatigue or exhaustion, and while the head of another turns slowly, for the most part they remain still, resting with the natural elements, impervious to Israeli threats. Yet the glitchy sound at the end suggests impenetrability. The patterns and colors of the intarsia rebalance any bad feelings, auspicating a radiant future. Hazar's feelings are concretized in what Giuliana Bruno calls "sartorial archi*texture*," namely a fabric assemblage replete with affect.[56] Hazar's thoughts and feelings are suffused throughout, iterated in the looping of the yarns and emboldened by the sponginess of thick knots.

Laura Marks writes that textiles express a material relationship between thoughts and feelings.[57] The rhythmic property of textiles, which Marks refers to as "algorithmicity," empathically "appeals to shared embodiment" and prompts a kind of embodied relationship that is abstract insofar as, in not being figurative, textiles transcend the body.[58] They invite a perceptual attachment to the aesthetic and affective vibrancy of cloth. Hazar's hand-knitted outfits/uniforms, in their rhythmical repetition and vivid palette, exceed the boundedness of representation. Here we are in the presence of bodies, although we cannot see them fully in the flesh; the textural membrane that connects undetectable silhouettes to the social fabric calls us to connect with what those partially abstracted bodies stand for: that is, their very refusal to be seen as flesh, to be humanized only to then be dehumanized. As the figure of the Palestinian is continually marked and reduced to either hypervisible (diabolical, terrorist, primitive, abject, wretched) by narratives of violence and death, or is altogether pitied and then obliterated, Hazar's models/characters evade easy identification and the fixity of perception, and thereby, given their refusal to clearly self-identify, prevent mistranslation. Conceptually similar

to Dababeer's ageless and somewhat genderless models, they are depicted as part of an impersonal-looking yet intimate collective. They invite us to look into the crevices of transparency and opacity, in the interstices of visibility and invisibility.

As Hazar told me: "When someone sees you walking on the street, based on your clothes and your style, they're gonna judge you in one way or another. For instance, in my society here in Palestine men are often afraid to wear colors. This applies especially to queer people, who are more likely to be bullied if they wear anything daring."[59] Her practice of crafting stealthily clothed figures conveys within it a commentary about the oppressive structures that confine the queer other to a fear-induced kind of invisibility. Designing fully clothed bodies that boldly assert eccentricity—in the etymological sense of being peripheral—and that are thus highly visible, while simultaneously rendering individual identification impossible, can be seen as a metaphoric act of reclamation, specifically of an otherness that demands acknowledgment and yet remains unintelligible. The "others" (i.e., the clothed figures in her collections and videos) are many. Their vibrancy is pervasive, hard to forget. Hazar's work untethers fashion from normative images of beauty, bodies, gender, and race, actualizing what Stephen Seely, in his writing on queer fashion, describes as "the power to resist a complete capture by capitalism . . . [and by] dominant modes of meaning, organization, or subjectivity."[60] Indeed, it is in the juxtaposition with capitalist modes of production that Hazar explicitly situates her slow and sustainable practice of knitting, eventually selling each one-of-a-kind piece within Palestine or exhibiting it at cultural events.

In the Different Skin Tones collection, the garments consist of vibrant and amorphous patches that obscure the clarity of the subjects' facial presence and bodily contours. The intention of Hazar's garments is not so much to conceal as it is to articulate that which is ungraspable.[61] The most emblematic look in the collection is that of a tentacular figure devoid of all identifying features (fig. 25): Eccentric knits mask the face and drape and engulf the body. The viewer gets the sense of being directly looked at. The tactic of cloaking the photographed figure exposes the fundamental violence of seeing and gazing; the viewer is left bewildered. Each model is veiled, untraceable, and hidden from the hypervigilant gaze of the predatory security apparatus and, to a great extent, all onlookers. The frills and tassels of the garments symbolically shield the body from all forms of oppression: colonial, political, social, and technological.[62] Hazar's textural game camouflages bodily appearances and thus rejects Israeli profiling.

I see Hazar's army of fashionable lookalikes as a multitude in the sense in which Paolo Virno understands it in relation to "the crisis of the form-of-state," that is, as a collectivity in which there is no longer "a people converging into the unity of the state," or the hope to become sovereign through state formation.[63] The multiplicity of individual subjectivities (Hazar's models) merges into *sameness*—a concept concomitantly akin to Virno's articulation of *One* as a form of "unity," and to what in Islamic theology is called *tawhid* (i.e., a term that within the Palestinian



FIGURE 25. Look from Different Skin Tones collection by Hazar Jawabra. Photo by Fadi Dahabreh, Fauzi Azar hostel, Nazareth, 2019. Courtesy of Hazar Jawabra.

liberation movement intimates "oneness"). For Virno, the multitude carries the seeds of "virtuosity," "creativity," and "experimentalism."[64] The multitude-as-*One* is not a formation cast out from history but rather a response to the untenable promise of statehood. It responds to an ongoing historical crisis, a crisis in which the attempted annihilation of Palestinians is consistently opposed, day after day, by an ever-strengthening praxis of togetherness.

The abstraction invoked by Hazar's textural avatars should not be misread as incurring the risk of producing the "absolute depersonalization" with which Fanon described the racialized dehumanization experienced by those oppressed by colonial rule;[65] conversely, it is precisely in the face of colonization that the oneness of the multitude can emerge as an infrastructure of collective decolonial feelings—a cluster of often "bad" or ambivalent yet always antagonistic feelings that aspire to transform "common sense."[66] Oneness, from a queer and decolonial vantage, is not predicated on an individualist logic of bounded, sealed, autonomous selfhood; rather, it's a conflation of multiple subjectivities that coexist according to a principle of relationality that acknowledges their primordial nonequivalence. Following Glissant's reading of opacity as a woven fabric where separate components are entwined yet are not exactly the same, I read Hazar's stealthy characters as being ensnared with one another as well as within the surrounding environs; via the textures of their garments they are mutually interwoven, imaginatively coming together to form a multitude-as-oneness. Their stealth quality, like Glissant's opacity, "is not enclosure within an impenetrable autarchy but subsistence within an irreducible singularity," which is to say that Hazar's creatures block the impetus of the gaze to differentiate them, identify them, and classify them: An external (Israeli, colonial) visual regime of transparency is counteracted by a stealthy, haptically perceptible dissimulation.[67] Hazar produces imaginings of a multitude that can be understood as an infrastructure of feelings at odds with the hegemonic surveillance apparatus.

As mentioned earlier, while endorsing the centrality of queerness in the liberation struggle I also contend that the decolonial practices of fashion designers such as Dababeer Nest and Hazar Jawabra encapsulate a distinct version of queerness. Tactically speaking, queerness can be concealed precisely in order to dissolve pluralism into a oneness (with other humans and nature as a whole) that sets aside atomized subjectivities in the name of a dissenting unit. In its invocation of a multitude, Hazar's fashion project hides the identity of her characters while metaphorically cloaking them in queerness. On the aesthetic plane, this approach is diametrically opposed to Trashy Clothing's emphasis on ostensible queerness as a mode of confrontation with the normative tenets of the apartheid state; however, both Hazar's and Trashy's work have as a chief objective the provocation and critique of Israel's phobic, authoritarian organizing principles that subjugate Palestinians. More specifically, the aesthetic-political aim of Hazar's fashion tableaux is, according to my interpretation, twofold. On the one hand, the avatars confront the

restrictive, conventional genres of masculinities and femininities deemed acceptable within the general Palestinian society; and on the other, they poke at Israel's well-known practice of marking members of the Palestinian LGBTQ+ community and threatening to "out" them if they do not collaborate as informants.[68]

Israel's use of secret data (usually obtained through wire taps) is an operation that Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian construes as xenophobic, gendered—and, I would add, queerphobic—"carceral psychics."[69] As Shalhoub-Kevorkian has explained, Israel's highly sophisticated state surveillance mechanisms infiltrate the sphere of intimacy, producing what she calls "secret penetrabilities": The extraction of secret information is yet another technology of warfare and, more precisely, of psychopolitical debilitation, neutralization,[70] and "racialized incarceration" of those who are already living at the limits of the human.[71] Hazar's pieces are conveyors of a heightened perceptibility that in confounding gender and, to an extent, ethnicity, interrogates the very gender-sexual and racial hierarchies at the core of the Zionist ethno-state. In their hyperexposed illegibility, Hazar's texturalized avatars stalwartly efface penetration and respond with what Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni calls "counter-penetration"—a call for collective imagination in response to Israel's suffocation of bodyminds, as well as, to a lesser degree, the normalization and entrenchment of psychological foreclosures enacted by the PA.[72]

Textiles, historically, have been instruments utilized by Palestinian communities to develop clandestine information practices; indeed, steganography—the technique of concealing information in public, or, rather, to hide in plain sight—is a practice that can be seen both in the embroidery work done by Palestinian women on their own thobes as well as in the objects crafted by imprisoned Palestinian men to encode information for their families.[73] Textile steganography is a stealthy form of storytelling, or hacking, through which minoritized communities, including queer, encode information that dodges the control or the comprehension of hegemonic groups.[74] With this in mind, Hazar's practice of disguised exposure can be seen as operating through the register of queer stealth. While often when we think of stealth we imagine a poetic of discreetness, in line with a more minimalist kind of self-presentation, as is the case with Dababeer Nest, in Hazar's work stealth is signified by a maximalist style. The colorful algorithmicity of her collections stands for the contradictory nature of representation: The gaze of the spectators and, potentially, Israeli surveillance systems, is drawn to the subject, only to be left unsatisfied—something that in fashion theory has been called "sartorial misdirection."[75] Hazar's version of queer stealth is not merely about being shielded from inspection, but more ambitiously about standing out while remaining anonymous. To apply Nicole Archer's terminology to Hazar's work, "the textile's 'textility' (or texture) trumps its 'textuality' (or readability)": That is to say that the texture of textiles can serve to create a semiotic confusion and consequent unreadability.[76] Via an attention-drawing maximalist aesthetic that manages to avoid opening anyone to individual scrutiny, Hazar's

work makes a statement about the need for collective actualization in the face of threats of exposure or surveillance.

Her maximalist version of stealth fashion also espouses a queer affectability that conjures the oppression of queer Palestinians within an exploitative system of reward and punishment (on one side, the Zionist promise of entering the allegedly safe haven of Israel pending the threat of public shaming; on the other, the PA's hetero-masculinist rhetoric of "liberation first, civil rights after"). In a way, Hazar's fashion practice speaks *of* and *to* queer people by hiding in plain sight, thus confounding, hacking, or glitching the conventionalized visual economies in which Palestinians are embedded.[77] Queer fashion stealth thus configures a (queer) decolonial aesthetic in Palestine, one that messes with the Zionist gaze (whether direct or indirect, a human eye or a drone) by eschewing gender, sexual, and racial taxonomy, and one that with its "textility" disturbs dichotomies like mind/matter and human/nonhuman.

MIRRORING ILLEGIBILITY

Dababeer Nest and Hazar Jawabra share a stealthy approach to collective fashioning that rejects individualist rhetorics of self-expression in favor of a heterogeneous oneness. Their queer stealthy work can be more broadly understood in terms of what Lauren Berlant called "glitchfrastructures": bodily practices that while cementing an affective network (or a multitude) enable the production of aesthetic figurations and scenes that can decolonize a liberal fashion imaginary fabricated in Euro-American contexts.[78] Palestinian glitchfrastructures are the scaffolding for a collective rethinking of fashion in collective-common terms: Stealthy, glitchy designs furnish a platform for unity vis-à-vis colonial and/or nationalist aesthetics pivoted on gender, sexual, ethnic, and racial intelligibility. Infrastructures of glitch, or stealth, are actually *counter*-infrastructures inasmuch as they are networks of, simultaneously, care (for each other, that is, among the "othered") and disavowal (of expectations or projections from Zionist or Orientalist vantage points) that mediate shared decolonial feelings and demand the formation of alternative lifeworlds. Such affective counter-infrastructures can shape new imaginaries and marshal the desire for new atmospheres of living.

Both Dababeer Nest's and Hazar's fashion brigades negotiate (in)visibility in the face of the Israeli surveilling gaze (and, to take it further, of colonial visuality at large).[79] The tactical oscillation between the visibility of the clothes and the opacity of the bodies is conveyed via the deployment of images that, on the one hand, speak to the "authors" and their respective communities, and on the other occlude understanding.[80] These fashion creatives communicate via a double address: by interpellating their respective Palestinian communities so as to decode their visual language, and by addressing, or opposing, the external, colonial gaze through a striking yet unreadable visual lexicon. As Nayrouz

Abu Hatoum has written, in contemporary Palestinian art the calculus of (in)visibility asserts visual sovereignty by refusing the logic of visual intelligibility on which imperialism is predicated; that is to say that art can be used to embed a politics of refusal—refusal to gain legitimacy through colonial semantics of knowability and understandability.[81]

Despite their shared embracing of infrastructural illegibility, Dababeer Nest's and Hazar's work epitomize two diverse modes of fashion stealth. In both cases, stealth or, more broadly, an aesthetic of illegibility, is intentional; however, for Dababeer, illegibility is not only aesthetic but also functional. Dababeer's fashion might thus be seen as a kind of operative medium through which the dialectic of visibility and invisibility is articulated with and within the larger community in Jenin. Meanwhile, in Hazar's fashion practice, illegibility works symbolically and performatively. Less threatened by ongoing, severe material conditions of policing, Hazar intends for her storytelling practices to raise awareness about Israel's control and classification of the Palestinians, and construct a provocative textural response that grabs the attention of the viewer, illustrating for them how fashion and beauty can simultaneously be sources of pleasure under duress and a method for imaging a queer Palestinian reality unmoored from the Israeli gaze. After all, given the time it takes her to source the fabrics and produce the outfits, few pieces are made and very few of those are sold outright; it is when they are captured on film, or exhibited in museums where they can be put into context, that their potential to resonate is realized, and they truly come to life for the viewer.

The clothes produced by Dababeer, on the other hand, are worn regularly by Jenin residents (whether they are militants or not remains unclear to nonlocals) as much as by other Palestinians in the West Bank (especially in neighboring areas, such as Nablus); wearing these pieces can be a way to embody the spirit of the resistance. The uniformed clothing in the Jenin camp affords activating tactics of fugitivity: In the photo shoots and short films produced by the collective, the black looks mediate a constellation of feelings that attune wearers to one another. The appropriation of Dababeer's signature clothing items by militant groups evinces how fashion storytelling can help shape a burgeoning alliance between different modes of activism in Jenin as well as how it can act as a vehicle through which to energize the opposition to the Zionist military classification and subjugation of Palestinian bodies. For Dababeer, the operative use of fashion stealth makes their work "stick" for its wearers. For Hazar, the affective-material properties of the garments as well as their documentation propose symbolic gestures of refusal—even, potentially, humorous—against everyday Israeli profiling. The respective modes—operative (with Dababeer) and representational-performative (with Hazar)—of fashion stealth constitute a joint effort, on divergent scales, against Israel's systematic psychological warfare. Under different conditions of scrutiny, oppression, and militarization, these queer decolonial fashion practices contrast visual regimes of transparency and craft new visions of refusal and togetherness.

The restrictions enforced by Israel through its forms of enclosure and surveillance are counteracted by networks (created by fashion makers with other local artists, crafts makers, and/or lay people) that enable a local creative production of knowledge as well as its circulation across and, at times, beyond Palestine. It's not merely a question of space: Such networks, or infrastructures, can be sustained and remain functional thanks to a weaponization of the slowed-down temporality imposed on Palestinians. In other words, queer decolonial fashion practices that contrast imperial control and visuality have an important temporal dimension. In the next chapter I elaborate on how the protracted temporariness in the specific context of besieged Gaza has been repurposed by local fashion creatives for their own ends.

4

Slow Fashion

The Politics of Time and Labor in Gaza

Hanging on a rusty metal ledge of a makeshift stall are denim jackets featuring different motifs embroidered in the Palestinian cross-stitch (fig. 26). The patterns, such as the shape of historic Palestine, its flag, the keffiyeh, the moon of Bethlehem, and the Palestinian pound, signify Palestinian heritage, with its native array of national symbols.[1] The tactile quality of the *tatreez* and the vibrant, naturally dyed colors of the patterns are eye-catching. On the jacket to the far right, we see the silhouette of Handala in the colors of the Palestinian flag. The character Handala, who gets his name from *handal*, a deep-rooted Palestinian plant, is meant to personify the Palestinian people. Designed in the 1960s by political cartoonist Naji al-Ali, it became a popular symbol beginning in 1973, when the Arab-Israeli War erupted. Handala is a boy who is forever ten years old, the same age as Ali when he became a refugee in 1948. The rugged clothes and bare feet symbolize his status as a refugee and his class allegiance with the poor; he turns his back as a gesture of disdain toward the opportunistic solutions to the occupation imposed on the Palestinians by foreign nations for their own gains. On the denim jacket, Handala is knit inside of, and is looking at, a map of historic Palestine, which enfolds and embraces him through the fishnet pattern, nodding at the ancestral relationship of Palestinian fishermen with the sea. The ribbing and the cuffs are stitched with an extra layer of denim with the fishnet motif, in this case in black and white: in traditional garments, especially headscarves, black and white once signified loyalty to Fatah (the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization); over time the black and white keffiyeh gradually lost its specific affiliation with a political party, becoming for Palestinians everywhere a symbol of the struggle, or of solidarity with the struggle, for national liberation. This jacket typifies the coexistence of deep



FIGURE 26. Denim jackets by ANAT, 2020. Photo by Salma Shawa. Courtesy of Salma Shawa.

Palestinian symbolism, ancestral crafts-making, and international styles in the design aesthetics of the younger generation of Palestinian fashion designers.

The intricate precision of the embroidery bears witness to the laborious artisanal work behind the jacket's production. The designers of these jackets are ANAT, a grassroots fashion collective in Gaza specializing in embroidered denim pieces; their name comes from a goddess of sexuality, war, and protection whose mythological history harks back to ancient Semitic religions in the Levant. Despite the difficulty of obtaining denim in Palestine and its consequent scarcity, denim is ANAT's fabric of choice because of its wearability and, in the words of founder Salma Shawa, because its "genderless" features are well suited for mediating and rendering the cross-stitch tradition in a way that aesthetically appeals to young, transnational consumers who largely prefer urban, casual attire.

The garments designed by ANAT are sold not only in Gaza but across Palestine and, thanks to an online order system, worldwide. However, this worldwide aspect is not without huge challenges. In an interview in 2022, Salma—a Palestinian from Gaza who has lived in Boston under a US visa for the past few years—told me that the their first jackets were made in 2018, when denim was temporarily allowed by Israel into Gaza.[2] After a local merchant made the fabric available to the ANAT team, they had the jackets produced in a small factory and then embroidered in a family-run workshop.[3] When a few weeks later the embroidery of a small batch was completed, the jackets were bundled

and shipped to the Israeli postal office in the West Bank, where the package sat for months, in a kind of quarantine, waiting to be processed. Only then was it sent via international courier to the United States, where Salma checked the conditions of the individual jackets and repackaged them for rerouting to the countries they had been ordered from. Clothes produced in Gaza take this absurd trajectory because nothing can be shipped internationally from Gaza; all packages must go through the West Bank. And given the complete separation of Gaza and the West Bank, the ANAT team has no associate there to sort and rearrange shipment to the final customers, though even if they did, the cost of shipping individual packages internationally from the West Bank would be exorbitant. In any case, since Israel controls the borders, all international shipments must go via Israeli post and undergo Israeli checks.

When at last the customers receive their jackets from ANAT, in the sleeve fold or in the pocket they can find a note from the collective that tells the story of the garment, its production, its journey, and the various actors who were involved along the way. The notes also thank the recipients for supporting ANAT and, by extension, the Palestinian plight. These minor gestures elude the "thanatogeographies" of the occupation, enacting everyday forms of dissensus in the face of Israel's apparatus of control. In effect, fashion makers in Gaza find themselves dependent on the geographical seclusion as well as the temporality of the siege.[4] As the journey of the jacket demonstrates and as Salma explained to me, "The first challenge is to find the materials, since Israel retains full control over what enters and exits Gaza. We are at their mercy when it comes to all kinds of resources. The seemingly most mundane things, such as fabrics like denim or nail polish remover, are often blocked at the checkpoint for months or even years, with no explanation provided to the residents."[5] For instance, in 2022, during one of our online conversations, she told me that suddenly no denim was arriving in Gaza and local fabrics were scarce as well, so they had to put their entire production on hold, and all their orders had to be canceled.

The production ethos of ANAT centers on honoring the labor of the local Gazan workers and contributing to the local economy. While each embroiderer works at their own pace, the embroidery on each jacket requires at least two weeks of work, as embroidering on denim is especially difficult due to its thickness and stiffness. A new collection is produced only when the materials are available to the local merchants, when the laborers are able to work, and when the devastations caused by the Israeli military attacks do not completely impede the operations.[6] The work of ANAT is significant for two interrelated reasons: It inserts itself into and continues a history of Palestinian labor and production in Gaza that has been financially and materially hindered over time by the Israeli apparel economy; and, relatedly, it is made possible by the deft engineering of a logistic infrastructure that interferes with the Israel-dominated political economy as well as the architecture of the occupation.

In fact, with the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip in 1967, the Palestinian economy became heavily reliant on the Israeli capitalist market.[7] With the boom of the Israeli economy in the 1970s, Gazans—that is, the Palestinians who ended up being refugees in Gaza after their forced displacement in 1948—were encouraged, and oftentimes forced, to cross the border and work in Israel, primarily in the construction business as unskilled and underpaid wage laborers.[8] The import and export of goods inside and outside Gaza also became heavily controlled and arbitrarily limited.[9] Meanwhile, those who remained in Gaza during the day, the majority of them women, were employed by Israeli companies in the garment manufacturing sector through exploitative subcontracting agreements.[10] Palestinian embroidery workshops in Gaza, as well as small textile factories, were involved in labor-intensive operations with low profit margins; and the Israeli contractors had total control over the design, marketing, and distribution operations. The garment sector in Gaza mirrors how colonialism, fueled by a hyper-extractive capitalist system, dispossesses and annexes land, plunders resources, and exploits human labor.

While largely dependent on Israeli commerce, Gazan artisans still managed to sew and circulate garments to the West Bank, hence maintaining independent local trade.[11] However, after 2006, with Israel's military disengagement from the Gaza Strip, Gazans were no longer allowed to work in Israel, all financial transactions with Gazan laborers came to a halt, and the Strip eventually became an open-air prison.[12] After having made Gazan textile workers financially subordinate and subservient, only to then interrupt these economic relationships, Israel left the majority of Palestinians in Gaza unemployed and brought the local manufacturing activities to near collapse. The closure regime forced Gazan manufacturers to work solely within their local market.[13]

Such a "de-development" of textile production was interlinked with an agrarian destruction that resulted in a lack of access to water and irreparable damage to crops. The ecological violence caused further unemployment among those Gazans who had relied on seasonal agricultural jobs, and by extension of textile workers whose livelihood was contingent on the conditions of the soil, the quality of the crops, and access to clean water.[14] In response to Israel's destruction of Gaza's agrobiodiversity, farmers initiated campaigns in the early 2010s to unionize agriculture.[15] They also began smuggling seeds (including fiber seeds, e.g., from cotton plants that were traditionally grown in the Galilee region) into the territory, creatively experimenting with rudimentary ways of desalinizing the water of Gaza, and planting seeds in areas farther away from the ever-expanding militarized buffer zones.[16]

Meanwhile, textile workers relaunched, at a much smaller scale, their own production. This was facilitated by their collaboration with farmers and was implemented by grassroots fashion collectives that workshopped traditional techniques of weaving and knitting. Indeed, fashion designers such as ANAT, analogous to

Nöl Collective in the West Bank, played a crucial role in revitalizing such techniques as a means to both resist cultural erasure and to stoke the regrowth of a local, autonomous economy. Ever since, fashion design and image-making in Gaza have helped strengthen the social fabric of Palestinian society. Fashion producers and garment workers have joined forces by engaging in a collaborative, slow-paced, anticapitalist practice aimed at fending off the physical and emotional amputation of Palestinian life.

MAKING WORLDS UNDER SIEGE

In 2018, on the 70th anniversary of the Nakba, nonviolent mass protests along the borders, known as the Great March of Return, were started by Gazans to confront Israeli colonial spatialization, assert Palestinian connectedness beyond colonially imposed borders, and reclaim the right of return. Inspired by the Arab uprisings of 2011, which revived a transnational spirit of solidarity with Palestinians across gender, racial, and class lines, the protests were a joint response to Israel's isolationist policies and to the failure of the Palestinian political elite, due to internal factional frictions as well as their embroilment in stagnant power dynamics with Israel, to attain any tangible amelioration in the lives of the local population. The protests catalyzed the determination of the Palestinian people in Gaza to act as a grassroots movement willing to define its own vision, a vision rooted in the implementation of the right of return, the refusal to be governed according to an apartheid system, and the ultimate aspiration to dissolve Zionism as the ideological-material precondition for the status of Gazans as refugees.[17] While the insurgence was brutally repressed by the Israeli military forces, it nonetheless made space for the coming together of different segments of the civilian population of Gaza and ignited a spirit of creative production that fostered communal practices such as weaving, dancing, cooking, and kite-building.

In this context of political and artistic fervor, fashion collectives such as ANAT consolidated connections with other fashion producers across Palestine. ANAT has taken on the responsibility of raising awareness about the Palestinian struggle in Gaza through their design and photographic work and also through pedagogical storytelling in the form of TikTok videos and Instagram reels—stories in which Salma alternates sharp commentary on local news items with behind-the-scenes sketches of ANAT's work within the remit of Palestinian textile history and anecdotes about everyday life in Gaza.[18] By chronicling the lives of clothes in Gaza as well as the various ways the operations of production and circulation are obstructed by Israel, Salma unveils how the political and affective economy of clothes encapsulates the very conditions of living as much as the practices of survival in Gaza.

Despite Israel's strict control of and regular cuts to both electricity and broadband, the members of ANAT have managed to connect digitally—mostly via Facebook,

Instagram, and WhatsApp—and to collaborate with Palestinian creatives in other areas, for instance by helping each other coordinate the logistics of fabrics sourcing and garment circulation or consulting on techniques of production.[19] Salma told me: "Whenever a Palestinian interested in designing and producing clothes asks me for advice, I share with them how at ANAT we handle the logistics of making and shipping because I want to benefit them and Palestine more broadly. We learned how to create a clothing line and sell our pieces through extensive research and trial and error; it took us years to figure it out. But it's crucial that we share knowledge and resources with one another. We do all of this for Palestine."[20]

Cultivating distant relationships with fashion designers and image makers they cannot possibly meet in person due to Gaza's segregation makes Salma feel "part of a Palestinian nation, one that has no boundaries." She said: "It's a feeling that is so hard to feel when you're secluded for all these years in Gaza."[21] But by stoking, through creative work, a transnational youth movement for a free Palestine, that feeling "that is so hard to feel" can be shared and politically mobilized. Palestinian fashion designers build, both physically and digitally, affective counter-infrastructures that, on the one hand, refuse capitulation to the settler colonial order and, on the other, shore up a vital sense of belonging, mutuality, and care with fellow Palestinians beyond territorial partitioning.[22] The formation and ongoing expansion of their network is readable as an act of dissent with, and refusal of, the siege; in other words, as a resolute determination not to surrender themselves to the blockade. Such networks involve designers, image makers, and artisans of different genders, social strata, and ages; each of them understands that a decolonial ethics must be operationalized in a joint struggle against systemic forms of oppression that thwart the flourishing of new visions for the present-future; thus, on top of navigating the suffocating spatio-temporality of the occupation, or siege, it is imperative for them to call into question binaries (e.g., West Bank/Gaza, old/new, and male/female) that compromise their unity.

Indeed, part of ANAT's mission is to unmoor the Western imaginary surrounding Palestinian fashion from the liberal, humanist, gendered commodification of empathy and solidarity endorsed by fashion-based social enterprises.[23] They refuse to be absorbed into a discursive and visual economy of humanitarian aid—what Dina Matar would call "image normalization"—by offering alternative narratives and depictions of fashion workers who, on the planes of gender, race, and age, defy dominant narrations of Palestinian crafts makers.[24] While admiring and working with craftswomen (who are often victims of the Orientalist expectations or projections of Western consumers), ANAT also brings together Gazan workers of different genders, thus challenging Western sentimentalization of Palestinian elderly women embroidering in refugee camps and passing the techniques on to their daughters as well as the obliteration of men from mainstream discourses around clothing production on the grounds of their expected "masculine" military tasks and visible participation in the public space. ANAT interrogates the governing

mythology of the nation as one predicated on a strict gender divide, while simultaneously ensuring the survival of a craft that is part of Palestinian heritage.

As with Taita Leila, at least one-third of the laborers working with the ANAT collective are men, men who occasionally face criticism for their perceived "feminine" job. But in practicing a craft that has been traditionally developed by women, they are also shattering a norm and challenging the assumption that crafts are inherently feminine.[25] As stated on its website, ANAT "transcends boundaries, defies norms, and dares you to join in." Not only are the design concept and the silhouettes of their pieces, in the words of Salma, "genderless," but, as she put it, "Palestinian liberation is a task for everyone, regardless of their gender . . . I believe it's important for us as Palestinian creatives not just to create a design and sell it. Our work should really be about: How do we create a space where everyone can feel represented and can participate, regardless, for instance, of gender? . . . We must be community-builders." She continued, "And then, you know, there are all these stereotypes about people who live in Gaza. Zionists would often say, 'In Gaza they would throw you off the rooftop if you were gay; at least Israel respects LGBTQ people.' Our designs as well as the videos we produce on our social media channels show that that is not the case; there are so many Palestinian and Middle Eastern people who can relate to us and to our brand because it's genderless."[26]

Salma's words evince how, in line with the fashion creatives discussed previously in this book, queerness is an inevitable component in their practice. The discursive instrumentalization of queerness is crucial to the Zionist pinkwashing narrative, the gender-sexual and racial underpinnings of which are a key target of the critique advanced by Palestinian activists and fashion creatives. Decolonial practices of cultural and artistic production engage with queerness as a way to both account for a multiplicity of voices and subjectivities whose very existence is paramount to the intersectional fight for liberation, and to repudiate Israel's propagandist discourse on Palestinian queerphobia, which justifies their endeavor to represent Palestinian lives as unworthy. To center queerness, in its multiple and mutable connotations, in decolonial fashion practices—practices that are grounded in bodily affective relationality with other (human and nonhuman) beings—means to oppose the Zionist propagandist manipulation of Palestinian identity as inherently violent and queerphobic. Salma's words dismiss the hackneyed Zionist accusation that in Gaza queerphobia and Islamism are two sides of the same coin. Palestinian creative producers, together with their consumers (who are often members of their own extended community, whether in Palestine or in the diaspora), take active part in a worldmaking project that inconveniences the Zionist uses of gender and sexuality as biopolitical techniques of control, classification, and governmentality.

ANAT's use of the rubric "genderless" allows for a certain opacity, or even stealth. On the one hand, it could resonate with and appeal to queer individuals who would sense its connotations and thereby feel attuned to the brand's aesthetic sensitivity; thus, "genderless" can be seen as functioning as a metonymy

of "queer" for queer people. On the other hand, it might serve to camouflage matters of nonnormative gender and sexuality under the guise of cosmopolitan trendiness (in line with how "genderless" is typically used in global fashion media).[27] The semantics of opacity used on digital media by ANAT are being mirrored in the material-visual lexicon—or, to use Nicholas Mirzoeff's expression, the "countervisuality"—of their clothing line and its photographic representation.[28] In both their design and photographic work, ANAT conveys the intersectional dimension of what their practice aims for, namely disrupting the scopic field within which Palestinians are typically enclosed—what Sa'ed Atshan calls "ethnoheteronormativity," a system of oppression wherein ethnocracy and heteronormativity are interlocked in subordinating minoritized Palestinian subjects.[29]

In one of the shots from the promotional material of their first collection (fig. 27), ANAT members Salma Shawa and Antonio Weathers are posed in front of a crimson roll drop, one wearing and the other displaying a different style of denim jacket. The image captures an atmosphere of quiescence. The subjects' undecipherable affect can be interpreted as an intentional decision not to be entrapped in the saturation of those commodified feelings that dominate media images of Palestinians. They look away from the camera, their eyes gazing down or to the side. One could read in their facial expression an absent-mindedness linked to the state of dissociation in which Gazans are presumed to live. But their refusal to be fully legible to the external gaze is, more broadly, a refusal to be seen in any way that would license an external representation coded in ways that might not resonate with their emotional and existential state. In the case of Dababeer Nest, illegibility is structural to the collective's virtual communication with the resistance; in the case of Hazar Jawabra, illegibility has been deployed against Israel's dataization of Palestinian bodies; while in the case of ANAT, illegibility—or, in a more nuanced fashion, opacity—eludes colonial expectations of meaning-making based on readability.

Ilya Parkins has observed that because opacity is a register through which femininity and masculinity can be performed as "excessive of conventional structures of gendered and sexualized meaning," in the visual culture of fashion it allows us to dispute predictably normative gendered readings.[30] Parkins explains that by "texturing visibility" fashion designers and image makers can create a sense of "relational opacity" with the viewer: Relational opacity trips up the spectator so as to "open up the terrain of relation beyond the heteronormative economy."[31] Parkins contends that the expectation of legibility in fashion photography rests on a violent two-sided rhetoric that seeks to penetrate photographic subjects, especially women, to render them transparent and to spectacularize them for the purposes of consumer capitalism. Both gender normativity and consumer capitalism are critiqued and dispensed with by ANAT; they are altogether in charge of their anticapitalist modes of design, production, and documentation.



FIGURE 27. Salma Shawa and Antonio Weathers with denim jackets by ANAT. Photo by Leen Khoury, 2020. Courtesy of Salma Shawa.

Given the specific location of Gaza, illegibility acquires further complexity. The affective flatness of the ANAT members' and models' demeanor, observable in the brand's catalogs, goes hand in hand with the peculiar temporality of the siege. Specifically, in order to deal with the military devastations and to avoid being completely shattered, Gazans engage in a labor of emotional self-management that enables them to stay lucid enough to care for others, tighten communal kinship, and keep working as a means to generate revenue for the community. An important part of this involves a commitment to cherish those fleeting moments of pleasure and beauty that occur amid the horror of war. The affective immobility of Salma and Antonio (see fig. 27) could also be grappled with through the very embroidery work of the jacket that Antonio exhibits for the camera. What I am suggesting is that the garment is a lens with which to understand the temporal and spatial politics that are at work in Gazan fashion production. The sophisticated combination of embroidery patterns and embellishments on the jacket are the result of at least one full month of work, and probably much longer considering the regular interruptions caused by the wars on Gaza. The slowness with which the ANAT fashion workers produce the garments reflects simultaneously the slowing down of human life effected by the siege and ANAT's intimate attachment to life as they work within this temporality.

ANAT's work is an example of slow fashion: Slowness is inextricably material and emotional (i.e., requiring a fragmentation of hegemonic time and the affective labor that the tactical navigation of such time requires). Slow fashion is a genre of fashion-making that is, by default, anticapitalist, for it counters the linear, fast-paced production of garments as done in the Global North. On a macro scale, slow fashion is an inevitable outcome of the Israeli organization of time, whereas on a micro scale it is actively taken up as it makes room for the transgression of the separation of the Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip from those in the West Bank.

I previously described fashion justice as a place-based ethos of clothing production and distribution that in attending to environmental, gender, and racial economies disputes colonial governmentality. Said governmentality takes the form of a classification of bodies as well as a material and temporal enclosure. In that same vein, I understand the picture of Salma and Antonio (fig. 27) as an index of *queer Indigenous fashion justice*: The jacket was made slowly by women and men from different generations who used a crafting technique that since the Nakba has been endangered and appropriated; additionally, the members of the collective who are posing as models in the photo identify differently on the planes of gender, race, and age. The communal process of paying tribute to an Indigenous practice is cherished and executed across different axes of identity by designers and workers who affirm their stance against the segregationist and taxonomic order of the siege.

When the work of Gazan fashion creatives is at risk of being halted or altogether shut down by Israeli military policies, they continue to operate steadfastly in the gaps and hums of the temporality that is imposed on them, all the while

thinking, designing, and planning. As Israel's state violence and control of everyday Palestinian life leaves Gazans waiting for "a future in suspension," instilling in them a depressive hopelessness and resignation to a fate of either cyclical humiliation or a complete disappearance qua death, they engage in seemingly mundane and uneventful practices—such as making clothes and taking pictures—that allow them to mend and fortify the social fabric in communal ways;[32] in so doing, they carve out from the temporality of state violence bits of time that are generative in sustaining a mode of being in the world that does not imply the foreclosure of a future. Nayrouz Abu Hatoum points at something analogous to this when she writes that since Israeli state violence disorients the Palestinians' perception of time, "waiting . . . is a struggle with time through time," insofar as under conditions of protracted displacement waiting becomes an agentic, nonstatic practice in which Palestinians imagine better futures.[33] Within the slowed-down temporality of the siege they steadily plot ways to continue fashion production and circulation as a form of community-building. In other words, the temporality of the siege is turned against itself by collectives like ANAT to engineer fugitive and pleasurable tactics of collaboration that manifest in the creation of beauty.

The place-based fashion practices of designers and crafts makers in Gaza are objective correlatives of a communal investment in what Linda Tabar evocatively calls an "ongoing recomposition of a world," namely a rejection of being engulfed into the prevailing spatial and temporal system of oppression and domination.[34] Tabar maintains that "amidst destruction and dispossession, Gazans have remained committed to the praxis of life, both at large and small scales . . . [through] minor-key practices of refusal." Indeed, queer decolonial fashion practices contribute to interlacing people and their environment in a material and affective economy that is not extractive and not capital-driven. Gazans, according to Tabar, share "an everyday anticolonial common sense," by which she means that beneath the surface of state-regulated spatial and temporal discipline and surveillance, "they are living anticolonial lives . . . [with an] anticolonial consciousness."[35] In the ongoing process of reparation of material infrastructures as well as physical and psychic wounds, they practice "different ways of living that work against various forms of normativity," including gender and racial, as a way to envision life otherwise, that is, to prefigure an alternative reality via gestures of re-worlding.[36]

NOSTALGIA AS AESTHETIC PREFIGURATION

Meera Adnan is a Palestinian clothing line designed by Meera Albaba in Gaza City. Meera defines her creative practice as "a nostalgic visual monologue" on how it feels to be Palestinian. Her practice is concerned with connecting with the collective feelings that have come to be embodied by her generation. Nostalgia is a crucial feeling for Meera, and it translates into her work. In an interview in 2022 she told me: "As Palestinians and Arabs we always talk about the past. We always

say that before the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, we used to be very smart, victorious, and inventive." This reminiscing about, or longing for, the past, she explained, "is the result of the fall of the Islamic caliphate, which created a generation of trauma that Muslims like myself tend to share. We [Palestinians] always reminisce about something in the past." In addition to the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Western colonization, first with the British mandate on Palestine and later the Nakba, added further indelible layers of trauma. Such ancestral trauma is inextricable from the psychic lives of Palestinians, and this is precisely what Meera grapples with creatively through her work.

Meera and I discussed how nostalgia is often a sentimental attachment to a way of being in the world that was never truly, fully experienced.[37] She shared with me stories told by her grandparents about what life was like before the Nakba, how the agricultural economy and home ownership enabled a sense of peaceful coexistence; but she also warned me that women might not have always been treated well, and the living conditions were meager. There is neither grieving for nor enchantment with that lost world in Meera's words. Fanon famously cautioned against the native's romance with precolonial culture, and many prominent postcolonial thinkers have interpreted nostalgia as a sedimentation of the past that obscures the traumatic violence that ruptured it.[38] However, while nostalgia bears the risk of mythologizing the past and becoming overinvested in reactionary attempts to recuperate an imaginary home through the impositions of norms and laws that stymie the very possibility of crafting a better future, it can also be kindled for retooling the past toward a not-yet. In other words, nostalgia can be imaginative.[39] Svetlana Boym explained that "nostalgia is not always about the past; it can be retrospective but also prospective . . . [and] fantasies of the past determined by needs of the present have a direct impact on realities of the future."[40]

Due to its ambivalence, nostalgia is a feeling-method for reclaiming the imagination and producing new imaginings of the past-present-future. For instance, in the lookbook of Meera Adnan's first collection we find nostalgia, inspired by the aesthetic prevalent in Gaza in the late '70s and early '80s, in the architectural elements—the dated window grates, the pale blue walls—as well as in the fashion styles, with broad-shouldered coats paired with more contemporary items like baggy urban puddle pants and clunky sneakers, all worn by female models. For Meera, and for most Gazans, nostalgia is an exercise in pragmatic optimism: It can operate as a mode of temporary dislocation from the present that taps into the past in order to imagine an alternative present-future.[41] In other words, nostalgia does not need to be "restorative"; it can be "creative," and, I add, prefigurative of other new and better realities.[42] If, following Boym, nostalgia is a "rebellion against the modern idea of time" and can "open up . . . a multitude of . . . nonteleological possibilities of historical development,"[43] then for Palestinians nostalgia is nonpredeterministic and might operate disjuncturally in regard to the temporality of the blockade in which they are forced to live, a temporality that has stretched into

and encroached on the present since 1948. I define *prefigurative nostalgia* as a sense of longing that, instead of getting someone stuck in their memories, bears with it a shudder, or a frisson, with an inchoate potential for something to happen. This idea takes Boym's understanding of nostalgia as a creative process of restoration further by stressing its capacity to affectively mobilize the imagination of nostalgic subjects toward a present-future that breaks the spatial and temporal confinement of the siege, a siege that is both physical and psychic. In the work of Meera Adnan, the counter-siege temporal mode that I call prefigurative nostalgia is photographically at play both in the juxtaposition of historic and contemporary fashions and in the subtle ways in which gender is embodied and styled.

Similar to Salma of ANAT, Meera often defines her design collections as "unisex." This is done for two key reasons: One is that it would be financially and logistically unfeasible for local designers to produce both a womenswear and a menswear collection; the other is that making two collections would contradict her commitment to a slow-paced production that operates according to criteria and based on infrastructures that are dramatically different from those undergirding the larger fashion industry. Thus, a gender-neutral collection can be seen as an unavoidable result of the limitations imposed on Palestinians; however, and more interestingly, it is also, for Meera as well as other Gazan fashion makers, a way of repurposing fashion work along nonnormative gender lines.

The ambivalent gender—or, to use Jackie Stacey's expression, the "offgender flux"—of "unisex," or "genderless," designs is imbricated with a cunning way of inhabiting the temporality of the blockade by bringing history back into the figuration of new ways of being.[44] Put differently, the backward gaze can be instrumental for designing new possibilities of queer embodiment. After all, looking backward, searching for and tapping into histories and genres that might inform and aid the refiguring of present ways of living, can be a way of dealing with one's feeling of being at odds with the present.[45] What's more, pragmatically speaking, employing unisex and genderless terminology in aiming to reach a consumer and social media following base regardless of their gender identification is also a sign of the designers' stealth.

Meera explained to me that her understanding of what *I* refer to as queerness, which I see as semantically disguised under the label "unisex," owes more to local Indigenous knowledges than to conceptualizations imported from the West. In one of our conversations she told me:

> Every human being has masculine and feminine energies, and for us to reach our best potential we need to reconcile with both. When I design clothes and even when I get dressed I tap into both energies, also depending on my mood. I always think of my clothes in terms of gender-fluidity, but not in a Western, neoliberal, and individualistic sense. Although we have to be tactful when we publicly talk about gender in Gaza, if you look back to Islamic history people were way more open and fluid in their gender experience than we are today both in Gaza and in

> Western societies, and it was precisely because of colonization that we became stuck with binaries.[46]

While intentional about the somewhat queer coding of her collections and their capacity to involve a consumer base that is not marked strictly by gender dichotomies, Meera links her view of nonnormative embodiment to an Indigenous historical lineage of defiance of those dichotomies. In this sense, her approach to design conjures Dababeer Nest's investment in Indigenous relationality. Meera's words can be interpreted as theorizing "queerness" as nostalgically moving along a historical continuum, from the past into the present and potential future, in a continuous stream that has been stifled by Western colonial incursions. In other words, Meera highlights the connection between historical phenomena with (queer) social formations that have been reconfigured by the legacy of colonial modernity: This connection, according to Gayatri Gopinath, is key to interrogating the myopia and individualism of the West's liberal visibility politics concerning gender and sexuality.[47]

Further, from Meera's reflection—which is coherent with scholarly theorizations of queer indigeneity as being historically in contrast with "modern" settler sexual formations—we grasp that what is at stake for her is a nostalgia for historical modes of gender embodiment that could potentially be recast and reshuffled in the present and future.[48] Prefigurative nostalgia is both an affective experience and a useful act, insofar as it can become an impetus for change. Fashion design and image-making may seem incapable of doing anything substantive in the grand scheme of things, but they allow us to envision a space of freedom from the constrictions of the present—a space that also points to a different reading of gender and sexuality. As Jonathan Flatley, inspired by Walter Benjamin, put it, "insofar as fashion initiates us into a melancholic historical practice and a nonhomogenous experience of temporality, it can potentially provide us with a kind of revolutionary education."[49] In this sense, by trafficking with different temporalities, fashion can have something of a pedagogical function: It can make perceptible certain elements of historically submerged and/or immanent social configurations that could pose a challenge to Western colonial conceptions and visual renditions of gender, sexuality, and race.

The Nice Guys collection from 2020 shows, in the intentions of Meera, the "soft and emotional side" of Gazan men as an alternative to the iconization of virile and belligerent Palestinian masculinity. In one image (fig. 28) for the campaign, the T-shirt reads, in translation, "smooth as silk, sweet as honey," while in another image for the campaign (fig. 29) the model wears a brooch made of pink roses and a T-shirt with a print of two feminine hands with red nail polish holding a *subha* (or *tasbih*). Text, color, and imagery are used by Meera to generate an ambiguity that challenges stylistic expectations of gender coherence; in other words, clothes and their visual depictions serve to manipulate and, I would say,



FIGURE 28. Model posing for the campaign of Meera Adnan's Nice Guys collection. Photo by Meera Albaba, Gaza City, 2020. Courtesy of Meera Adnan.



FIGURE 29. Model posing for the campaign of Meera Adnan's Nice Guys collection. Photo by Meera Albaba, Gaza City, 2020. Courtesy of Meera Adnan.



FIGURE 30. Model posing in an old café in Gaza City for the campaign of Meera Adnan's Nice Guys collection. Photo by Meera Albaba, Gaza City, 2020. Courtesy of Meera Adnan.

queer common modes of self-presentation in Gaza. This gesture suggests the possibility of configuring a new economy of the sensible that could well generate new ways of seeing Palestinian fashioned bodies and thereby, at least potentially, leave its mark on the social fabric.

The Nice Guys series was shot by Meera herself in the oldest café to have survived the 2014 Israeli airstrikes in Gaza. In one image (fig. 30) that was shot at the café, a model stands in front of a wall that features aging posters of Palestinian political figures. Framed among these nationalist icons, the very presence of the young man with a look and an attitude that is in stark contrast with those of the men in the posters may be seen as recording an awkward bodily presence that affectively troubles the hypermasculine aesthetic imagery of the Palestinian resistance, without necessarily marking itself as unbelonging. This fashion-based visual storytelling allows for the emergence of affective modes of belonging to a Palestinian nation that eschews conformity to the aesthetic scripts perpetuated by state-sanctioned discourse. The model's affect makes space for an alternative relation to his present, dominated as it is by a nationalist masculinist ideology that leaves little or no room for men's vulnerability. The outfits, demeanor, and affect of Meera Adnan's models are neither easily assimilable to categorization based on Western-centric aesthetic signifiers of nonnormativity nor are they commensurate with the dominant local representational language of masculinity.



FIGURE 31. Photo from Meera Adnan's Nice Guys collection shot near the beach in Rafah, Gaza. Photo by Meera Albaba, 2020. Courtesy of Meera Adnan.

In another image from the same series (fig. 31), two young men are hanging out on the beach in Gaza. The boy on the right wears a T-shirt with a print of a Palestinian woman wearing the keffiyeh the way women used to wear it during the First Intifada, with superimposed text reading "Sit al-Sittat" (the ultimate woman) referring to the militant who actively participated in the resistance. This unusual juxtaposition between the more conventionally masculine femininity of the female fighter printed on the shirt and the "soft" masculinity of the young man suggests that multiple forms of belonging to and affiliation with the Palestinian decolonial struggle are possible regardless of, or, actually, precisely because of, the different aesthetic-political styles of signifying the quest for liberation. In these images, their muted affect suggests oblique ways of belonging without embracing the aesthetics of masculinist militancy.[50]

Bearing in mind what Meera referred to as the "soft" side of "nice Palestinian guys" and taking into account Meera's reflection on "gender fluidity," I am attending to the aesthetic of the models in her photographs in terms of queerness *not* to impose a gender-sexual marker on them but rather to shine a light on their slanted, critical disposition toward the aestheticized forms of entrenched patriarchal masculinity that are hegemonic in the Palestinian visual public sphere and in mainstream Western media. An aesthetic of *queer feeling* can foreground different modes of belonging and sovereignty as resources for a more heterogeneous

collective political consciousness rooted in a desire for an "otherwise" from current conditions of life in Palestine, namely from the gendered and racializing biopolitics of settler colonialism as much as from the frequent enforcement of the same by the Palestinian political authorities.

The snapshot examined here, given the wrecked boats in the backdrop, telegraphs the degradation of the Gazan landscape and implies the presence of the sea. Despite the haunting of death, which percolates through the infrastructural remnants of Gazan life, the Palestinians in Gaza remain attached to the land—their presence insisting that the beach is an integral part of the Palestinian material and emotional landscape. The Mediterranean, albeit beyond the photographic frame, is enshrined within Gaza's visual environs, attesting to the historical connectedness of Palestinians to nature.[51] Sealed off from the rest of Palestine and bound to living as constantly displaced refugees, Gazans have protected their access to the sea even if this, too, is under outside control.[52] In the picture we don't see the water, but the bodies of the models face it: We know it's there and that they can reach it, albeit while under surveillance.

The history of violence and oppression hovers in this photograph. The prolonged temporality of war is perceptible, but the fashion (i.e., the clothes worn by the models) questions the reduction of Palestinians to atemporal subjects of war and death. The gender, or off-gender, play occurring in the prints on the T-shirts, as well as in the "emotional character" of the young men in the images, merge with locations, objects, and overall aesthetics that simultaneously evoke the past—if we reckon with Meera's words—and rearrange it through contemporary streetwear. In this kind of convergence or coagulation of times, prefigurative nostalgia is operational: The affect(ivity) of the models gestures at a precolonial past as much as at current "global" ways of self-presentation; thus, affect here "touches across time," linking past and present and even projecting such self-enfolding temporal formation into the future.[53] The nostalgia for more fluid modes of gender embodiment that Meera mentioned coalesces into contemporary styles; it ferries, condenses, and blends styles of the past into those of the present.

This thinking about and reconfiguring of the past is consistent in the vision of Palestinian, and especially Gazan, fashion creatives. According to Nasser Abourahme, in the temporality of Israel's settler colonialism Gazans cultivate an "unruly fugitive time that exists beneath, beyond, and all around settler order in a host of [creative] practices which are not just forms of endurance and insistence on life in the face of death, but also of refusal to see the settler state as anything more than temporary."[54] Whereas Palestinians do *feel* the temporality of the Nakba—which I hereby refer to as *Nakba time* to emphasize simultaneously its protractedness since 1948 as much as its pervasive affective pull within social life, namely its functioning as a structure of feeling—they also inhabit and perform a slowed-down, fractional, disjunctural temporality. The Palestinians' attachment to life is enabled by their ingenious way of confronting the temporality of the Nakba,

a temporality that despite its different scales of intensity remains ultimately stuck in its own stretched-out cycle, that is, it maintains its "crisis ordinariness."[55]

The prosaic and only seemingly apolitical acts of making clothes or taking pictures have a twofold meaning: They reclaim the visual agency of Palestinians, or, in Said's words, "the permission to narrate," by actively documenting their existence, and they demonstrate how the extended temporariness of the occupation can be dissembled via elusive "ways of operating"—an expression used by Michel de Certeau to indicate tactics that in creating spatial and temporal gaps can disrupt, if not actually transform, dominant configurations of space and time.[56] Such aesthetic operations—grounded in the labor of workers *with* and *on* their land, in the face of carcerality and ruination—reveal an attachment to life that inconveniences the conditions of unlivability in which Israel keeps Gazans, and in so doing reveals an unwavering prefiguration of alternative modes of organizing the social fabric against the temporality of colonialism and capitalism. Gazans' resilience, operationalized through (spatial and) temporal acts of dissent, can rupture the chronopolitics of the siege and, more broadly, of the Nakba, for which the siege is a (temporal) scaffolding.[57]

The coming together of men and women for the purpose of clothing production and the depictions of styles of masculinities and femininities that disquiet the Zionist pinkwashing narrative of Palestinians as misogynistic and homophobic, as much as the Palestinian politicians' rhetorical production of gender normativity as paramount for their nationalist ambitions, partake in challenging the linearity of the occupation. In fact, the occupation cannot be detached from gender, since both the Zionist occupation and the PA's normalization of said occupation rely on an equivalent standard set of gender norms: Women are seen as responsible for the future of the nation because they are the bearers of the young men who ought to be killed (from the vantage point of Israelis) or revered (by Palestinians, in view of Israel's attempt at obliterating them as a people) in view of their supposed ability to *make* the nation.

The pragmatic optimism with which Palestinians creatively envision an alternative reality beyond the confines of the occupation and siege requires a labor of love. Meera Albaba said that love is a core component of her design philosophy. She told me:

> Contrary to depictions of Palestinians as a people who hate life, we love life so much that we want to live it fully and we cannot accept this version of it [living under siege], which is not life; and we don't even want to have a fake State of Palestine if this is going to encompass only 25 percent of historic Palestine. We want our own land to be freed. Palestinians are often willing to give everything away for their country, even their homes, children, parents, or their own lives; they think of it as a means of freedom for their own country and people. Zionists think what we care about is killing Israelis. That's not true at all, we just want to free our land and be able to move freely, and then whoever wants to live here we don't really care.[58]

Meera defined love, in the collective experience of Palestinians, as "being connected to our emotions and using that connection to carry us *as* communities; it is the feeling of *needing* to carry each other." Love, she concluded, "is *the stuff* that makes our actions." In this sense, love is the feeling that not only generates forms of mutual care, but also activates social and political transformation. Love can expand from being a relational feeling to being a political force that has the power to question, intervene into, and transform dominant systems and discourses.[59]

For Meera, love translates into working with a team of Palestinian workers, most of them women, and, as with ANAT, in participating in a digital network of creatives across Palestine as a means to support each other by sharing the resources necessary to engage in practices made nearly impossible by the crippling occupation. This way, fashion is turned into a platform for community-building. She told me:

> As Palestinians we are always trying to break through our political geography and to connect with one another. And creativity, which has been largely neglected, plays a big role. I hope that my fashion project, Meera Adnan, can be a place for Palestinians with different backgrounds and identities to come together. Fashion can function as a creative medium of solidarity, a way in which we can come together, share our experiences, and build alliances across borders. Through my fashion work I have met so many people, especially Palestinian women, and have felt so much solidarity and support, also in practical terms, such as handling things like production.[60]

Being part of a Palestinian fashion community dispersed by an apartheid geography is in itself a form of resistance against the Israeli policies of control and surveillance, the fast consumption of the Palestinian upper classes (particularly in cosmopolitan bubbles like Ramallah, in the West Bank), and the fashion industry, hinged as it is on colonization, exploitation of wage labor, and capitalism. In Meera's words, "We're trying to break from all of that by showing we have figured out our own system according to our own terms and time." In talking about the importance of solidarity Meera is referring, similar to Israr and Sumud of Dababeer Nest, to kinship across colonial borders within historic Palestine. For her, building networks of support, whether material or emotional, with Palestinians of all generations especially in Gaza and the West Bank is a source of fortitude and a means of coping with the unbearable present. This is expressed on the brand's social media platforms, which is largely in Arabic, as well as in communications with her consumer base, which is composed mostly of Palestinians, whether living in Palestine or in other Middle Eastern countries, and to a lesser extent of non-Palestinian Arabs.

Salma of ANAT would appear to have a different take on the role of solidarity than Meera: Although still prioritizing the intra-Palestinian network-building on the ground that is necessary to any local fashion designer, she is also invested, with her storytelling work, in building solidarity with Palestinians in the diaspora

as well as with non-Palestinians in the West, so it follows that the main language for ANAT's communications is English. Salma's investment in enhancing global solidarity with the Palestinian struggle can be attributed to her position as a Palestinian who was born and raised in Gaza but who currently lives in the United States. Since she is based outside Palestine for much of the year (and therefore she coordinates all the necessary logistics from afar), in her everyday life in the United States she is actively involved in pro-Palestine advocacy. Thus, advocacy in the diaspora is indispensable for her emotional life and, consequently, has become integral to her fashion collective's mission.

Despite such differences, both ANAT and Meera Adnan are part of a fashion movement that has sustainability at its core. Sustainability requires patience (by operating in Nakba time) and love (for the land and the environment). Given that life in Gaza is made unsustainable by the Israeli military, and many scholars have considered Gaza "a metaphor for unsustainability," this might sound ironic.[61] However, fashion sustainability is about cultivating local craftsmanship and working with fellow Palestinians who oppose the threatening exploitation on the part of Israeli companies that loot Palestinian sources and knowledge, and profit in the process. In one of our conversations, Meera dismissed Western brands' claims of sustainability in favor of a more capacious, Indigenous, place-based, and slowness-oriented understanding of the concept. Similar to the designers behind Nöl Collective, SYKO Project, and Taita Leila, she stated: "Sustainability is a concept that is overused and has been emptied of meaning by fashion brands. Sustainability is already ingrained in Palestinian culture: Everything in the way my ancestors consumed was sustainable, and they had creative ways of making all kinds of things reusable. Sustainability is inherent in my practice, but I don't use it as a marketing technique in the way Western designers do. I use natural materials, I make sure no fabric goes to waste, and I don't produce quickly and in large quantity—I just produce small quantities at a slow pace."[62]

In line with Salma of ANAT, Meera went on to explain that after the systematic destruction wielded by the Israeli army on Gaza in 2007, it has been extremely difficult, and at times impossible, for the vast majority of local factories to survive, especially considering that, per Israeli rule, they are prohibited from exporting any products. It ensues that local manufacturers can only work with what is available to them, which most of the time is not enough to supply fashion designers with natural and long-lasting fabrics.

Notwithstanding such limitations—which, of course, in Gaza are that much worse than in the rest of Palestine—Meera retains in her work an ineradicable dedication to sustainability, something that is ingrained in Palestinian Indigenous life. Meera points out that recovering a history of sustainability should not overlap with a folkloric romanticization of feminized Palestinian craftsmanship, namely the process that has historically characterized the representation of Palestinian embroidery and that, at least in part, has contributed to the exploitation of

feminized labor by international social enterprises.[63] Rather, the textile tradition of Palestinian crafts makers (primarily women but, especially in more recent times, also men) should be respectfully brought back by young designers through close collaborations with them so that those skills can take new forms and open up new possibilities beyond the parameters of what is expected of, or deemed possible for, Palestinian fashion—something that, for instance, Meera herself has done through her long-standing collaboration with artisans in al-Khalil who experiment with cactus leather.

Whereas ANAT has opted for local production (primarily of denim) with the requisite months or even years of time that passes before a new design collection can be created, the bulk of Meera Adnan's pieces are commissioned to Palestinian garment workers who live in refugee camps in Jordan. Since traveling in and out of Gaza is severely restricted, Meera has to plan long in advance and be strategic about how to move products through the countries from which products are easier to ship and less likely to be indefinitely blocked; for example, oftentimes Meera entrusts Palestinian friends and workers who live in other parts of the Middle East with sourcing and sampling the fabrics. Once these unofficial collaborators are granted permission to visit Gaza, they bring the fabrics with them so Meera can make her selection and place the orders. Evidently, this requires great effort and patience on the part of everyone involved. The logistics of production of Meera Adnan's and ANAT's collections are not the same, yet behind both is a surreptitious plotting.

Slowness is a fundamental principle through which they navigate, at times fugitively, Nakba time. Their fugitive inflection of the time of the siege has a twofold outcome: It organizes their collective labor by deploying slowness for their own benefit; and it is refracted through their fashion storytelling (whether their designs, photographs, or oral stories shared on social media) by grafting the citationality of assimilated past ways of gender embodiment—a kind of mnemonic citationality that Marianne Hirsch would call "postmemorial"—onto figurations of new and different styles of self-fashioning.[64] Nakba time and its undulating rhythms are embedded in the anticolonial sensorium and consciousness of these young fashion producers. In fact, steadily surviving siege implies, for ANAT and Meera Adnan, an interrogation of the very conflation of the temporal *structure* of the siege with the temporal *experience* of same. They do not simply operate under siege; more aptly, they operate through, behind, and beyond the siege. Their operations lodge a refusal to be made passive by the infrastructures of the blockade; such refusal takes the form of a material swerving from, or breaking through of, infrastructures, as well as of a re-visioning of alternative presents/futures. By necessity, they do things slowly. Slowness is, in fact, the temporal currency of occupation, but it is also the only possible register of livability. Inhabiting slow time means practicing sustainability, not simply in the sense of producing ethically and "responsibly" but in the sense of creatively sustaining life itself under conditions of unsustainability.

The rhythms of production and circulation of garments are embodied by these young fashion creatives in their effort to break, or at least temporarily suspend, their subjection to Nakba time.

QUEER VISIONING

Following the Palestinian suicide bombings of the Second Intifada, Israel marked Gaza as a terrorist enclave that needed to be dealt with through extreme measures. The blockading of Gaza in 2007 entailed the obfuscation of any distinction between civilians and combatants as well as the legitimization of Israel's exertion of brutal force on the grounds of claims of securitization and counterterrorism—a rhetoric that is at the core of what Hadeel Assali and Nayrouz Abu Hatoum have called a "carceral border regime" (i.e., the colonial apparatus of segregation and punishment that manages the lives of Palestinians).[65] Ever since, a dialectic of visibility and invisibility has pervaded any narration of life in Gaza: Gaza is seen in the media only when Israeli military violence in the Strip escalates or when the local population revolts; when that happens, Gaza is singled out as a unique site of crowdedness, starvation, and hopelessness, or as a hub of terrorists.[66] The spectacularization of Gaza reifies the local violence and suffering, and any form of cultural production that takes place there during times of relative respite remains unknown for it exceeds the threshold of what is worthy of being made visible. The visuality of Gaza is mediated to the public through a prism of either military or humanitarian emergency, and, as a result, the visual archive of Gaza is monolithic.

In the face of the reproduction of such sovereign visuality, which simultaneously exceptionalizes and fixates Gaza into a realm of abjection, it might be more productive, according to Sherene Seikaly and Darryl Li, to look at Gaza as a laboratory in which colonial policies of confinement and management of the Palestinians are tested and refined so they can be replicated later in the West Bank.[67] Along the same lines, Tareq Baconi has urged for a de-exceptionalization and a concurrent problematization of Gaza's assumed singularity, one that eclipses what is occurring elsewhere in Palestine, in particular in the West Bank, where Israeli settlers continue to unlawfully annex land and assault local residents.[68] The temporal register of Gaza is one of extension, protraction, and of normalized repetition: This is part and parcel of Nakba time, a forever catastrophe, i.e., the temporality of occupation, dislocation, and attempted extermination of the Palestinians which has permeated their lives—in various modalities across historic Palestine yet according to the same principle of ethnic cleansing—since 1948.[69]

Within such de-exceptionalized, converging, and protracted time, the Israeli strategies of containment and immobilization in Gaza have been contested and, at times, successfully sidestepped by young creative producers. Meera told me, "As a Palestinian in Gaza, the victimhood narrative is always stamped on me, and this makes me angry because I feel like people don't have any sympathy for us unless

we're depicted as defenseless victims. And then when we carry weapons to resist the oppression we suddenly become 'extremists.' We are constrained by these discourses, so we need to make and remake our own narratives: I want to be someone who does something about it, I don't want to feel sorry for myself because I am under occupation."[70]

In reflecting on dominant representations of Palestinians and her desire to produce counternarratives, Meera tenuously draws a connection between creative-cultural production and the resistance. The legitimization of the Palestinian resistance as an indispensable tool in the project of freedom and liberation is shared, more or less explicitly, by all Palestinian fashion makers; with varying degrees of involvement in and comfort with discourses around armed resistance, they understand their work not as firmly detached or epiphenomenal to the resistance but rather as partaking, in a different form, in the project of dismantling Israel's apartheid regime. With great clarity, they understand and feel the need for a "material decolonization" and recognize that daily resistance can take multiple forms in response to relentless Israeli oppression. Using fashion to produce alternative representations of Palestine is a way to generate new archives of living, and of leaving traces of their presence and beauty for a future decolonized Palestine.

In Gaza, by operating in the interruptions that punctuate Nakba time, Palestinians exceed the organization of space and time that shapes their representation, reclaiming through aesthetic work—something that Meera refers to as a "continuous production of beauty"—their political agency as well as revoking their permission to have their lives represented vis-à-vis their reduction to objects of pity or subjects of terror. Additionally, they opt out of the frequent interpellation of their existence as being ontologically on the brink of disappearance.[71] They want to destitute the normalization of the abnormalcy to which the hegemonic regimes of representations—chiefly via Western and Israeli media—relegate the Palestinian people; they rupture what Said described as "the image that will not go away," which I take to be the visual dialectic of victim/terrorist.[72] Their practices are forms of countervisuality that suspend the visual economy of military and humanitarian archiving of the Palestinian experience, particularly in Gaza.

As Seikaly has observed, Gazan cultural actors produce new images for an "archive of decolonization" that undermines the exceptionalization of Gaza as constructed by the media.[73] Fashion designers and image makers in Gaza call into question Israeli discourses predicated on counterinsurgency and security.[74] They interrogate, or even go as far as shattering, the epistemologies of in/visibility, whether excessive or sanitized, that have historically contained them.[75] They redraw the parameters of their visual representation—with the multiplicity of such representations amounting to a new decolonial archive—and thereby redress the possible ways in which Palestinians can be seen and understood in their heterogeneous yet steady modes of attachment to their own identity and their sense of belonging to the land.

In "Reflections on Exile" Said warned that the deprivations and complex feelings (of anger, isolation, sadness, or nostalgia) experienced by Palestinians should not be channeled into nationalism, which is itself an ideological reproduction of the violence that is integral to the militarized making of nation-states. From his admonition we can infer an invitation to produce intimate written and visual narratives envisaging scenes of living that are expansive and creative—even "queer," in its original connotation of slantwise—beyond the conventionalized and institutionalized (ethnonationalist and heteronormative) structures of nation-states. The aspiration of the Palestinian officials for independent statehood as a solution to the occupation has been consistently frustrated by failed diplomatic negotiations, often mediated by Western powers (especially the United States), as part of the Oslo peace process, which led to an increased fragmentation of the territory, an intensification of surveillance (by the Israeli army) and policing of popular dissent (also by the PA in the West Bank), and to an overall deterioration of the average Palestinian's economic and social conditions of living. The awareness of the correlation between the above diplomatic flop and the degradation of everyday life has elicited, on the one hand, stern support among the civilian population for the armed resistance (represented in Gaza by the Al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas), and on the other a collective desire to imagine alternative ways of being in the present-future beyond dreams of statehood.[76] As I've argued so far, these two—the armed resistance and the nonviolent creative resistance—should not be hastily understood as strictly and definitively unrelated; surely, the young artists and cultural producers discussed so far are not involved with the armed resistance, yet the disillusionment generated in them by the Palestinian political elites and the constant, pervasive onslaughts conducted by Israel, prevent them from a simplistic condemnation of "violent" resistance. They work on a different track, using fashion to produce beauty and pleasure under horrific conditions, but with an intimately shared goal of liberation that is not dependent on the self-serving ambitions for state-formation advanced by politicians.

Fashion designers and image makers are invested in thinking about how fashion design, photography, and film could potentially untether feelings of belonging to the land and to one another (as a people) from a hegemonic, teleological narrative of futurity conducive to the formation of a nation-state. As Salma of ANAT put it, Palestinians already are a nation—one that crosses boundaries and connects those who are exiled on their own land under unbearable conditions with those who are exiled, under drastically less strenuous circumstances, in the diaspora—inasmuch as, in their togetherness, they share a history, culture, collective identity, and therefore a national consciousness.[77] Despite their different opinions on what the priorities for Palestinians as a people should be (opinions that differ primarily according to their locale: Gaza, the West Bank, or the '48 territories), the young fashion creatives across Palestine share a skepticism of a putative Palestinian state (Who would such state be run by? What role would the Zionist settler state and

its allies play in its formation?) as the ultimate goal of their joint struggle. While the ambition for a formalization of a self-sovereign entity is legally and geopolitically salient, and therefore should not be dismissed altogether, to this day such an ambition remains unrealistic in view of the intensification of assaults on Palestinian land and lives as well as the disinterest among major Western powers in a statehood project that would meet the expectations, needs, and demands of the Palestinian people.

In this state of affairs, abdicating the telos of the nation-state (by now inseparable from political corruption, militarism, and multiple ethical and economic compromises) and severing the link between Palestinianness (i.e., the sense of a Palestinian identity) and nation-building might provide an opportunity to envision liberatory futures that are removed from institutional political apparatuses and that, instead, center the rethinking of sovereignty on Indigenous principles and on an intersectional praxis of liberation wherein multiple layers of oppression (gender-sexual, racial, and environmental) are combated. Production of beauty, to cite again Meera Albaba, and the reclaiming of the imagination, as Palestinian artist Steve Sabella put it, are the kernels of what I call queer decolonial fashion practices—practices that are neither driven by nor legible through nationalist approaches.[78] In the creative process of worldbuilding, renditions of the past are assimilated by Palestinians and are often productively retrieved and embedded in contemporary minor aesthetic operations that prefigure new, nonmessianic horizons of being.

As Abu Hatoum has worded it, "*A* future for Palestine and Palestinians is contingent on present and past collective worldings, and it is also contingent on the working of the imaginative."[79] Worldbuilding in Palestine can be said to be enlivened by a queer vision. Not because it is put into effect by self-identified queer individuals, but because it requires an oblique vision of, as much as an oblique approach to, what a decolonial Palestine might be like. "Palestine can be free only if queer people in Palestine can be free": Versions of this adage are recurrent among queer-feminist activists. While this proviso is persuasive and functional for grassroots mobilization, it has the limitation of being applicable to virtually any population under colonial rule, and, at the same time, it might place too much emphasis on the tenuous domain of subjective identification. In this book I have shifted the focus from *queer Palestinians* to *the struggle for queer Palestine* as a way of *thinking queerly* about Palestinian liberation. Zionist imperialism is a gendered-gendering and racialized-racializing enterprise grounded in ethno- and heteronormativity; however, Palestinian nationalism is founded on heterosexual and masculinist assumptions as well. In order to envision a decolonial Palestine—one that reflects the desires of the younger Palestinian generation—the ethno-heteronormativity that underpins the above, and more generally imbues the fantasy of the state, should be dismantled.[80]

With these considerations in mind, surveying the aesthetics of storytelling crafted by Palestinian fashion creatives reveals the persistence of an underlying energizing queer drive. Understanding queerness as part of the decolonial commitment to producing liberatory (anticapitalist, antimilitarist, and antiheteromasculinist) aesthetics requires us to suture queerness to the emancipatory potential of disrupting the normatively gendered figuration of the Palestinians themselves. Such normative gendering is "turned off" in Palestinian fashion design and photography through a meticulous "texturing" of (in)visibility, often through the aesthetic-affective registers of illegibility and unintelligibility. In the cultural production of the Palestinian fashion community, what can be considered queer is, more expansively, a willful investment in the intersectional dissembling of the gender, racial, and ecological violence of the occupier.

Fashion design and photography are two types of storytelling that, in Gaza, allow a way *into* the unrecognized beauty of Gazans as well as a way *out of* the ordinary horror of the siege by, in the words of Meera, "creating scenes of beauty." Leila Abdelrazaq, echoing Said, has written that for Palestinians, photographs function as proof of their Indigenous existence and presence in the face of Zionist ethnic cleansing.[81] While more traditional genres of photography are meant to be indexical of some sort of historical objective truth, fashion photography in Gaza remixes past and present to generate imaginaries that simultaneously carry within them the traces of history—as the posters in the Nice Guys series suggest—and avoid the risk of being fixed into same.

As the case of Meera Adnan shows, fashion image-making in Gaza does not intentionally or openly divorce itself from documentation; however, it exceeds it and potentially collapses different temporalities (something that fashion photography, thanks to elements such as staging, props, and styling, enables). Images such as those produced by ANAT and Meera Adnan are not meant to speak for a "nation" or "a people" or to suggest a specific reading of history that serves a nationalist narrative; by contrast, they incubate an alternative way of seeing and thinking about the present in relation to its past and potential future. Traces of history are infused into images and they effuse from them; such traces are key elements in the self-sovereign activity of recomposition of a world: The goal for Salma, Meera, and the other designers in historic Palestine is not to restage history but to craft multiple stories that, while accounting for history, concomitantly generate other possibilities of being in the world.

Without cleaving to romanticizing analytics of hope and utopian speculations, the work of Gazan fashion designers shares with members of their fashion community in the West Bank and '48 a decolonial vision that consists of a commitment to hijacking the obstacles posed to them by the occupation (and/or siege), to recovering Indigenous craft, to sidelining logics of profit dependent on external investments, and to visually unsettling the gender

roles assigned to Palestinians in nationalist discourses, discourses that dovetail with colonial epistemologies of gender and sexuality. Collectively, they mold counterhegemonic imaginaries that challenge the imperial visuality of the settler colonial regime as well as the visual grammar of the autocratic Palestinian leadership.

Epilogue

The Affective Afterlives of Clothes

After the 2021 Israeli airstrikes on Gaza City destroyed numerous residential buildings and killed nearly three hundred people, a design collection called Sudden Attack (by Nnbynn, a clothing brand from Haifa) came out.[1] Soon, images of its looks and videos were circulating on social media. The "attack" in the title refers not just to that singular attack on Gaza but to the Nakba itself. The collection is showcased through a fashion film, which puts it all into context. The video begins with the sound of helicopters overlaid with the static of military drones in the background. The camera enters what looks like a ravaged house. In a room with broken doors and windows, models of different genders march through at a sustained pace, passing one another but never touching, their gait automated. The camera is flickering, and with each glitch we are transported into a different scene in which the camera tails a new model: We see them from behind, with a full view of their dressed bodies in the ruined surroundings. Through the broken windows a resurgent nature is creeping into the house as eradicated trees and leafy branches poke their way through. In the final scene the camera pans around and together the models march toward it, looking straight into it, unblinking; they are side by side, walking in sync. Their affect and demeanor suggest that they have survived the attack on the house and are now ready to rise again.

The photo shoot took place in Wadi Salib, Haifa, in a former schoolhouse dating back to the 1930s that was bombarded by the Israeli military. Wadi Salib, the site of a number of riots against British rule during the 1930s and 1940s, was once a majoritarian Arab neighborhood, at least until the Nakba, when sixty thousand Arab residents were uprooted from the area (soon to be replaced by Jewish settlers from Europe). On top of such displacement and repopulation, Wadi Salib has, over the past three decades, experienced a gentrification plan that has erased

almost every remnant of its native population, and Israeli government offices (e.g., that of Land Administration) were constructed on the ruins of buildings harking back to the Ottoman era.

The decision to do the shoot in a former school was meant to epitomize one of the many historic Palestinian spaces of learning and joy destroyed by Israel. The collection and related film are characterized by a sense of repetition, as if to say that the 1948 "attack" triggered a cyclical iteration of annihilating events that typifies the temporality of the Nakba. The glitches in the video are symptomatic of this repetition: Every glitch is the same; with each one we move into another room and focus on a different model, yet the rooms all look the same, the models' pace is quick and incessant, and their unisex outfits are nearly identical, with only minimal variations. The Nakba never ended, nor has the survivalist, slow fashion production of Palestinians who adorn themselves with the symbols and signifiers of their quest for liberation. The glitches mirror Israel's "sudden attacks" as well as, more importantly, the practices through which Palestinian designers glitch, or interrupt, the visual reproduction of Israeli violence itself.[2] Despite the run-down setting and deafening sounds, the models keep walking along, looking fashionable, belying the surrounding ugliness.

In the collection, the relationship of Palestinians with their ancestors is translated into the prints. Oversize sweaters and sweatshirts feature large prints on the back depicting scenes of Palestinian life from the late 1910s and early 1920s. The staple prints of the collection show either Gazan fishermen or women swimming in the Mediterranean; the photographs, sourced from photo albums and history books, depict community life in a serene environment lit by the sun. Archival research of this kind, in the words of Nnbynn's founder Angham Khalil, is "[about] bringing stories from the past to the present moment. Our responsibility is to keep these stories alive, but the only way we can do it is to work with and through them in ways that will resonate with the generations we'll pass them on to."[3] Her words are strikingly resonant with those of the protagonists of this book. In Palestinian fashion, the relationship with the past is typically a nostalgic one that prefigures a way of life that looks back at the past and adjusts the embodied memory of it to the needs and wants of young Palestinians. The work is archival in a futural sense.[4] Fashion is used to project the past, captured in the Palestinians' collective unconscious, into the future. As Angham herself worded it, "We need to use that past in a creative way to imagine a new, better reality. And perhaps . . . fashion can take us to a better place."[5]

Fashion "can take us to a better place" in the sense that it can help us craft styles of looking and moving in the world that open up the social fabric to multiple ways of producing, representing, and inhabiting Palestine, both physically and symbolically. Fashion can be a compass for rethinking the relationship between the human body and land beyond extractivist and exploitative logics, as well as for centering the agency, experiences, and knowledges of workers. What's more,

the queer decolonial practices of the cultural producers in the Palestinian fashion scene in this book model a kind of creative activism whereby the gender-sexual, racial, and environmental struggles are understood and attended to in conjunction; it is precisely this approach to and formulation of contemporary aesthetic production that, in Palestine as well as, potentially, in other colonial contexts in which Indigenous peoples live under threat of disappearance, have anchored a generation of young artists to each other in their shared commitment to a liberationist worldmaking project (i.e., in their indomitable will to dismantle the structural and systemic inequities that perpetuate settler colonialism).

Palestinian fashion collectives have redefined fashion as something that challenges and exceeds the colonial framework through which fashion creative practices from the Global South have historically been theorized. On their own terms and from their own situated positionality, they have advanced an epistemological and aesthetic critique of the system of fashion (which in its present incarnation works as an infrastructure of extractive capitalism) and have embraced a communitarian activist approach through which the production and circulation of clothes become relational modes of collective subject formation. Fashioning the body, in their intentions, is about turning upside down the "de-futuring" of coloniality (with the fashion industry being one of the main economic and racial pillars of colonial reproduction).[6] The very presence of the collectives de-invisibilizes their struggle, which takes form in ways that are neither grand nor spectacular. In a way, their fashion is militant: It seeks to rebuild the connecting tissue between human life, nonhumans, and land; it unearths genealogies of creative aesthetic production deemed unworthy of global representation or that are intentionally neglected because they inconvenience imperial visuality and are inassimilable to the dominant culture; it aligns itself with queer, feminist, and antiracist discourses native to Palestine that are not simply concerned with giving visibility to minoritized voices within the fight against the occupation, but that are rather focused on using gender and race as prisms through which to grapple with and to mine the very foundations of the Zionist mission.

Their practices can offer a comprehensive intersectional model for justice-oriented fashion design and production beyond Palestine and the Middle East. In fact, queer Palestinian decolonial fashion shows how by operating locally while thinking globally one can develop a critical commentary on both local society and the structural external forces that prevent its evolution. At the same time, Palestinian fashion issues a call for action—through the circulation of commodities (clothes) and their photographic and filmic depictions—on multiple fronts: preserving the land; combating the racism that ideologically governs power asymmetries and phenomena such as plundering of resources; and positing gender as a central aspect in the reconfiguration of societal and labor dynamics and media representations. In this sense, decolonizing fashion is not simply about decentering Eurocentrism, giving voice to the social actors in the

Global South, and reducing pollution and exploitation; it is about thinking of fashion as something that bears the capacity to sustain a decolonial political agenda that is informed by and creatively puts into practice the actual teachings of local activists. Beyond the meanings, politics, and goals of the Palestinian fashion scene—all subsumable under a decolonial activist praxis that is undetachable from grassroots organizing—the documentation of the practices in *Dressed for Dissent* reveals precisely a modeling or pedagogical function: It demonstrates the multiple interconnected ways in which fashion can be operational as a worldmaking device.

In other words, this book has invoked the political relevance of fashion in contemporary Palestinian culture by showing how inextricable it is from the communal prospect of liberation. For the achievement of liberation, fashion and fashion media might sound secondary; and yet the ways in which they have been intentionally used by recent generations of Palestinians prove how vital they are for the decolonization project. On the level of affect, fashion can be a source of joy as much as a portal into another world; one can find comfort and hope in a material, a fabric, a garment, as well as in one's emotional proximity to the community that brought these to life. As Sudden Attack suggests, fashion does not simply reflect but can also react to the times, given that it is simultaneously a shelter and an armor, a way to approach others and the predicament one finds oneself in. Clothes make the body politically significant to the extent that via dress their surface can become a porous site where aspirations and desires as well as fears and anxieties can be projected.

Scavenging forgotten archives leads to the production of new repositories of clothes, photographs, and films (i.e., to the generation of new knowledge via material culture and its visual recording). Bringing to light photographs of Gaza from the early twentieth century and printing them on knits, for instance (as Nnbynn does), is not just a way of paying homage to the life that was, but rather of affectively "wearing" it and feeling a sense of possibility that something gone could one day be again. The spirit of freedom conveyed by scenes of swimming in the sea incubate that sense of possibility: It might be unthinkable for most Palestinians to swim in the Mediterranean, but Palestinians are still in Palestine, the sea is still there, and their resolute will to relive those scenes remains undefeated. The images of a past "good life" are woven into the fabrics of contemporary Palestinian fashion. In the Sudden Attack collection, the outfits have baggy, genderless silhouettes, the clothes are raw-hemmed, with hanging threads in the back that almost touch the ground, the photo prints are stitched loosely to the fabric, and the tops feature embroidered patches and lettering that collapse into tassels. As the models walk, these clever details leave traces behind them; the hanging threads attach the bodies to the ground but also, possibly, to one another. The split seams suggest imperfection (inevitable with slow and sustainable production) and unfinished business.

That unfinished business is the liberation struggle that younger Palestinians perpetuate and reinvent with all their creative means. Undeterred by spatial, physical, and psychic humiliation, Palestinian fashion creatives have built affective and material networks through which they come together and participate in the cogent project of refiguring the very political and economic system under which they live. Apropos of the stultifying politics that calcify hegemony, Gramsci invoked, in *Odio gli indifferenti* (translatable as *I Hate the Indifferent*), what he called "dramatic fantasy," i.e., a vision for radical change grounded in the everyday work of anticipation for a different state of things—something that politicians lack and artists possess and, indeed, have the moral duty to cultivate.[7] Such creative forging of new realities consists of unearthing imaginative spaces supposedly foreclosed by decades of unremitting violence and that, in the case of Palestine, gesture at freedom from the colonial shackles that have constrained collective attempts on the part of Palestinians to attain sovereignty (visual, affective, and material). In their everyday creative struggle against settler colonial governmentality, Palestinian fashion designers and image makers, in line with Fanon's invocation, are "turn[ing] away from the colonial state and find[ing] in their own transformative praxis the source of their liberation."[8] As Ronak Kapadia would put it, their "counter-visual tactics of insurgency" reject the "death imaginary" ascribed to their bodies as they confront the settler security state control.[9] Their creative practices and narratives reveal how they see their work as something that poses a challenge to the political imaginaries of nationalist sovereignty while simultaneously disrupting what Said called "the syrupy sentimentalism of roles [ascribed] to [women] [as] mothers, virgins, martyrs" as well as the cult of normative masculinity.[10]

In the last image of the Sudden Attack fashion film and lookbook, a young model stands on a chair (fig. 32), surrounded by debris. After the zigzag pacing in the glitchy short film, we're presented with a still. Perfectly centered within the frame and looking down at us, the model has an air of fatigue: His eyes are tired, his shoulders droop, his body hangs heavy. The sleeves of his blazer are visibly short, as if the jacket doesn't belong to him, his sneakers dirty and unlaced. The floor and the clothes are both dusty. We might surmise that he has found these clothes in the rubble after the attack, or even come out of the rubble himself. The chair is the only piece of furniture in the room. Clothes bear the traces of the colonial violence exerted against Indigenous Palestinians, but they also maintain a vitality—whether torn, shredded, or dirty—that bespeaks survivance. It is this attachment to life and reverence for death that make Palestinian fashion affectively dense and politically meaningful. As they gesture toward the past and the future, clothes remain: They are material remnants for renewed aspirations. The model appears static, almost frozen in a state of abandonment; and yet he's looking directly at us, pensive, perhaps pondering what has just happened and what might be, expressing a dignity, patience, and resolve that those clothes so intimately preserve.



FIGURE 32. A shot from Nnbynn's Sudden Attack collection. Photo by Fadi Dahabreh, 2021. Courtesy of Angham Khalil.

Afterword

I had initially completed this book feeling mildly hopeful. However, with the ongoing mass slaughter in Gaza, maintaining an optimistic hold on reality is probably unreasonable. It seems nonetheless important to include some information about the life and work of the protagonists of this book. While sharing their exact whereabouts and experiences would infringe on their privacy, communication (between me and them, as well as, more importantly, among themselves) and community are too important in this book for me to "exit" and leave the reader in the dark about the current state of the Palestinian fashion scene. After October 2023 most of the designers and image makers featured in this book have suspended their activities. They have put their production on hold or shut their businesses completely. Only in rare cases have they continued their work, doing so with further vehemence. This has largely depended on where they are located. It is no surprise that Meera Albaba, who luckily managed to evacuate from Gaza, has stopped working on her clothing line, although she recently shared an Instagram story in which she expressed the wish to relaunch it in the future. Similarly, ANAT has ceased operating, and its founder, Salma Shawa, has become a public spokesperson for pro-Palestine activism, garnering over three hundred thousand followers on Instagram and almost four hundred thousand on TikTok. The vast audience that Salma had originally built on ANAT's fashion-focused social media page has not only remained but has increased enormously since she sidelined the fashion to make space for news and political commentary—a testament to the rootedness of Palestinian fashion in political matters and social justice. On the outskirts of Ramallah, Sim Sim suspended the production of Nöl Collective for one year and a half so as to fully devote her energies to fundraising for those Gazan textile workers who survived and were displaced, at times finding refuge in Cairo;

only recently has she resumed production, working closely with workers across the West Bank whose workshops have also been impacted by the Israeli army's revamped attacks in the area. While her privileged position (compared to those in Gaza) is most likely what allowed her to go back to work, her commitment to community in multiple forms (raising funds but also finding new crafts makers in need of work with whom to collaborate) make her fashion practice much larger and ambitious than what one might superficially associate with fashion. Hazar Jawabra told me she just regained some of the energy and motivation to begin a new collection "one day at a time." Dababeer Nest, the most severely impacted collective in the West Bank, shut down operations when the Israeli army's incursions into Jenin began in 2024, and temporarily withdrew from social media. Despite their digital disappearance, the courage, unity, strength, and warmth that have transpired in my personal communications with them leave me full of admiration.

Trashy Clothing have continued their work in a relatively sustained manner from Jordan, becoming even more vocal about Israel's violence and Western imperialism. Over the last two years they have launched two collections. The first collection, Arsenal of Democracy, is a sharp critique of US empire and the complicity of the American government in the enactment of Israeli terror, and the second, Humiliation Rituals, is a commentary on the rituals of humiliation conducted by the Israeli military at the expense of Palestinians, whether unlawfully detained prisoners or victims of censorship: Some models are hooded and have swords strapped onto their outfits (fig. 33), others carry books purchased from Jerusalem's Education Bookshop (which was raided in 2025)—all in defiance of Israel's ongoing violence toward Palestinian bodies and knowledge production. Trashy Clothing's work has attracted plenty of attention, in that its catchy and provocative visual references resonate with the aesthetic impetus, taste, and discourses of the current generation of pro-Palestine student activists, and it has been praised in independent media outlets and mainstream fashion publications alike. Without compromising their integrity (e.g., by refusing to be featured in magazines or exhibitions whose agendas appear suspicious), they have used their popularity to raise their voices via fashion collections that have become even more explicit and easily readable in their messaging. Lastly, the collectives and designers in the '48 territories, given their safer location within the boundaries of what is officially considered Israel, have embarked on various paths. A few of them have recently resumed their work, timidly, and at a slower pace, without advertising it (for example, without doing photo shoots or circulating new imagery on their social media channels), while the majority have discontinued their projects for the time being.

It comes as no surprise that what has not crumbled amid the unfolding catastrophe is their connection with one another and with those who are in solidarity with them. It's perhaps there, in the relationality and emotional contact—enabled by digital media, often unreliable and most likely surveilled—with friends, community members, and followers (whose numbers keep growing on a global scale),



FIGURE 33. Trashy Clothing's Humiliation Rituals runway show. Photo by Omar Braika, 2025. Courtesy of Trashy Clothing.

that I can perhaps still see a ray of hope, a reminder that not even a genocide can shut down the joint creative energies and the workings of the imagination that provide sustenance to keep being in the world even in the metaphorical absence of a future. Since Gaza is being emptied and many young people in the West Bank have emigrated to other countries, a renewed cultural scene is more likely to resurface with the support of the diaspora: Those Palestinians recently forced to leave as well as their networks of fellow Palestinians who were already in exile may well play a larger role in rebuilding a creative-activist movement both within and beyond Palestine, one that joins forces with solidarity activists and allies from multiple paths of life. A glimmer of this can be seen in the tentacular diffusion of *tatreez* circles and workshops run by Palestinians all over the world since October 2023, even if several preexisting fashion brands—whether run by Palestinians or not—in Western countries have, disturbingly, either instrumentalized the Palestinian component of their identity in a performative manner or have remained silent regarding their political stance for fear of losing customers and support. The debates regarding the uses and expressions of Palestinianness in fashion within the diaspora post–October 7 are taking up more and more space both in activist and artistic circles. May these inspire a drive for real change and collective action, rather than merely distract with their noise from this living nightmare.

. . .

"Habibi, we're okay," followed by a bandaged heart emoji, is the last WhatsApp text I received, while writing these closing words, from one of the designers in this book, at a distance of months apart from our previous exchange—months in which I lived with worry and dread. I imagined them far from being okay and they knew that texting me, even if irregularly and with the same formula, would bring me a sense of relief (as if I were the one in need of comfort . . .). An Instagram DM from another designer had informed me, in a tone of exhaustion and relief, that they had finally managed to reach safety by leaving an area in which they probably would not have survived another day. A message on Signal from the member of another collective said they did not care about work anymore, that all they wanted was to stay in community, grieve their losses, and support their families. Several other check-up texts were shared, and I closely monitored the social media activity of all of those who still regularly used these to reassure myself they were "okay." Amid the live-streamed horror that I obsessively watched on my phone every day for over two years, these messages have orchestrated the ups and downs of my mental health and capacity to finish this book. While closing on the scene, however, these final words I'm typing are also meant as an overture for future researchers, activists, and artists to use the very traces (images, recordings, etc.) accumulated during the ongoing genocide to produce new narratives and archives that, in the midst of all the outrage, fatigue, sadness, and general doom, might eventually become invigorating material for the writing of new cultural histories for a decolonial Palestine.

NOTES

NOTE TO THE READER

1. In the current moment, November 2025, Gaza has been turned into a mass grave (the death toll reaching approximately 68,000), and Israel has announced a plan of full invasion and expulsion backed by the governments of the United States and the majority of Europe. Israel has also developed a project of further division and annexation of the West Bank and the closure of the only land crossing point between the West Bank and Jordan in response to the recognition of the State of Palestine by a number of European delegations at the UN General Assembly. Israel and the United States continue driving the colonization of Palestine undisturbed, in part through the help of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, which has been acting as a middleman to quell strongholds of the Palestinian resistance (as witnessed by its recent, brutal offensives on Jenin and the destruction of the refugee camp). Each and every university in the Gaza Strip has been demolished. The vast majority of Palestinian journalists reporting from Gaza have been targeted and killed by Israeli airstrikes. Medical personnel, including doctors, nurses, and paramedics, have been killed in vast numbers. Mosques have been leveled to the ground. Humanitarian convoys taking food into the Strip have been shot at and prohibited from entering—no aid is entering Gaza, and starvation is being deployed as one of the cruelest methods of warfare. Ceasefire deals have been broken several times by Israel. Israel has bombed Lebanon and Yemen—the main active supporters of the Palestinian armed resistance in the MENA region—as well as Qatar, where negotiations for a supposed ceasefire were slated to take place. Communications blackouts during ceasefires have enabled Israel to conduct even more horrific military offensives across the West Bank. No foreign reporters are allowed into Gaza, and the vast majority of Western mainstream media outlets have manufactured news items or distributed the propaganda of those countries' governments, which have consistently reaffirmed their alliance with Israel, in defiance of international law. Here in the West, the militarized

repression of solidarity with Palestine has reached the point of suppressing or prohibiting student protests and even issuing unlawful arrests, abductions, detentions, or deportations of student-activists; Jewish people are, in scenes of total absurdity, being arrested—their protests condemned as antisemitic by Western governments—as they manifest public solidarity with Palestine. Despite such ongoing repression, the solidarity movement with Palestine is growing bigger by the day, and civil society–led initiatives such as the Global Sumud Flotilla in Europe and North Africa have been launched in the attempt to break the siege.

2. This statement was made by South Africa before the International Court of Justice on December 29, 2023. See NBC News, "World 'Fails' Palestinians in 'Livestreamed Genocide,' South Africa Tells World Court," posted January 11, 2024, YouTube, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=POgxAFOJGoM. See also Amnesty International, "Amnesty International Investigation Concludes Israel Is Committing Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza," December 2024, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/12/amnesty-international-concludes-israel-is-committing-genocide-against-palestinians-in-gaza/.

3. El-Kurd, *Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal*, 3.

INTRODUCTION

1. The West Bank territory was divided into three areas by the Oslo II Accord in 1995: A, B, and C. Instead of segmenting the West Bank into three distinct parts, however, the areas dot the region irregularly with checkpoints, walls, and other security measures blocking free access. Area A refers to the part of the West Bank that is nominally administered by the PA but that, in actuality, is still predominantly controlled by the Israeli government, which regulates all passage in and out. Most of the people from Area A cannot leave or enter without receiving permission from the Israeli government. Villages in Area B are under Palestinian civil control and joint Israeli–Palestinian security control (people from Area B can only travel to Area A and Area B). Finally, Area C is under full military and administrative control of the Israeli government; those from Area C (which includes East Jerusalem and occupies approximately 61 percent of the West Bank) are effectively in Israel and can travel to all three areas, and even to Tel Aviv. The permit system was instated by Israel in the West Bank, allegedly as a measure of security, in 1991, with the outbreak of the first Gulf War. In Gaza, instead, enclosure policies had been introduced in the aftermath of the First Intifada and have since been strengthened.

2. Interview by the author, March 20, 2019. The interviews carried out with the research participants were slightly edited to improve flow.

3. Gregory, *Colonial Present*, 125.

4. Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel*, 198–99, 204.

5. Kotef, *Movement and the Ordering of Freedom*, 5.

6. Berda, *Living Emergency*, 115. The governing principle of the system of population control, containment, and cataloging is race: Based on ethnic-racial hierarchization, Israeli Jews are unambiguously allocated privileges—spatial, temporal, and legal—from which Palestinians are excluded. Settlers can move freely on main roads and across Palestine (whether between settlements located in the West Bank or between fully annexed territories and the West Bank and East Jerusalem), whereas Palestinians have to undergo multiple forms of scrutiny and are forced to use rundown segregated streets that are made invisible to Israelis. See Berda,

Living Emergency, 36, 39. Roy Wagner has termed "visibility-mobility regime" the Israeli sovereign system of technologies that governs simultaneously the mobility and the visibility of Palestinians. See Wagner, "On (Not) Choosing Between Mobility and Visibility," 1.

7. "A one sided farce" was an expression used by Edward Said with regard to the Oslo process. See Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, 53. For a reading, informed by Said's work, of the consequences of the Oslo accords on Palestinians and the benefits gained by Israelis, see Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 172–78.

8. Said, *Peace and Its Discontents*, 12.

9. Hanan Toukan, *Politics of Art*, 193. In *The Rise and Fall of Human Rights*, Lori Allen breaks down the relationship between the brutality and human rights violations of the PA police and its neoliberal, Western-oriented agenda that functions as a cover for the former.

10. Within a sociopolitical state of compliance with the occupation, the local capitalist class gained economic power by way of its proximity to the PA in its role as key conduit of foreign capital inflows. Kareem Rabie has spoken of "state-assisted forms of accumulation" to refer to how the Palestinian bourgeoisie's accumulation of capital sought to stabilize a state-building project linked to an emerging international sector via free-market practices, for example, private economic development projects. See Rabie, *Palestine Is Throwing a Party and the Whole World Is Invited*, 15–16. As Toufic Haddad has explained, the neoliberal economy and the normalization of the relationship with Israel became the barometer of how the state-building process was coming along, hence causing further economic discrepancy and social unrest in Palestine and ultimately muffling people's calls for liberation with a promise of financial modernization. See Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.*, 8.

11. Farsakh, *Palestinian Labour Migration to Israel*, 296. Drawing from Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile*, Sophia Azeb has stated that nationalism is, in essence, "a reproduction of the violence endemic to the modern nation-state," which Palestinians should refute. To reject participation in nationalist discourses means, in effect, to "refuse to be recognized as Palestinians within the confines and language of . . . a nation-state." She invokes, instead, an Indigenous principle of "mak[ing] space, not states." See Azeb, "Who Will We Be When We Are Free? On Palestine and Futurity." In a similar vein, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum has stated that today the mode of organizing for Palestinian civil society is that of a collective feeling toward a future of "no-state yet to come." See Abu Hatoum, "For a 'No-State Yet to Come,'" 185. Ghassan Kanafani had importantly stated that nationalist movements use a grand and "blind" language (chiefly revolving around the idea of "revolution") as a mere shield to protect those who in light of their political and economic privilege or leadership actually aim to suppress any possibility of changing the status quo. See Kanafani, "Afkār ʿan al-taghīr wal-lughat al-ʾUmiyaʾ," 146. In reflecting on the popular Palestinian uprisings from 1936 to 1939 he had already noted how the involvement of the people (including the intellectuals) in the liberation struggle was thwarted by the attempt of the political authorities in the Arab regimes to limit and take control of the resistance. See Kanafani, *Thawrat 36–39 fī Filasṭīn*, and Alloush, *Munāqishāt ḥawl al-thawrat al-Filasṭīnīyah*, 12.

12. Peteet, "Closure's Temporality," 59–60.

13. Wagner, "On (Not) Choosing Between Mobility and Visibility," 23.

14. Junka-Aikio, *Late Modern Palestine*, 4.

15. Maira, *Jil Oslo*. On the affects of the post-Oslo generation, see also Tuastad, "Violent Rise of Palestine's Lost Generation."

16. Salih and Richter-Devroe, "Cultures of Resistance in Palestine and Beyond," 19–20.

17. This is not to say that the national project is no longer important to Palestinians, but that the frustration of many with how the contours of "the national" have been monopolized by the PA has provoked a collective desire, especially among youths, to envisage an alternative future detached from the nation-state as conceived by the political establishment. Laura Junka-Aikio warns us that such a process of aesthetic reconfiguration of the political beyond strictly statist-nationalist framings should not be read as an unequivocal collapse of Palestinian nationalism tout court; rather, it should be understood as an extension of the collective imagination beyond the institutional and organizational forms that are conventionally associated with "politics." See Junka-Aikio, *Late Modern Palestine*, 87.

18. Marwan Darweish and Andrew Rigby have written about the economic depression and suffering endured by Hamas-led Palestinians in Gaza in the early 2010s, and how the Arab uprisings provoked the rise of digital civil protests in Gaza against the authoritarian regime of Hamas and the Israeli occupation. See Darweish and Rigby, *Popular Protest in Palestine*, 172–73.

19. For a comprehensive analysis and assessment of the relationship between online and offline social networks in Palestine in the wake of the Arab Spring, see Dwonch, *Palestinian Youth Activism in the Internet Age*. The use of social media that favored the emergence of the contemporary cultural scene in Palestine can be framed within the cyberactivism that was shaped by what Laila Shereen Sakr calls the "Arab techno-global uprising" of the early 2010s. See Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*.

20. Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives," 23.

21. Said, *Culture and Resistance*, 163–64.

22. Tawil-Souri, "Where Is the Political in Cultural Studies?," 471. Since the 1980s the Israeli army has ransacked Palestinian archives, bombed radio and television stations, and even banned the display of Palestinian symbols, flags, and clothes in a concerted plan to delete traces of Palestinian life as part and parcel of the process of ethnic cleansing. See Tawil-Souri, "Where Is the Political in Cultural Studies?" The censorship of Palestinian cultural expression, aimed at the suppression of Palestinian identity and ultimately existence, was juridically sanctioned by the Tamir Law, which was passed in 1980 by the Israeli Knesset as an amendment of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance. This law banned any symbols or slogans of Palestinian nationhood, and its violations (for example, children wearing T-shirts with Palestinian logos or text) were considered a criminal offense leading to arrest. See Hallaj, "Palestine: The Suppression of an Idea," 11. Residents of the West Bank were prohibited (according to Article 6 of Military Order no. 101) from "printing" any images of "political significance," whereby "printing" referred to any form of representation and creative expression. See Sherwell, "Imaging Palestine as the Motherland," 165, and Raja Shehadeh, *Occupier's Law*, 157.

23. As Kanafani theorized, cultural resistance and armed resistance against the occupation must proceed in unison until the very ideology (Zionism) that underwrites the oppression of the Palestinians in the first place is disassembled. Kanafani argued that the responsibility for combating both Zionism and the authoritarianism of Palestinian politicians also rested on the shoulders of the intellectuals. Such responsibility involved a rethinking of the role that youths played in the larger struggle for freedom: Including and valuing youths' different contributions to the struggle would be of great help in the achievement of democracy.

See Kanafani, "Afkār ʿan al-taghīr wal-lughat al-ʾUmiyaʾ," 156, 143–44, and Wild, *Ghassan Kanafani*, 13. For a reflection, inspired by Kanafani, on how cultural resistance and armed resistance feed into each other, see Hamdi and Brehony, "Role of Revolutionary Intellectuals" and *Ghassan Kanafani: Selected Political Writings*; Harlow, *Resistance Literature*, 3, 11; and Ball, *Palestinian Literature and Film in Postcolonial Feminist Perspective*, 6.

24. Matar and Tawil-Souri, "Producing Palestine," 1.

25. Matar and Tawil-Souri, "Producing Palestine," 6.

26. "Structure of feeling" is the concept through which Raymond Williams described how a set of social changes in a precise historical situation can manifest itself in the attitudes of a given group of people, formally registering as shifts in manners, language, or style. See Williams, *Marxism and Literature*. Jonathan Flatley glosses Williams's concept of "structure of feeling" as "the mediating structure—one just as socially produced as ideology—that facilitates and shapes our affective attachment to different objects in the social order. . . . When certain objects produce a certain set of affects in certain contexts for certain groups of people—that is a structure of feeling." See Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 26. According to Ben Highmore, in his writing on fashion, attending to "structure of feeling" allows us access to the way feelings and tastes are an activity of "worlding" that renders life as this life and not another, and renders time as this time and not another. See Highmore, "Formations of Feelings, Constellations of Things," 146.

27. I am borrowing the expression "fashion from below" from a comment I received from the editorial faculty board at University of California Press (September 2025).

28. Here I am deliberately borrowing from Nadia Yaqub's reflection on Palestinian filmmaking. See Yaqub, *Gaza on Screen*, 2–3.

29. Delice, "Frantz Fanon: Fashion and Decolonization on a Planetary Scale," 165.

30. Annette Weiner in Saad, "Materializing Palestinian Memory," 58, 60.

31. This is the same approach toward history that, according to Tahrir Hamdi, typifies the work of contemporary Palestinian hip-hop artists and dancers. Hamdi, *Imagining Palestine*, 180.

32. De Cesari, "Anticipatory Representation," 155.

33. On the nationalist artistic representations of the Palestinian woman as land, see Filippello and Tynan, "Redressing the Homeland."

34. Heteropatriarchy is integral to any nationalism, including Palestinian. With the creation of the Palestine Liberation Organization in 1964, a politically formalized nationalist movement developed. As with all nationalist movements, the Palestinian was "masculine-based." Put another way, "masculinity was *nationalized*" insofar as the resistance was metaphorized as a masculine endeavor. See Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine," 469. On the other hand, women were iconized in nationalist art and institutional paraphernalia (such as political brochures) as personifications of the land—the Zionist violation of which Palestinian men would have to vindicate—and as bearers of the future liberators. In the nationalist imagination constructed by the ruling administration in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, women are celebrated for being the biological-reproductive pillars of the fight, but the heroic, revolutionary agents remain their husbands and their sons, who are tasked with redressing what Normal Finkelstein has termed Israel's "emasculation of Palestine." See Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, 176. In the Declaration of Palestinian Independence issued by the PLO in 1988, women are congratulated as

mothers, and the First Intifada is invoked as, alternately, a pregnancy and a wedding—that is, in Joseph Massad's words, "the apogee of heterosexual love," which in theory would lead to independence. See Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine," 477. This masculinized and heterosexualized schema has remained the unofficial model of Palestinian nationalist agency.

35. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering in Palestine*, 70–71.

36. Karaman, "Beyond the Lyrics," 50, 56.

37. Farsakh, Kanaaneh, and Seikaly, "Special Issue: Queering Palestine," 11.

38. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering in Palestine*, 113, 121. Following Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj, and Silvia Posocco, "Decolonial queerness entails querying the workings of neo-colonial epistemic categories and taxonomies that classify people." See Bakshi, Jivraj, and Posocco, *Decolonizing Sexualities*, 1. Similarly, Heike Schotten has argued that "queer dissidence is crucial to and intrinsically part of the work of decolonization. . . . Any successful vanquishing of Zionism, any effectively decolonizing movement in Palestine, will necessarily rely upon and further a specifically queer resistance to coloniality, since the abolition of colonialism both requires and entails the destruction of colonial categories, norms, and practices of sex/gender/sexuality." See Schotten, "To Exist Is to Resist," 22.

39. Schotten, "To Exist Is to Resist," 22.

40. Lila Abu-Lughod and Nada Elia, among others, have noted how Palestine has been central to the field of Indigenous studies, which also examines the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples and their struggles for self-determination outside the framework of national liberation. See Abu-Lughod, "Imagining Palestine's Alter-Natives"; and Elia, *Greater Than the Sum of Our Parts*, 135.

41. Bruyneel, *Third Space of Sovereignty*, 218.

42. Using the language of Indigenous sovereignty in the context of Palestine poses a synergic critique toward Israeli state sovereignty and Palestinian state-centered discourses and ambitions to same. The PA conceives of sovereignty as a form of autonomous state governance exerted by the PA itself within the territorial borders established as part of the Oslo accords, and therefore with the approval of the settler colony that continues its expansionism undisturbed; this diplomatically-agreed-upon form of semisovereignty accords power to the PA to the exclusion of Palestinians' actual Indigenous sovereignty. See Rifkin, "Indigeneity, Apartheid, Palestine," 27.

43. Ayyash, "Decolonial Sovereignties in Palestine."

44. As Mark Rifkin put it, the notion of Palestinian indigeneity goes beyond a designation of priorness; it questions the frameworks of legitimacy imposed by the settler state while zooming in on the needs and wants of Indigenous people, thereby indexing a misalignment with and opposition to the terms of state and rights adjudication. See Rifkin, "Indigeneity, Apartheid, Palestine," 28. From an Indigenous-decolonial vantage, the Palestinian struggle is aimed at the decolonization of the entirety of historic Palestine (inasmuch as the whole Palestine is occupied) from below, where "below" indicates concerted modes of fights that are not organized or coordinated within the domain of state-official politics. See Barakat, "Writing/Righting Palestine Studies" 350.

45. Pappé, "Indigeneity as Resistance," 278.

46. Pappé, "Indigeneity as Resistance," 284.

47. Tawil-Souri, "Where Is the Political in Cultural Studies?," 468.

48. Stein and Swedenburg, *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 9.

49. Tawil-Souri, "Where Is the Political in Cultural Studies? In Palestine," 477.

50. On nonlinear ethnographic trajectories in scholarly work in and on Palestine, see also Hammami, "Destabilizing Mastery and the Machine." On the difficulties and dangers posed by Israel to scholars doing ethnographic work in Palestine, see Insaniyyat, "Impossible Ethnography."

51. Abu Hatoum, "Decolonizing [in the] Future," 401–2.

52. Abu Hatoum, "Decolonizing [in the] Future," 402.

53. This statement is inspired by Polly Withers's self-reflection in "Ramallah Ravers and Haifa Hipsters," 95.

54. Ihmoud, "Palestinian Feminism," 285.

55. I borrow this term from Ted Swedenburg, who used it in relation to Palestinian hip-hop culture. See "Palestinian Rap," 22.

56. A third phenomenon that contributed to spawning the emergence of the fashion scene could be considered the rise of neoliberal humanitarianism, encapsulated by social enterprises based on Euro-American models and dependent on foreign capital investment principled on a developmentalist logic that has only enriched the higher strata of civil society. Tariq Dana has exhaustively researched how NGOs came to play an important role in "neoliberalizing" the West Bank, especially Ramallah, after the signing of the Oslo accords. Within the postnationalist framework of the Oslo peace process, local technocrats and the political elites or professionals, who had a network of global investors, started welcoming external donors' investments as a way to increase their own upward mobility. As a result of the entrance of NGOs in the sociopolitical environment of the occupied territories, grassroots political organizing was weakened and even silenced. See Dana, "Structural Transformation of Palestinian Civil Society," 197–99. Lori Allen has further stressed how many young Palestinians shared the sentiment that such NGOs backed up a bureaucratized vision of peace that diverged from their desire for freedom. See Allen, "What's in a Link?"

1. THE QUEER STAGING OF ANTI-APARTHEID FASHION

1. For an analysis of the impossibility of togetherness in light of the "bantustantization" of the Palestinian territories after the Oslo accords, and the obstacles posed by Israel to entering and exiting as well as traveling around the West Bank, see Aouragh, "Confined Offline."

2. On the secrecy of Palestinians online, see Khalili, "Virtual Nation," 126.

3. See Bishara, *Crossing a Line*, 195; and Bishara, "New Media and Political Change in the Occupied Territories," 65, 75. Helga Tawil-Souri and Miriyam Aouragh have defined the ongoing control and frequent jamming of Palestinian internet traffic by Israeli networks in terms of "cyber colonialism." See "Intifada 3.0?," 119. On the impact of the movement of March 15, 2011, on Palestinian media activism, see Mira Nabulsi, "Hungry for Freedom." Hanine Shehadeh has charted how Palestinians have used new media, in the face of digital colonialism, to connect with each other over the past twenty years. See Shehadeh, "Palestine in the Cloud."

4. Makram Khoury-Machool has argued that the sociopolitical conditions of Palestinian youths under occupation led to Palestinians becoming among the largest groups of internet users in the Arab world. See Khoury-Machool, "Palestinian Youth and Political

Activism," 17–18. The Second Intifada favored what Rebecca Stein and Ted Swedenburg have defined as an "interiorization of the social." See Stein and Swedenburg, *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 13. For recent reflective accounts of media usage during the Arab uprisings from the early 2010s, see the special issue of *Media and Communication* titled "Ten Years After the Arab Uprisings: Beyond Media and Liberation," edited by Hanan Badr and Lena-Maria Möller, and the dossier "The Resilient Spring of Arab Cinema, Ten Years After" in *Film Quarterly*, edited by Ruby Rich and Rasha Salti.

5. As Sulafa Zidani has highlighted, Arab youths are continually invested in navigating and negotiating their identities in the face of the tendency within the mainstream media to designate such identities according to hegemonic ideologies. See Zidani, "Not Arabi or Ajnabi."

6. "Emo" describes a music subculture of teenagers and young adults of all genders inspired by punk, but embracing a combination of dark clothes and makeup with a reserved, introspective, and emotionally vulnerable demeanor frequently labeled as "effeminate." Close to 2010, the trend of emos spread across Middle Eastern countries. This style, which originated in the United States, was adapted in the Middle East as a way to semiotically mark one's dissent against conservative values and comportment. It was severely repressed in countries such as Iraq, as it was associated with homosexuality and was therefore considered a threat to national identity. See Rohde, "Gays, Cross-Dressers, and Emos," 440–42.

7. Ladan Rahbari has explored how in the specific context of Iran Instagram has been used by young queer people as a space for visual self-representation and collective rebellion. See "Duffs and Puffs: Queer Fashion in Iranian Cyberspace," 69.

8. As Helga Tawil-Souri's compelling research on the TV industry in Palestine/Israel highlights, in the mid-1990s Palestinians began building their own telecommunications infrastructures to broadcast media in the occupied territories. Over the next ten years, the growing number of Palestinian TV and radio stations in the West Bank led to a competition between those privately owned and those run by the government. See Tawil-Souri, "Global and Local Forces for a Nation-State Yet to Be Born." Lori Allen has also traced back the coming into existence of the Palestinian broadcast media to the Oslo accords, coinciding with the installment of the PA: see Allen, "Martyr Bodies in the Media." On Palestinians' use of digital cameras and their own media production, especially films, in the early 2000s, see Tawil-Souri, "Cinema as the Space to Transgress Palestine's Territorial Trap."

9. As Shukri told me, "Even just a few years ago these artists and musicians were never explicitly associated with queerness, or queer stardom, and that's really how queer Arab culture is: It's very much 'if you know, you know.'" Interview by author, January 13, 2020.

10. Zidani, "Not Arabi or Ajnabi," 3202.

11. Bootlegging in fashion is nothing new; it can be traced to the atelier of Dapper Dan in Harlem in the 1980s, whence it swiftly acquired an important cultural valence in queer contexts, from the inventive DIY self-fashioning going on in the New York underground ballroom scene to Queer Nation in 1990. On self-fashioning and DIY practices in Queer Nation, see Berlant and Freeman, "Queer Nationality."

12. Jacques Rancière has used the term "dissensus" to describe a conflict over the delimitation of the visible and the invisible, the audible and the inaudible, the sayable and the unsayable; put differently, dissent is a dispute over who belongs and who is excluded in the "partition of the sensible" and suggests the necessity to articulate the claims of those

who are left outside of the domain of the nameable. The "partition of the sensible" (or "distribution of the sensible") is a legitimization effected by the ruling order of certain ways of feeling (the "sensible" is precisely what structures common experience), seeing, speaking, behaving, and in general being in the world. According to Rancière, one can intervene in the distribution of the sensible by giving voice and reinscribing in the aesthetic-political field the *dēmos*, or the *people* (i.e., those who are relegated to the perceptual margins of the community and therefore remain with no name, invisible and inaudible). See Rancière, *Politics of Aesthetics*.

13. Bootlegging recurs as the chief fashion insurgent practice of other Palestinian designers as well, including Haifa-based, self-defined "anti-fashion couturier" Hanna Hamam, who retrieves bootlegged Adidas tracksuits and Nike T-shirts, found in large quantity in Palestinian markets, to create genderqueer outfits characterized by bust pads and asymmetric cuts.

14. *i-D* is a British bimonthly fashion magazine, founded independently as a fanzine by art director Terry Jones in 1980 to target fashion subcultures with an edgy, punk, and often queer aesthetic.

15. Berlant, "Thinking About Feeling Historical," 4. On flat affect in the context of fashion photography, see Filippello, "On Queer Neutrality."

16. El-Kurd, *Perfect Victims and the Politics of Appeal*, 77.

17. Allen, "Martyr Bodies in the Media," 161–62.

18. Bayat, *Life as Politics*, 149. Sanjay Atshana has used the idea of "presence" to analyze the digital strategies of participation in the public sphere among Palestinian youths. See Atshana, "Affective Affinities, Embodiment, and the Political."

19. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations*, 6.

20. Craig Larkin has discussed how the Separation Wall has been employed "as both a site of public contention and as a space to be reclaimed through text, image, and discursive narrative. [It] has emerged as a dynamic canvas for multilayered . . . visual art, expressing marginalized voices, political criticism, social protest, and global solidarity." See Larkin, "Jerusalem's Separation Wall and Global Message Board," 135.

21. Appadurai, "The Colonial Backdrop," 4–6.

22. Here I'm attributing to Palestinian fashion image makers the ability to reframe the visual politics of the Separation Wall. On the political role of photography in Palestine/Israel, see Abu Hatoum, "Framing Visual Politics."

23. Brown, "Queering Glamour in Interwar Fashion Photography," 301; and "From Artist's Model to the 'Natural Girl,'" 37.

24. Aouragh, "Everyday Resistance on the Internet," 127.

25. Von Busch, "Engaged Design and the Practice of Fashion Hacking," 163. On "fashion hacking," see also Barry and Drak, "Intersectional Interventions into Queer and Trans Liberation."

26. Interview by author, January 13, 2020.

27. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 151–52.

28. Stuart Hall defined transcoding as "taking an existing meaning and re-appropriating it for new meanings." See Hall, *Representation*, 70. Writing about queer Black fashion designers, Sequoia Barnes has considered transcoding a camp technique that twists racial assumptions and stereotypes; in her words: "Not only [is transcoding] an effort to change

meaning, but [it is also] a very complex way of 'carnivalesquing' a representation of one's identity, i.e., taking what has been assumed and expected of a marginalized identity and subverting it from within the scene of subjection." See Barnes, "Radical Cheek," 234, 253.

29. Muñoz, *Disidentifications*, 31.

30. Hochberg et al., "No Pride in Occupation," 600.

31. Apropos of alQaws, Shukri told me: "It is one of the organizations that we've always admired. We really respect the work they do for queer Palestinians in the West Bank, in Jerusalem, and all over Palestine. They have established a framework and a language for educating others on what it means to identify as both queer and Palestinian and how it might be possible to have your needs met and achieve freedom as queers in a free Palestine." Interview by author, July 2022.

32. Lawrence and Braika, interview by author, June 2020. Shukri's point is further articulated by Jordanian LGBTQ+ digital magazine *MyKali* (2007–). In a story posted in October 2021 on the magazine's Instagram page (@mykali_magazine), its editor stated: "The Palestinian struggle is inherently intersectional: it is a struggle against racism and oppression, displacement and dispossession, genocide and ecocide, apartheid and structural violence, especially against women and queers. These are all products of the same colonial logic that the occupying regime deploys to subjugate Palestinian bodies and sexualities, surveilling, managing and exploiting them to justify its crimes and preserve its dominance."

33. Farsakh, Kanaaneh, and Seikaly, "Introduction: Queering Palestine," 7–10.

34. In the words of Nadje al-Ali and Ghiwa Sayegh, Palestinian queer-feminist movements such as alQaws and Aswat are "rejecting the heteronormative and occasionally homophobic strands of earlier generations of feminists, while simultaneously distancing themselves from a neoliberal identity politics and an LGB activism that is monopolised by gay men." See al-Ali and Sayegh, "Feminist and Queer Perspectives in West Asia," 248. The connection between the occupation and the LGBTQ struggle was first emphasized at the turn of the twenty-first century when, in the wake of the Second Intifada, LGBTQ activist organizations began to problematize the nationalist and assimilationist logic (expressed, for instance, in the fights to end discrimination in the Israeli army and the right to same-sex parenthood) of Israeli gay activism. See Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism." Feminist anti-occupation activist groups, such as Black Laundry, which were located at the margins of the gay struggle, articulated a new political vision based on the conviction that "the oppression of different minorities in the state of Israel feeds on the same racism, chauvinism, and militarism that causes the oppression and dispossession of the Palestinians to continue." See Stein, "Explosive," 530–31. Amalia Ziv argues that it is precisely in the context of the anti-occupation movement that "*queer*, as an identity formation and a politics appeared," and "the emergence of the queer moment . . . needs to be read for the way that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict inflects local identities and politics and at the same time provides a symbolic terrain in which dramas of identity, belonging, and disidentification are played out." See Ziv, "Performative Politics in Israeli Queer Anti-Occupation Activism," 538.

35. Maikey and Stelder, "Dismantling the Pink Door."

36. I borrow the expression "intersectionality of struggles" in relation to Palestine from Sunaina Maira. See Maira, *Jil Oslo*, 174. On "participatory media," see Norman, "Creative Activism," 252–53.

37. Interview by author, July 2022.

38. "Pinkwatching Israel" is an archival and media platform founded in the early 2010s by Palestinian Queers for BDS. On the use of "pinkwatching," see Schulman, "Israel and 'Pinkwashing'"; Maikey and Schotten, "Queers Resisting Zionism"; Puar, "Golden Handcuffs of Gay Rights"; alQaws, "From Pinkwashing to Pinkwatching"; Mikdashi and Puar, "Pinkwatching and Pinkwashing"; Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine"; Maikey and Stelder, "Dismantling the Pink Door"; Alqaisiya, "Decolonial Queering"; and Atshan, *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*.

39. Kelly, "Israeli Gay Tourist Initiatives and the (In)visibility of State Violence," 160.

40. Kelly, "Israeli Gay Tourist Initiatives and the (In)visibility of State Violence," 161.

41. Puar, "Citation and Censorship," 133.

42. Kelly, *Invited to Witness*, 161–62.

43. Schulman, "Israel and 'Pinkwashing.'"

44. As Jasbir Puar aptly observed, "The homonationalist history of Israel illuminates . . . increased mobility for gays and lesbians during the concomitant increased segregation and decreased mobility of Palestinian populations, especially post-Oslo." See Puar, "Citation and Censorship," 97.

45. On the abjection and "disposability" of Palestinian queers, see Ritchie, "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel-Palestine," and Maikey and Stelder, "Dismantling the Pink Door."

46. Interview by author, June 2021.

47. Peteet, "Closure's Temporality," 43.

48. Interview by author, October 2023.

49. The watermelon is a common anti-occupation symbol historically used to stand in for Palestinian flags after Israel banned the public display of the Palestinian flag in the West Bank and Gaza following the Six-Day War of 1967. This is when Palestinian youths came up with the idea of using the watermelon, which when cracked open shows the same colors as the national flag, as an icon that would temporarily replace the Palestinian flag in public demonstrations. As part of the Oslo accords, Israel lifted the ban in 1993, but banners with painted watermelons have continued to surface in protests of solidarity with Palestine.

50. The Separation Wall (or Occupation Wall, or Apartheid Wall) was built in 2004 by the State of Israel as an alleged securitization measure in response to Palestinian suicide bombings during the First Intifada. It encircles and separates the West Bank from what is today considered Israel proper.

51. Weizman, "Politics of Verticality."

52. This is a reference to the iconic "Flower Power" photograph, taken by Bernie Boston in 1967, wherein marchers protesting the Vietnam War placed flowers in soldiers' rifles.

53. In the video, Bashar is subjected to the joint necro-gaze of the military and medical apparatuses. According to Polly Withers, the "panopticon-esque imagery of the co-constitutively racializing military and medical gazes reinforces the notion that systemic subjugation to the prison (whether carceral or clinical) industrial complex inflicts extreme psychic coercion on the colonized." See Withers, "Mediating Queer Masculinities Through Alternative Music from Palestine," 10.

54. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*. On the discursive production of the Arab body as monstrous, terrorist, and queer, see Puar and Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag."

55. Interview by author, June 2021.

56. Hochberg, "'Check Me Out,'" 578.

57. Hochberg, "'Check Me Out,'" 584.

58. The footage, from 2001–2, reveals an infrastructural coherence among the practices of inspection and abuse that Palestinians undergo at checkpoints across the territories: at Beit Sahour, Jerusalem, Gaza, Ramallah, Jenin, al-Khalil, Nablus, Bethlehem, and Qalandiya.

59. Hochberg, "'Check Me Out,'" 588. Rena Hammami has written that the racial operations of violence taking place at the checkpoints are entangled with masculinist gendered dynamics between Israeli and Palestinian bodies. See Hammami, "Destablizing Mastery and the Machine," 94.

60. Daniel Boyarin has argued that Zionism is a gendered hetero-masculinist ideology that is historically pivoted on a commitment to rehabilitating Jewish masculinity from its much denigrated, supposed weakness, emasculation, and even queerness. It ensues that the "New Jew" or "national Jew" who contributed to building and who lives in the State of Israel is considered and celebrated by Israelis as embodying that very redemption of masculinity in the name of a militarized, virile, heteronormative ethics that obfuscates internalized homophobia and anti-Semitism. See Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*.

61. This fashion performance can also be read as an act of protest against what Omar Kholeif describes as the expected Palestinian "stereotypical male oafish, brutish, . . . Mafioso-style masculinity," namely a typification of masculinity that reflects the cult of virility that is central in the Palestinian national imagination. See Kholeif, "Queering Palestine," 159. On hypermasculinity and the fear of demasculinization in the Palestinian national(ist) imagination, see Amireh, "Between Complicity and Subversion."

62. In the last segment of the film, the archival photographs of Palestinian men stripping at checkpoints take us back to the violence routinely experienced by Palestinians. The photos reveal a range of affective responses in the facial expressions or postures of the men being scrutinized: Anger, frustration, sadness, indifference are conveyed through gestures of confrontation. In one of the stills, men theatrically hold their shirts wide open, defiant and empowered, their chins up, as a way of saying "what else do you want to see?!" In another picture men lift their T-shirts up only a few centimeters, while looking down, humiliated and defenseless. Most of the photos are taken from behind; we have a clear view of how the soldiers are gazing at the Palestinian men, with disdain, curiosity, or both. As Gil Hochberg has explained, the "focal transition from the seductive, teasing, fashioned, active body to the scrutinizing gaze of the soldiers highlights the pornographic nature of this armed gaze, revealing how the act of military surveillance that 'identifies' (finds, names, creates, and invents) the terrorist also entails his simultaneous 'perverse' sexualization." See Hochberg, "'Check Me Out,'" 590. The juxtaposition of the fashion show with this sequence of journalistic, archival photographs evinces both a tangible reality, as proven historical evidence, of the bodily dynamic at checkpoints and a reconfiguring of that exchange (in the fashion show) from the perspective of the model who is in charge of, and rearranges, the visual field of the checkpoint encounter.

63. Berda, "Erotics of the Occupation," 13.

64. In *The Right to Maim* Jasbir Puar argues that the self-branding and pinkwashing tactics underpinning homonationalism should be understood as tied to and shoring up

Israel's normalization of securitization policies (such as bodily inspections at checkpoints, enforcement of the permit system, and separation of Israeli highways from Palestinian dismal backroads), policies that are ultimately put into effect in the attempt to stifle Palestinians' bodily agency.

65. My use of "recognition of the other" is inspired by Isabella Hammad's idea of "recognizing the stranger," with which she describes the moment in which, in the encounter between the Palestinian and the Israeli, a shift in perception and knowledge about the other can occur. Hammad is in turn inspired by Aristotle's concept of *anagnórisis*. See Hammad, "Edward W. Said Memorial Lecture: Recognizing the Stranger."

66. The expression "fashion-abilities" was coined by Otto Von Busch in his book *Vistas of Vitality*.

67. Interview by author, June 2021.

68. Stein, "Souvenirs of Conquest," 258.

69. See Rachman, "Miss Universe Contestants Accused of 'Israelising' Palestinian Culture."

70. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations*, 29.

71. Stein, "Souvenirs of Conquest."

72. Stein, "Souvenirs of Conquest," 654–57.

73. Their steady commitment to the environment became more apparent when, in May 2020, they launched a Cyber Fashion Week to give visibility to Middle Eastern fashion designers, who would have otherwise been unable to showcase their collections due to financial difficulties, visa-related restrictions, and lack of industry support, as well as to limit carbon footprint. During this digital fashion week, which ran over six days, each selected designer put together a video presentation with 3D fashion models. For Trashy's presentation, Shukri and Omar had asked their customers to submit, through an app, scans of themselves wearing any pieces they owned from the label: These body scans were then digitally animated by Omar so that the customers eventually became the models in a virtual runway show. They devised this strategy as a way to help their followers connect with each other as well as to break down the distance between themselves, as fashion designers, and their customers: The runway was resignified by Trashy as an anti-elitist space of encounter and community-making.

74. Ankori's writing appears to be widely informed by Said (on "Orientalism"), Bhaba (on "hybridization" and "Third Space"), and Appadurai (on "disjuncture"). See Ankori, *Palestinian Art*, 219.

75. Ankori, *Palestinian Art*, 123–24.

76. On the other hand, Jennifer Kelly has offered an in-depth analysis of how solidarity tourism also functions, in the strategic organizing of the Palestinian tour guides, as a thoroughly studied anticolonial practice through which the tours are structured in a way that reenacts the dynamics of apartheid so the international tourists can experience it firsthand, albeit on the privileged side; in other words, tourists are invited to witness and interrogate the asymmetric lines along which their solidarity movement is mobilized. See Kelly, "Subjection and Performance," 93. At the same time, solidarity tourism pragmatically brings money into militarized Palestinian villages to the benefit of the local families, hence fomenting their resistance. See Kelly, "Asymmetrical Itineraries," 740–41. For a broader discussion of militarism, tourism, and solidarity in Palestine, see Kelly, *Invited to Witness*.

77. Interview by author, June 2023.
78. Stein, *Screen Shots*, 15.
79. Here my reflection is partly informed by Shinko, "This Is Not a Mannequin," 21.
80. Parkins, "Introduction: (Ad)dressing Citizens," 4.

2. AGAINST ECOCIDE: TOWARD AN INDIGENOUS FASHION JUSTICE

1. The JNF, since then, has played two major interrelated roles in Israeli settler colonialism: land acquisition and afforestation. For an overview of the JNF's policies, see Nur Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, 125.

2. This process of Judaization is one that Lorenzo Veracini has called "the indigenization of the settler," namely the execution of the colonial project of cleansing the land of the Palestinian population and replacing it with a settler-only colony. See Veracini, "The Other Shift," 35.

3. Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, 131. On Israel's nationalist "eco-imaginary," see Boast, "'Planted Over the Past.'" On Israeli forestation for tourist purposes, see Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 154–55.

4. Pappé, *Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, 220–21. Nur Masalha has reconstructed how after 1948 the JNF was rebranded as an environmentalist organization. See Masalha, *Palestine Nakba*, 126. In 1959 Israel passed the Nature Preservation Law, aimed at limiting grazing, followed by the establishment of the Green Patrol, which would crack down on herders and persecute foragers of native edible plants and flowers. Israel's then minister of agriculture Ariel Sharon declared *za'atar* (thyme) a protected species, effectively placing a ban, on the grounds of conservation efforts, on the tradition of foraging it, punishable by hefty fines and up to three years in prison. On the crackdown on Palestinian herders, see Salih and Corry, "Displacing the Anthropocene," 389. On foraging policies, see Shipler, "Emptying the Desert," 191. On the operations of the Green Patrol, see Falah, "How Israel Controls the Bedouin in Israel."

5. According to the Israeli nonprofit organization Zochrot, by 2008 at least eighty-six parks had been established on the ruins of depopulated Palestinian villages. See Cook, *Disappearing Palestine*, 40. Based on statistics provided by nonprofit organization for human rights B'Tselem, 380 nature reserves and 115 parks were created by Israel before 2017. For an examination of the B'Tselem data, see Sasa, "Oppressive Pines," 5–6. More recently, in 2020, the JNF declared that since its establishment it has planted 185 million trees, 280 forests, and over 1,000 parks. See Elia, *Greater Than the Sum of Our Parts*, 108. On the extractive practices of Israel following the Oslo accords, see Abdel-Qader and Lee Roberts-Davis, "Toxic Occupation," 30–31. María Beltrán and Giorgos Kallis have drawn attention to how the Oslo negotiations ensured the asymmetric power struggle over water in Palestine/Israel; see Beltrán and Kallis, "How Does Water Flow in Palestine?" On Israel's hydrological hegemony, its systemic war on water, and its impact on climate change in Palestine, see the work of environmental activist Muna Dajani for the Palestinian policy network Al-Shabaka, e.g., "The 'Apolitical' Approach to Palestine's Water Crisis" and "Drying Palestine: Israel's Systemic Water War." On Israel's "ecological imperial" policies, especially concerning the colonization of the water supplies in the West Bank, see Farrier, "Washing Words."

6. Interview by author, May 2022. "Sim Sim" is the pseudonym used, for reasons of privacy, by the artist.

7. Jumana Manna, "Where Nature Ends and Settlements Begin."

8. Sharif, "Vanishing Palestine," 19. Israel's "logic of elimination" was already theorized in the 1970s by Rosemary Sayigh in *The Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*.

9. Stoler, "Imperial Debris," 201. On the Palestinian-Israeli "landscape of enclosure," see Fields, "Landscaping Palestine," 64. D. A. Jaber has argued that Israel's ecocide is a form of political domination that consists of the destruction of a native ecology, a destruction that is necessary for the creation of a fully settler space. See Jaber, "Settler Colonialism and Ecocide." For my understanding of the relationship between settler colonialism and environmental injustice in the context of Palestine/Israel, I am indebted to Joseph Pugliese's *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human*. Ben Lorber has cited the words of Coya White Hat-Artichoker to underscore the transnational links that bind settler environmental colonialism with ecoapartheid: "I see what is happening in Palestine as an indigenous struggle for sovereignty. . . . I see Israel's systemic and intentional destruction and removal of Palestinian lives, homes, and communities as very similar to the destruction of communities, lives, and removal of Native people from their traditional lands." See Lorber and White Hat-Artichoker in Pugliese, *Biopolitics of the More-Than-Human*, 237. On the same topic but beyond Palestine, Kyle Powys Whyte has written: "Settler colonialism can be interpreted as a form of *environmental injustice* that wrongfully interferes with and erases the sociological contexts required for indigenous populations to experience the world as a place infused with responsibilities to humans, nonhumans and ecosystems." See Whyte, "Indigenous Experience, Environmental Justice and Settler Colonialism," 159.

10. Gershon Shafir and Yoav Peled have termed this process "proletarianization of agrarian communities." See Shafir and Peled, *Being Israeli*, 112.

11. Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian has written about the visual and olfactory trauma inflicted on Palestinians in their everyday lives, fittingly coining the expression "occupation of the senses." See Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "Occupation of the Senses." Indeed, in violation of international law, the West Bank has become an illegal dumpsite for Israel's hazardous materials. The PA, technically in charge of administering the West Bank, lacks the jurisdiction to legislate on the matter of waste disposal, insofar as since 1990 Palestinians have been prevented by Israeli officials from constructing waste infrastructures. Taking advantage of this incapacitation, the Israeli military forces do not collect waste in the West Bank. As a result, Palestinians are inundated with waste and the only way they can dispose of it is by incinerating it, with the toxins released by flaming garbage posing a serious threat to their health. In the words of Sophia Stamatopoulou-Robbins, "Palestinians are continually forced to live inundated by wastes and a sense of their own wastefulness, [to the point] that waste and the environment have collapsed to form a single ecology." See Stamatopoulou-Robbins, *Waste Siege*, 11. Contravening the Geneva Conventions, sewage sludge, medical and electronic waste, solvents, and other industrial byproducts are dropped by Israel in dumpsters all over the West Bank. Water networks and rooftop water tanks are deliberately shot and demolished, aquifers are contaminated with sewage, rubble, and remnants of chemical weapons, all of which emit dioxins. As Hannah Boast has articulated, the local hydropolitics are governed by a warfare that annihilates Palestinian infrastructures to consolidate a "water distribution regime" that lets Israelis financially and militarily profit from the intoxication, illnesses, and ultimately death of Palestinians. See Boast, *Hydrofictions*.

12. Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 89

13. Rob Nixon has written about the slow violence caused within advanced capitalism to the ecosystem and about those disempowered communities, mostly poor and in the Global South, that end up being displaced as a result of environmental threats. See Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Deborah McGregor has written about environmental justice within a framework of Indigenous transnational alliances and shared struggles. See McGregor, "Indigenous Environmental Justice." Laura Pulido has reflected on the intimate imbrication of environmental (in)justice and environmental racism, stating that "nonwhites are disproportionately exposed to pollution" and that environmental activists should forefront in their work the role of structural forms of racism in the exacerbation of the inequalities underpinning the attacks on colonized populations. See Pulido, "Rethinking Environmental Racism," 32. Christina Dhillon and Michael Young have defined environmental racism as "the deliberate or intentional siting of hazardous waste sites, landfills, incinerators, and polluting industries in communities inhabited by minorities and/or the poor." See Dhillon and Young, "Environmental Racism and First Nations," 26.

14. Braverman, "Settling Nature," 100. Environmental activists Jesse Benjamin, Sarah Kershnar, and Mich Levy have coined the expression "greenwashing Apartheid" in reference to the JNF's colonial cover-up manoeuvres. See Benjamin et al., "Greenwashing Apartheid."

15. Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape*, 60. W. J. T. Mitchell has aptly interpreted the claimed inability of the occupied to care for their land aesthetically and affectively as the rationale for the West's normalization of land appropriation. See Mitchell, "Imperial Landscape."

16. See Massad, "Conceiving the Masculine."

17. Barakat, "Lifta, the Nakba, and the Museumification of Palestine's History."

18. Atshan, *Queer Palestine*, 16.

19. Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism," 106.

20. On the juxtaposition of the hypersexual, "new" Jewish body and the feminized diasporic Jew, see Glusman, "Longing for Heterosexuality." On the history of the Sabra as the "new Jew," see Oz, *Sabra*. For an extensive examination of the relationship between Jewish nationalism and hypermasculinity, see Mayer, "From Zero to Hero."

21. Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 2–3.

22. Shohat, *On the Arab-Jew, Palestine, and Other Displacements*, 169, 172, 176. For Shohat's further reflections on the Sabra, see also *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, 219–21.

23. Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 8.

24. Kuntsman, "Soldier and the Terrorist," 143.

25. Interview by author, March 2023.

26. Rana Barakat has compellingly explored the history of the ruination and vanishment of Lifta in relation to its memorialization. See "Lifta, the Nakba, and the Museumification of Palestine's History."

27. Interview by author, March 2023.

28. Interview by author, March 2023.

29. For a thorough critical reconstruction of the history of the keffiyeh, see Tynan, "Insurgent Trend," and Swedenburg, "Seeing Double."

30. Interview by author, March 2023.

31. While there are unique differences to how land-based values turn into action according to a nation's history and place-based knowledges, many Indigenous people share

the view that ideas come and cannot be separated from place/land: Learning happens through relations with the land, it is not knowledge that is discovered or created by human beings. For a comprehensive discussion of Indigenous "Place-Thought," see Watts, "Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans."

32. Wilson, "Our Coming In Stories," 3.

33. Ghada Sasa has criticized the European-inspired environmentalism, developing the argument that "biocentrism," the key feature of Israeli environmentalism, implies a dichotomy of nature and humanity according to which only white supremacist, patriarchal, and capitalist aims are to be achieved, excluding the interests of those whose identities, e.g., queer and trans, lie at the borders of humanity. See Sasa, "Oppressive Pines."

34. Povinelli, *Geontologies*, 168.

35. Situated in the eastern part of the West Bank, Jericho has been under Israeli occupation since 1967.

36. Stoler, "On Archiving as Dissensus," 46, 51.

37. Stoler, "On Archiving as Dissensus," 51.

38. Writing about indigeneity in the context of Turtle Island, Qwo-Li Driskill has maintained that queerness and the environment share the value of relationality, and foregrounding their connectedness elicits "a return to and/or a continuance of the complex realities of gender and sexuality that are ever-present in both the human and non-human world, but erased and hidden by colonial cultures." See Driskill, "Stolen from Our Bodies," 56. Jodi Byrd, Alyosha Goldstein, Jodi Melamed, and Chandan Reddy have articulated how dispossession "works in tandem with the production of colonial, racial, gender, and sexual categories that change over time"—that is, as a predatory dynamic that they call "economies of dispossession." See Byrd et al., "Predatory Value," 3–4.

39. Erin Marie Konsmo and Karin Recollet have written that "queerness on the land is also about our relationships to destruction, to imagining our bodies beyond a city/bush divide, to making space for all of creation. Queerness is about living in response to the world that's been created around us, to finding ourselves in spaces like the city dump and meeting our animal kin there." Moreover, for them, "queerness offers a path to embrace non-normative relations that are often abandoned under hetero-patriarchy," hence it should be seen as central to Indigenous environmental justice actions. See Konsmo and Recollet, "Afterword: Meeting the Land(s) Where They Are At," 242, 250.

40. According to Indigenous relational ethics, reciprocal interspecies care is the ontic principle at the core of our beingness (i.e., of our being-together-in-the-world as self-determined yet connected beings). If holding oneself responsible for all entities with which one coexists is a pillar in all Indigenous communities' knowledges, then the disturbance of Indigenous land relations of care, responsibility, and mutuality is one of the main threats posed by settler colonialism through its land grabbing, resource extraction, and overall disablement of land and bodies—namely through forms of environmental injustice. To confront the regime of occupation embodied by the Israeli state, an ethics that foregrounds decolonizing practices rooted in an affective, holistic commitment to Nature (inclusive of human and nonhuman, or more-than-human, beings) and the safekeeping of its material integrity and imaginary should be embraced toward the goal of environmental resistance. Kyle Powys Whyte defines environmental injustice as involving "one society robbing another society of its capacities to experience the world as a place of collective life that its

members feel responsible for maintaining into the future." See Whyte, "Indigenous Experience," 158–59.

41. Payne and Maguire, "Fashion Justice," iv.

42. Fanon, *Wretched of the Earth*, 36.

43. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, 229.

44. Pappé, "Indigeneity as Cultural Resistance," 166, 168.

45. The first stage is the preparation of the raw material, which is either camel or goat hair, or sheep's wool. The colors of the raw wool are separated from each other, then treated through drying, sent to be spun, and converted into threads. The threads are then dyed into bright colors and are finally washed to stabilize the colors.

46. Interview by author, May 2022.

47. Here I am inspired by Audra Simpson's argument that Indigenous sovereignty is not about a reactionary property claim but rather about a form of lived relationality. See Simpson, "Sovereignty of Critique."

48. Jamal Nabulsi, "Reclaiming Palestinian Indigenous Sovereignty," 29–30.

49. Nabulsi, "Reclaiming Palestinian Indigenous Sovereignty," 30–31.

50. Nabulsi, "Reclaiming Palestinian Indigenous Sovereignty," 31.

51. This argument is informed by Aileen Moreton-Robinson's statement that Indigenous ontology is undetachable from being *in* and *of* the land. See Moreton-Robinson, "Incommensurable Sovereignties," 259.

52. Interview by author, March 2023.

53. Historically, Palestinian handwoven fabrics were linen (grown all over Palestine, although at times imported from Egypt) and cotton (grown in the Galilee region), while more expensive fibers such as silk were imported from Syria.

54. For a discussion of Palestinian contemporary understandings of art anchored to a spirit of togetherness, rather than nationalist resistance, see Salih and Richter-Devroe, "Palestine Beyond National Frames."

55. As Nada Elia notably argued, justice must be thought about as "indivisible," in the sense that Palestinian liberation also hinges on the liberation of Palestinian women and queers from the heteropatriarchal shackles that thwart their everyday freedom—shackles that are, according to Elia, symptomatic of the "regressive masculinism" of Palestinian men that results from the physical, psychological, and economic humiliations inflicted on them by Israelis for decades. See Elia, *Greater Than the Sum of Our Parts*, 128, 81.

56. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*.

57. Ann Stoler has coined the cogent expression "imperial debris" to refer to the remnants of Israel's colonial devastation. See Stoler, "Imperial Debris." On the rebirth of grape vines amid ruins in Palestine, see Meneley, "Hope in the Ruins." On the reappearance of poppies in Palestine, see Maira, "Freedom Is a Daily Practice."

58. Bettina Stoetzer has referred to such revamping of flora in Palestine as "ruderal ecology." See Stoetzer, "Ruderal Ecologies." To describe the practice of resoiling as symptomatic of the Israeli mission to annihilate ancestral agricultural knowledges, Anne Meneley has used the expression "epistemicide" (a concept originally formulated by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in *Epistemologies of the South*). See Meneley, "Hope in the Ruins."

59. Braverman evocatively refers to these enmeshments in terms of "more-than-human flows." See Braverman, "Environmental Justice," 3.

60. On alternative sovereignties in Palestine, and specifically food sovereignty, see Bishara, "Sovereignty and Popular Sovereignty." Timothy Seidel, among others, has also invoked the importance of alternative, land-based imaginaries and sovereignties in the context of Palestine/Israel. See Seidel, "Settler Colonialism and Land-Based Struggle in Palestine," 99.

61. The expression "environmental regime" was used by Timothy Luke to describe the ideation of a system of geo-power that operates through "environmentality." See Luke, "On Environmentality," 64.

62. Interview by author, April 2023.

63. Interview by author, April 2023.

64. Dedman, "Politicisation of Palestinian Embroidery Since 1948," 110.

65. Nasser-Khoury and Sue Jones, "'Silk Thread Martyrs,'" 199–200.

66. See Nasser-Khoury, "Let's Not Tatreez."

67. Rachel Dedman and Nour Shantout have explored how liberal nonprofit, nongovernmental organizations were founded in the decades after the Nakba by middle-class women who, thanks to their passports/IDs, could move with ease across Palestine to "help" poor women in need of employment. The NGO-ization and the commodification of the trauma and suffering of Palestinian women enabled a shift of Palestinian crafts-making from a peasant culture into a neoliberal economy—a shift that depoliticized the Palestinian struggle for justice and framed it as a humanitarian cause. See Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 32; and Shantout, *Searching for the New Dress*.

68. The richest and most creatively generative period of dressmaking and embroidery, according to Palestinian dress collector Widad Kawar, lasted from the late nineteenth century until the end of the British Mandate. Up until that time each Palestinian village had its own pattern arrangement, which was taught and preserved across generations and which would signify social status, regional origin, and religious affiliation. See Kawar, *Threads of Identity*. The clothing industry in Palestine was established in the late 1920s, when wealthy Jewish immigrants of Austrian and German descent arrived in Palestine (especially as a result of the Nazis' rise to power in Germany) and set up the first textile plants. As a result of the British mandate following World War I, numerous textile factories were set up in cooperation with Jewish government agencies to supply the demand of the British army for underwear, socks, and textiles for equipment like tents. In the aftermath of World War II, the local textile industry reached particular success as European buyers started going to Tel Aviv to buy from the same manufacturers from whom they had been accustomed to buying in Austria and Germany before the war. See Rooijakkers, "Palestinian Scarves and Flag Dresses." On the history of Palestinian dressmaking, see also Weir, *Palestinian Costume*, and Saca, *Embroidering Identities*.

69. Hovsepian, *Sewing Other People's Clothes*, 44–45, 58. On Israel's exploitation of Palestinian garment workers since the 1970s, see also Hovsepian, "Israeli Fashion and Palestinian Labor During the Intifada." As Edward Said wrote, Israel has been historically responsible for "the alienated labor of the Palestinians," whose work is "done by people who have little control of either the product of their labor or their own laboring capacity." See Said, *After the Last Sky*, 93.

70. Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 24–25.

71. Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 39–41.

72. Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 97–98.

73. Sherwell, "Palestinian Costume," 302; and Rooijakkers and Vogelsang-Eastwood, "Palestinian Embroidery," 191–92.

74. Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 49.

75. Saad, "Materializing Palestinian Memory," 57–58.

76. De Cesari, "Heritage Between Resistance and Government in Palestine," 747.

77. On Palestinian sartorial heritage and the relationship between gender, nation, and embroidery in the Palestinian national imagination, see Moors, "Embodying the Nation."

78. Interview by author, April 2022.

79. Berlant, "Thinking About Feeling Historical," 5.

80. Sheehi, "Forging Revolutionary Objects," 158–59.

81. Sheehi, "Forging Revolutionary Objects," 157–58.

82. Interview by author, April 2022.

83. Interview by author, April 2023.

84. Interview by author, March 2023.

85. Nabulsi, "Reclaiming Palestinian Indigenous Sovereignty," 34.

86. Interview by author, March 2023.

87. Von Busch, *Vistas of Vitality*.

88. For an in-depth discussion of "environmental imaginaries" in Palestine/Israel, see McKee, "Performing Rootedness in the Negev/Naqab."

3. STEALTH AND FUGITIVITY IN JENIN AND UMM AL-FAHM

1. Lori Allen has explored the visual politics of commemoration in Palestine during the Second Intifada, bringing to light how suffering—typically in the form of memorialization of martyred youths—came to be, albeit in different forms in local and international media, the dominant idiom of representation of Palestinians. See Allen, "Martyr Bodies in the Media."

2. Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, in his study of the visual representation of martyrdom in Palestine, has traced the phenomenon back to the beginning of the Second Intifada, when suicide operations began. He poignantly theorizes the postering of martyrdom as a form of archaeology practiced collectively by Palestinians (friends and family of the dead as well as political parties)—a way to represent themselves as brave, revolutionary heroes as opposed to terrorists or desperate victims, as per the conventions of Israeli and Western media. See Abu Hashhash, "On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine."

3. The cofounders go by the nicknames of Israr (persistence) and Sumud (steadfastness). In order to respect their privacy as well as their devotion to the nonindividualizing dimension of their project, their real names are not mentioned. Interview by author, March 2022.

4. Twelve Palestinians were killed, and approximately three thousand residents, already refugees, were further displaced. The 2002 invasion was made possible by the weakness of a Palestinian leadership that, while liaising with Israel toward the achievement of statehood, was largely perceived as corrupt and was unable to either arrest the expansion of settlements or protect the Jenin residents. See Baroud, *Searching Jenin*, 23. These residents, as Muhannad Ayyash succinctly explained, were ignored by the media, isolated from the rest of the West Bank and their 1948 homelands, and disregarded by the PA in their

aspirations for freedom. See Ayyash, "Let's Talk About Jenin." The 2002 crackdown on Jenin was a concerted effort on the part of Israeli military forces and media to vandalize and destroy Palestinian records in government buildings and hospitals while televising scenes of the Palestinian resistance with voice-over and captions labeling these as deliberate violence. See Baroud, *Searching Jenin*, 20–21. During the Second Intifada and continuing until today, Jenin has witnessed an escalation of violence emanating from the intensification of Israel's alleged counterterrorist measures, in parallel with the attacks on Gaza between 2008 and 2023, as testified by the shooting and killing in 2022 of Al Jazeera's prominent Palestinian American reporter Shireen Abu Akleh as she was covering a raid on Jenin. In April/May 2022, Jenin endured one of the worst military raids on occupied Palestine in twenty years. A year later (April 4, 2023), one thousand Israeli military troops, backed by hundreds of tanks, stormed the Jenin camp with tear gas while homes and public infrastructures were destroyed with the aid of drone missiles fired from unmanned helicopters.

5. These militant factions rapidly multiplied: They are decentralized and grassroots-led, and they relentlessly operate within a collective mood of dissatisfaction and anger with regard to local political parties and the international community. Many of the fighters defending the camp today were children during the traumatizing events of 2002 and grew up under a claustrophobic siege. Since 2022 the emergence of the Jenin branches (such as the Jenin Brigades) of the Lions' Den, with their sophisticated structure and deployment on the ground, have achieved acclaim and support among the residents. See Rabbani, "Jenin." In the face of the PA and UN's complicity with Israel, these young fighters have devised new organizing tactics for mobilization purposes through social media platforms like Telegram.

6. The denomination "wasps' nest of terrorism" (or "hornets' nest") has been used by Israeli official media for about twenty years to refer to the refugee camp located in Jenin. The expression was reclaimed by local residents in 2021 during the Israeli invasion following the Gilboa prison break and was further popularized after the targeted killing of Shireen Abu Akleh.

7. Their fabrics, mostly cotton, come primarily from Turkey due to the cost of sourcing natural fabrics in Palestine, and they are conceptualized, designed, and handmade across Palestine thanks to their network of fellow fashion creatives.

8. Given that since the early 2000s both Israeli and Western media have defined the Jenin camp as a "wasps' nest" (i.e., a "hotbed of militants," "a factory of terrorists who unleash wanton, mindless violence on unsuspecting Israelis" [Ayyash, "Let's Talk About Jenin"]), said militants have reclaimed their identity as wasps, building on the metaphor to organize on all levels—geographical, political, and, aesthetic—as flying insects capable of traveling virtually everywhere, watching every movement of the adversary, sensing their arrival, and masquerading themselves to elude capture and dissimulate their individual identities in the camps' narrow alleys.

9. Interview by author, March 2023.

10. On the "knockoff economy" and its potential for creative innovation, see Raustiala and Sprigman, *Knockoff Economy*. Regarding the ethics of what constitutes a "copy" and what is "creativity" as well as the role of social media in monitoring the circulation of knockoff fashion, see Pham, *Why We Can't Have Nice Things*.

11. Marks, *Hanan al-Cinema*, 1. See also Marks, "Arabic Glitch," and Marks in Sakr, "Arabic Glitch," 7.

12. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 119.

13. Interview by author, March 2023.

14. Sarkar, "Media Piracy and the Terrorist Boogeyman," 344–45.

15. Sarkar, "Media Piracy and the Terrorist Boogeyman," 356.

16. Stein and Swedenburg, *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, 10.

17. Flatley, "How a Revolutionary Counter-Mood Is Made."

18. Kawar, *Threads of Identity*, 25.

19. Weir, *Palestinian Costume*, 43.

20. Munayyer, *Traditional Palestinian Costume*, 90.

21. Munayyer, *Traditional Palestinian Costume*, 97.

22. Due to high taxes imposed across the West Bank, Jenin residents lack the money to buy "legal" cars. Vespas are easy for locals to obtain and/or put together. They are technically illegal as they don't have license plates. They are never new; they are used and/or reassembled.

23. In 2016 the Palestinian Council of Ministers declared it the national flower of Palestine.

24. See Braverman, "Environmental justice," 3.

25. My understanding of "visual sovereignty" owes much to the work of Jolene Rickard on artistic, sensory practices of sovereignty visualization among native people in Turtle Island. See Rickard, "Art, Visual Sovereignty, and Pushing Perceptions," and "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors."

26. Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*, 3.

27. Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*, 6. Legacy Russell has theorized "glitch infrastructure" as a queer-feminist collective practice of resistance qua refusal. See Russell, *Glitch Feminism*.

28. The bird was first discovered in Palestine in 1865 and was classified in field guides for Middle Eastern birds. It was acknowledged by the International Council for the protection of birds, and in 2015 the Palestinian Council of Ministers ratified it as a national Palestinian bird.

29. In the book of Deuteronomy (fifth tome of the Torah), chapter 5, the antelope is listed as one of the purely Jewish animals.

30. Johnson, *Companions in Conflict*, 203.

31. I owe my understanding of queer Indigenous relationality to Qwo-Li Driskill. See Driskill, "Stolen from Our Bodies."

32. Their gender and sexual self-identifications are not disclosed for reasons of privacy, nor are they specifically relevant to the articulation of the concept of *queer stealth*.

33. On the politics of "data bodies" in the MENA region, see Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*.

34. As Arturo Escobar has suggested, in settler colonial contexts decolonial aesthetics take the form of creative practices that might envisage what he calls "worlds otherwise." See Escobar, "Worlds and Knowledges Otherwise," 179.

35. This argument resonates with Gayatri Gopinath's reflections on queer opacity, which she understands as a claim for "the 'right' not to be known, to not be rendered transparent . . . if transparency, surveillance, regulation, and fixing are all strategies of colonial and racial domination." See Gopinath et al., "Queer of Color Critique in a Moment of Danger," 328.

36. See Atshan, *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*; Alqaisiya, "Palestine and the Will to Theorise Decolonial Queering"; Farsakh, Kanaaneh, and Seikaly, "Introduction: Queering Palestine"; Maikey and Stelder, "Dismantling the Pink Door in the Apartheid Wall."

37. In her work on military uniforms and how they have historically encoded imperial-colonial meanings, Jane Tynan also acknowledges how guerrilla fighters throughout history have used uniforms to weave local symbols through which "to improvise a uniform that mixed conformity with creativity," thereby opening up such dress code to transformation. See Tynan, "Images of Insurgency," 223, 228.

38. Martineau and Ritskes, "Fugitive Indigeneity," v.

39. Interview by author, March 2023.

40. Smilges, *On Queer Silence*, 27.

41. There are many autonomous and anonymous entities that use Telegram as a space wherein to report accurate news from the ground with a (relative) sense of safety. Two channels that are assiduously followed by Dababeer are Taqadomi (exclusively in Arabic and currently searchable on Instagram @taqadomi.ps10), a name that is regularly changed by its administrators to avoid being shut down by Israeli cybersurveillance (in fact, their profile descriptions reads, in its English translation: "After having canceled 10 accounts with over one quarter of a million followers . . ."); and Eye on Palestine (@eye.on.palestine), an account in both Arabic and English (with several backups, e.g., @eye.on.palestine2), also reporting from and on Palestine. An example of a Telegram message issued by Taqadomi on private channels is the broadcasting of the following announcement (here translated in English) by the Lions' Den on April 4, 2023: "The group of Aren al-Aswad calls on our people everywhere to mobilize and travel to the blessed al-Aqsa Mosque and to confront the calls of the settlers to storm our mosque. We tell the occupier that any folly you will commit in al-Aqsa Mosque, you or the youngest settler in your country will pay. And we will see who will besiege whom. [Signed] Your brothers, the Lions' Den Group."

42. El-Ariss, *Leaks, Hacks, and Scandals*, 32, 35.

43. Al-Rawi et al., "Delegitimizing the Legitimate," 29. Telegram also functions through a network of decentralized companies, thereby defying state regulation and restrictions on data privacy. See Akbari and Gabdulhakov, "Platform Surveillance and Resistance in Iran and Russia," 223.

44. Wijermars and Lokot, "Is Telegram a 'Harbinger of Freedom'?," 25.

45. In the specific case of Palestine, the activist use of Telegram can be framed within the cyberactivism that was shaped by the "Arab techno-global uprising" of the early 2010s. See Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*, 4.

46. This perception of media being "everything" echoes Indigenous understandings of media and reminds me of David Norman's assertion that "the camera is an Inuit medium. . . . Any medium Inuit employ, in any manner, becomes an Inuit medium when it becomes a vessel for Inuit expression and experience." See Norman, "Control Mapping," 49.

47. Bishara, *Crossing a Line*, 178, 188–89. Bishara makes the persuasive case that social media allow Palestinians to forge counterpublics, especially in light of their structural and systematic erasure from the Israeli and Western public sphere as well as their marginalization from mainstream, PA-regulated, Palestinian TV and newspapers.

48. Ahmed, *Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 93.

49. Interview by author, March 2022.

50. Interview by author, June 2022.

51. Interview by author, June 2022.

52. On psychic violence under occupation, see Sheehi and Sheehi, *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, 10.

53. Interview by author, June 2022.

54. "Disentanglement" is a metaphor that Roland Barthes, linking texts to textiles, invoked as a hermeneutic of deciphering. See Barthes, *Death of the Author*. Also, in *S/Z* Barthes utilizes metaphors of textiles to describe the structural properties of literary texts.

55. Azoulay, *Résistance des Bijoux*, 14.

56. Bruno, "Pleats of Matter, Folds of the Soul," 218, emphasis in original.

57. Marks, "Thinking Like a Carpet," 47–48.

58. Marks, "Thinking Like a Carpet," 53.

59. Interview by author, June 2022.

60. Seely, "How Do You Dress a Body Without Organs?," 261–62.

61. Through a playful register, Hazar's fashion assemblages might look and feel queer in light of the queer relational attachments that the colors and the distorted, untailored body shapes might invite; in other words, her work can be perceived as queer insofar as its distinct textural elements and properties spark a queer aesthetic sensitivity, or "curiosity." Renu Bora, probably inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's understanding of texture as the register of sensation where the force of desire compels us to become attentive, has written that texture invites "queer curiosity." See Bora, "Outing Texture," 95, and Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*.

62. I am hereby inspired by the notion of "texture games," which Rasmus Simonsen, influenced by Sedgwick and Wittgenstein, developed to reflect on material storytelling with regard to both language and clothes. See Simonsen, "Reconsidering Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick."

63. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 25.

64. Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 44. For a reflection on "multitude" and "people" with regard to political economy in Palestine/Israel, see Fischer, "Changing Palestine-Israel Ecologies."

65. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, xxiii.

66. Gramsci theorized "common sense" as the set of heterogeneous beliefs embraced by people as preexisting, self-evident truths. On this concept, see Crehan, *Gramsci's Common Sense*. In my understanding of infrastructure in relation to affect and "common sense," I am inspired by Lauren Berlant; see Berlant, "The Commons: Infrastructures for Troubling Times."

67. Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 190. For a queer compelling reading of Glissant's opacity, see Gopinath et al., "Queer of Color Critique in a Moment of Danger," 333.

68. For a discussion of how Israel uses sexual coercion, see Weiss, "Israel Surveils and Blackmails Gay Palestinians to Make Them Informants"; and alQaws, "alQaws Statement re: Media Response to Israel's Blackmailing of Gay Palestinians."

69. Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al., "Secret Penetrabilities," 275.

70. Shalhoub-Kevorkian et al., "Secret Penetrabilities," 266–69.

71. Shalhoub-Kevorkian, "At the Limits of the Human," 2252.

72. Ndlovu-Gatsheni, *Epistemic Freedom in Africa*, 131. For my understanding of (counter)humiliation and (counter)penetration in the context of Israeli settler colonialism, I am indebted to the work of Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian. Lara and Stephen Sheehi have defined Israel's practices of psychic debilitation as a "regime of psychological foreclosures." They wrote that Palestinians, through political, social, and psychological work, "continually strive to generate an 'imagination' to Palestinian political thought and social practices. In the language of Palestinians, the foreclosures that have been imposed by Israelis (and to

some degree the cronyism and authoritarianism of the Palestinian Authority) are resisted consciously and unconsciously through the political theory and practice of *sumud* (stalwartness)." See Sheehi and Sheehi, *Psychoanalysis Under Occupation*, 10.

73. Dedman, *Labour of Love*, 51.

74. On textile steganography, see Kuchera, "Weavers and Their Information Webs."

75. Findlay, "Sartorial Misdirection."

76. Archer, "Security Blankets," 186.

77. Jessica Lingel has written compellingly about "dazzle camouflage" as a strategy of counterconduct versus regimes of surveillance. While she focuses on more maximalist aesthetics and zooms in on queer tactics of "counterconduct," this reflection resonates with mine in regard to how in/visibility can be mobilized to form networks, or assemblages, of resisting bodies. See Lingel, "Dazzle Camouflage as Queer Counterconduct."

78. Berlant coined the expression "glitchfrastructures" in *On the Inconvenience of Other People*, 81.

79. On "imperial visuality," see Nicholas Mirzoeff, "Right to Look."

80. Toni Pape has theorized stealth as a tactical practice of imperceptibility. In his account, the main goal of stealth is to act efficiently while remaining imperceptible. See Pape, *Aesthetics of Stealth*.

81. Abu Hatoum and Assali, "Attending to the Fugitive," 140. In theorizing visual resistance in Palestine, Abu Hatoum and Assali draw from the work of Jolene Rickard on Indigenous visual sovereignty; see Rickard, "Visualizing Sovereignty in the Time of Biometric Sensors."

4. SLOW FASHION: THE POLITICS OF TIME AND LABOR IN GAZA

1. The Palestine pound was the currency under the British Mandate and during the first four years following the foundation of the State of Israel, that is, until 1952, when it was replaced by the Israeli lira, the Jordanian dinar, and the Egyptian pound. Then, when Israel captured the West Bank and Gaza Strip during the 1967 Naksa, a series of orders were issued to implement the lira in the occupied region. The process of currency substitution has been called the "shekelization" process. See Merrino, "Currency and Settler Colonialism," 1734, 1746.

2. Salma holds a Palestinian ID; however, she can visit her family and coworkers in Gaza only if and when she is granted permission from Israel, something that applies to all Gazans.

3. Whereas there are only (at the moment of writing) two garment factories in Gaza to have survived Israel's onslaughts, there are many more workshops, though they are impossible to number because most of them are based in homes.

4. "Thanato-geographies" is an expression coined by Mark Griffiths. See Griffiths, "Thanato-geographies of Palestine," 1643. The siege, which has led to the incarceration and near starvation of two million people, was imposed by Israel following the Second Intifada and the takeover of the Gaza Strip by Hamas in 2007.

5. Interview by author, March 2022.

6. The periodic military attacks carried out by the Israeli military in 2002 (dubbed Operation Defensive Shield); 2004 (Operation Days of Penitence, also known as Operation

Rainbow); 2006 (Operation Summer Rains and Operation Autumn Cloud); 2008–9 (Operation Cast Lead); 2012 (Operation Pillar of Defense); 2014 (Operation Protective Edge, or Operation Hot Winter); and 2021 (following the protests against the decision of the Supreme Court of Israel to evict Palestinian families from Sheikh Jarrah) amount to yet-to-be persecuted war crimes. All of these Israeli military operations included the indiscriminate maiming and killing of dozens, hundreds, or even thousands (as in the case of Cast Lead and Protective Edge) of Palestinians; the unjustified military detention of civilians; the blocking of and frequent attacks on aid convoys; the demolition of homes, shelters, schools, mosques, and hospitals; the firing of white phosphorus munitions; and different forms of physical and psychological torture. Indeed, such crimes violated international humanitarian law, were condemned by the UN and human rights organizations, and led to massive popular solidarity with Gaza, especially from the Global South, yet no sanctions were imposed on Israel. Nimer Sultany has written about the cyclical repetition of the wars on Gaza and Israel's ambition to render Gaza fully "unsustainable." See Sultany, "Repetition," 204.

7. As a result of the Six-Day War, Israel seized and then occupied the Golan Heights from Syria; the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, from Jordan; and the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Between 1967 and 2005 Israel maintained settlements within the Gaza Strip; however, when the Oslo Accords II of 1995 ratified that Israel remove its troops from the territory, a process of "disengagement" began and immediately took a sinister turn: the demolishing of Jewish settlements, the evacuation of settlers, and the withdrawal of soldiers gave way to tactics of containment, such as the closure of borders, the erection of watchtowers and an eighty-five-kilometer-long fence, and control over Gazan telecommunications, all of which ultimately shattered Gaza's infrastructures. For a discussion of Israel's process of disengagement and its impact on Gaza, see Li, "Gaza Strip as Laboratory." For an analysis of different tactics of containment, see Finkelstein, *Gaza: An Inquest into Its Martyrdom*; Fields, "Landscaping Palestine"; and Salamanca et al., "Past Is Present."

8. I hereby use "Gazan(s)" for convenience; however, since the residents of Gaza are refugees who came from all parts of Palestine, it would be more accurate to refer to them as "Palestinians in Gaza." During the Arab-Israeli war of 1948, approximately 250,000 refugees arrived in Gaza (where there was already a population of 80,000) and gathered in eight refugee camps. Pierre Filiu and Jehad Abusalim explained that before 1948, during the four centuries of Ottoman rule and then under the British Mandate, Gaza was a district that extended to a much broader region, which included the Naqab and north Sinai. In fact, the Gaza "Strip" (Qitaʾ) as a territorial entity was born out of the Nakba. "Gaza Strip" is a denomination that was used for the first time by Egyptian president Muhammad Najib in 1954, when Gaza fell under Egyptian administration. See Filiu, *Gaza: A History*, 79; and Abusalim, "Palestine in Tahrir," 88. On the history of the "Gaza Strip" see Finkelstein, *Gaza*.

9. Muhanna, *Agency and Gender in Gaza*, 9–10. On the reconfiguration of the socioeconomic structure of Gaza in the aftermath of the 1967 Israeli occupation, see Haj, "Palestinian Women and Patriarchal Relations."

10. On unpaid female workers in the garment manufacturing sector, see Rosenfeld, "Power Structure, Agency, and Family in a Palestinian Refugee Camp."

11. The garment sector of the economy in Gaza employed thirty thousand workers and generated sales of $8 million to $10 million per month prior to 2005. According to the

Palestine Trade Center, the garment sector was the largest sector in Gaza and the third largest in the West Bank by the year 2000. See Palestine Trade Center, "Fact Sheet," 1–2.

12. Muhanna, *Agency and Gender in Gaza*, 3–8. In the early 1990s, while still exploiting Palestinian workers for hard manual labor, Israel had already rectified its unofficial policy of relying almost exclusively on Palestinian labor by employing temporary migrant workers from other countries with the prospect of slowly replacing Palestinians. Later in the 2000s, when Israel formally disengaged from Gaza, it maintained its control on it by administering its trade, water, electricity, fuel, and medical supplies, as well as by managing the issuance of permits and identity cards. Air and maritime space are also unremittingly overseen, the latter by Egypt. Thus, disengagement did not mean full military withdrawal, because regular military incursions, surveillance through drones, CCTV cameras, and biometric profiling, among other techniques, continued with the aim of debilitating Gazans by inculcating in them constant fear.

13. The "de-development"—to use an expression by Sara Roy—of the Gazan textile industry was one of the "tactics of containment" that brought Gaza's infrastructures to the verge of collapse. De-development is a process described by Roy as the erosion of Gaza's internal economic base. See Roy, "Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-development," 56.

14. As the Forensic Architecture team at Goldsmiths, University of London, brought to light, Gazan farmers living along the borders are prohibited from growing crops over one meter high in order to ensure visibility for Israeli military operations, namely to create what Shourideh Molavi has called a "sovereign cartographic gaze." A sovereign scopic field is operationalized by the aerial spraying of crop-killing herbicides: a form of chemical and biological extermination. See Molavi, *Environmental Warfare in Gaza*, 52–54. Environmental degradation of this kind is instrumental to the racializing necropolitical project of land/human annihilation as well as to the concretization of what Safa Joudeh has called "Gaza's infinite dislocation." See Joudeh, "Defying Exception," 75. Molavi and Weizman have historicized how agricultural areas where produce such as citrus, onion, grapes, watermelon, almonds, olives, and vegetables were cultivated were either bulldozed, alongside trees, wells, and irrigation systems, or made inaccessible to farmers, with devastating impact on the livelihood of the local population. Until the Israeli occupation, Gaza was rich with orange groves and fruit orchards. The area has now been desertified and turned into a buffer zone. See Molavi, *Environmental Warfare in Gaza*, 18, 52–54.

15. These campaigns were declared "terrorist" by the Israeli Ministry of Defense in 2021. See Molavi, *Environmental Warfare in Gaza*, 40.

16. Darryl Li has studied how the vacant space of the "buffer zones" is used by the Israeli military to both consolidate the enclavization barriers and to deliberately destroy properties and shoot at Palestinians who enter them. In the aftermath of Israel's disengagement from the Gaza Strip in 2005, these buffer zones, which Li calls "free fire areas," were set up to kill more Gazans as well as to further restrict movement. See Li, "Gaza Strip as Laboratory," 45.

17. On the Great March of Return and its potential impact on a post-Oslo vision for the Palestinian struggle, see Baconi, "Gaza Strip: Humanitarian Crisis and Lost Statehood," 70–71.

18. ANAT, which has over eleven thousand Instagram followers under the handle @anat.international, has created an Instagram grid equipped with a variety of visual content advocating for justice. @anat.international is frenetically active on social media,

crosspollinating platforms by, for example, exporting and uploading TikTok videos on Instagram.

19. The Israeli attacks on and debilitation of ICT infrastructure can be read as tactics of mobility impairment—a form of cyber-disablement as collective punishment. Miriyam Aouragh has used the term "cybercide" to refer to this digital-colonial phenomenon. See Aouragh, "Revolutionary Maneuverings," 2129. Helga Tawil-Souri has traced how Israel's strict control over both electricity and broadband in the Gaza Strip in 2012 served as a "military playground, a testing ground, a laboratory, an open-air prison in which Gazans are treated as guinea pigs" to experiment with Israeli war technologies. See Dawes, "Digital Occupation of Gaza," 5.

20. Interview by author, April 2022.

21. Interview by author, April 2022.

22. Given the infrastructural foreclosures of social and political life for Gazans as well as the ongoing shrinking of their geographical space, digital technologies enable them to violate such restrictions and facilitate mobility in their everyday lives through cross-border alliances that solidify feelings of kinship that stretch beyond national(ist) frames. Miriyam Aouragh has written extensively about how the internet has recalibrated the meaning of "mobility" for Palestinians by allowing them to overcome isolation, with the important caveat that the digital is nevertheless defined by its intrinsic materiality as well as by the physical life conditions of its users. See Aouragh, "Confined Offline," 375.

23. Edward Said hinted at something similar to self-commodification when he wrote about "the Palestinians as commodity," namely about how Palestinians "produce themselves" like "the masabih, lamps, tapestries, baskets, embroideries, mother-of-pearl trinkets," hence turning themselves "into objects not for sale, but for scrutiny." See Said, *After the Last Sky*, 33. He wondered about the ambivalent complexity of accumulating proof of their past existence to make their present less precarious, and was cautious about the risks of generating a visual archive that could reproduce tropes and motifs that relegate Palestinianness to a far-gone past.

24. Matar calls "image normalization" the set of discursive and visual practices that cements a hegemonic representational regime whereby the "Other" is seen and known in ways that are convenient to the ideology of the oppressor. See Matar, "Gaza: Image Normalization," 173. On the refusal of commodification and the neoliberal visual economy of humanitarianism in Palestine, see Vadasaria, "Sensory Politics of Return."

25. In her ethnographic work on the evolution of Palestinian gender relations, Aitemad Muhanna has found that after the Second Intifada men became particularly hesitant about working alongside women due to the fear of being socially perceived as uninvolved in public resistance activities. Their visible participation in the resistance was, in fact, a signifier of their masculinity. Such an embodied perception of masculinity also served a practical goal: that of maintaining a patriarchal "moral" order that feeds the process and narrative of the Palestinian nationalist resistance. Indeed, when men abide by the expectation to take on the role of resistance fighters and women remain in the domestic space to do primarily reproductive and care work, the traditional moral and ideological (patriarchal) order of Palestinian nationalism is strengthened; this happens in the face of the Israeli threat to disassemble the Palestinian social fabric and kinship. See Muhanna, *Agency and Gender in Gaza*, 129–30.

26. Interview by author, April 2022.

27. The fashion images posted by ANAT as part of its digital collage on Instagram articulate different ways of self-presentation and gender expression. For example, in a post from January 5, 2021, one of the models in the photo is sporting a denim jacket featuring national symbols, such as the Palestinian flag in the silhouette of its borders and trimmed with black-and-white knots that evoke the keffiyeh; this is strategically placed alongside a boldened post in which the text reads "embroidery has no gender." Moreover, carefully selected terms such as "gender-neutral" or "unisex" in the captions could be classified as encrypted or encrypting text working as a tactic of sly troublemaking—an undiluted message plotted with great cunning.

28. Mirzoeff, "Right to Look," 7.

29. Atshan, *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*, 10. Oren Yiftachel defined "ethnocracy" as a political regime that facilitates the control over a territory and people by a dominant ethnicity, and argued that its most striking historical manifestation in Palestine/Israel is the State of Israel's project of "Judaization" of historic Palestine. See Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy*.

30. Parkins, "Texturing Visibility," 71.

31. Parkins, "Texturing Visibility," 70.

32. I borrow the expression "future in suspension" from Sherene Seikaly. See Seikaly, "Matter of Time," 1684.

33. Abu Hatoum, "Decolonizing [in the] Future," 398. Cathrine Brun has written that "protracted displacement," which takes the form of an endless waiting for Gazans, should be reframed as active and fluid, insofar as waiting allows Palestinians to develop relations that bolster the collective hope for return and freedom. See Brun, "Active Waiting and Changing Hopes." On "practices of waiting" in the experience of women in the West Bank, see Wick, "Practice of Waiting Under Closure in Palestine."

34. Tabar, "Indigenous Anticolonial." Helga Tawil-Souri has used the expression "checkpoint time" to define the mechanisms through which the temporality of the occupation overlaps or blends with its spatialization. See Tawil-Souri, "Checkpoint Time."

35. Tabar, "Indigenous Anticolonial."

36. Tabar, "Indigenous Anticolonial."

37. Marianne Hirsch has come up with the concept of "postmemory" to describe how the offspring of families who have experienced mass atrocity develop an intimate relationship with the memory of such an event, which they have not directly experienced. In the case of Palestine, this refers to how the collective trauma of the Nakba is inherited by the descendants of those families originally expelled in 1948 and how such trauma manifests itself in the form of postmemorial nostalgia. See Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*; and Hirsch, *Family Frames*. Kristine Sheets has conducted a poignant analysis of how postmemory, in the form of a "grief-induced nostalgic gaze," plays out in the making of *tatreez* among young Palestinian artists in the diaspora. See Sheets, "Embroidered Memories," 384.

38. For a discussion of Fanon's understanding of nostalgia, see Georgis, *Better Story*, 73–74.

39. Informed by Hirsch's work on postmemory, Neda Maghbouleh has underlined how historical memory always bears with it an imaginative property that informs feelings of nostalgia. See Maghbouleh, "'Inherited Nostalgia.'" In an interview from July 2023 in the

Middle East Research and Information Project, Palestinian author and prisoner Walid Daqqa argued against romanticizing the Palestine of the past. He said: "When Palestine becomes romantic, the Right of Return becomes utopian, and this romanticization of return distances us from return itself. I want to return to the Palestine of the future, in which the collective national identity must mirror the geography of the entire homeland." Quoted in El-Kurd, *Perfect Victims*, 196.

40. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xvi.

41. My use of the expression "pragmatic optimism" is rooted in the work that Antonio Gramsci and Walter Benjamin produced while they were, respectively, in prison and in exile. Gramsci notably used the formula "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will" to describe a view of the world stripped of illusion and capable of prompting the first step toward historical-societal transformation. As for Benjamin, by "organizing pessimism" he meant a pessimism that exceeds a diagnosis of the present conjuncture: From his vantage, pessimism had to be tactically organized, transformed from acknowledgment and reflection into active movement. In both Gramsci and Benjamin there is a skepticism toward an understanding of hope as—in the words of Ernst Bloch—"merely utopian." They saw, in fact, that hope, dislodged from thought, organization, discipline, and politics, could be consolatory yet ultimately give people the illusion that progress could somehow be messianically achieved; in turn, pessimism, as an optic, was better adept at pragmatically assessing the world and propelling an optimistic drive toward structural change. On these theoretical grounds, pragmatic optimism describes a decision to act despite the fact that the status quo may not (or most likely will not) be altered easily or in the short term. See Gramsci, *Letters from Prison*, 1:300n1; Benjamin, "Surrealism," 190, and Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 254.

42. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xviii, 351.

43. Boym, *Future of Nostalgia*, xv, 50. As Ilya Parkins and Lara Hawarth have explained in relation to fashion, nostalgia has an imaginative dimension; it is "an act of imagination tied to a sense of place." Following Benjamin, they explain that fashion "traffics in the dissolution of boundaries between past and present, between temporal categories that are meant to remain discrete." Indeed, fashion designers have "an uneasy relationship to the dominant ideology of discretely bounded times. [They] must have an allegiance to multiple time signatures simultaneously." See Parkins and Hawarth, "Public Time of Private Space in Dior by Dior," 681, 672.

44. Jackie Stacey defines "offgender flux" as the "capacity to move across, to embody the mobility of temporal flux." See Stacey, "Crossing Over with Tilda Swinton," 243.

45. On the meaning and value of looking and "feeling backward" for queer people, see Love, *Feeling Backward*.

46. Interview by author, April 2022.

47. Gopinath, "Queer of Color Critique in a Moment of Danger," 327.

48. See Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism."

49. Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 75.

50. With "queer affect" I refer to the unnamable ambiguity of a relation to the world that allows us to imagine different ways of being. I subscribe to Dina Georgis's definition of queer affect. She writes: "Queer affect has no moral sense. [It] offers an opening to thinking, as that which unravels the self in relation to the self's known world. Queer affect may

perform the transgression of norms, conducts, and habits, but what makes it of interest is not rebellion but how it presents an emotional occasion for learning." See Georgis, *Better Story*, 16. As Edward Said wrote, given the constant presence of the occupier in their spaces and everyday lives, Palestinians "have developed a technique of speaking *through* the given, expressing things obliquely and so mysteriously as to puzzle even ourselves." He was suggesting that it is through, with, and within the very material conditions in which Palestinians are forced to live that they can creatively produce nonlinear and unexpected ways of reconceiving their presence and their present. See Said, *After the Last Sky*, 53.

51. From the thirteenth century until 1948—before hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were forcibly uprooted from historic Palestine and segregated in the Gaza Strip in order to stave off a return to their homes—Gaza was a port city located on the Via Maris, a commercial coastal route. It was renowned throughout the Middle East as a prosperous textile and weaving hub as well as a thriving trade center that exported its fabrics (especially the *majdalawi*, which is still used by weavers and designers in Gaza and the West Bank) to the entire region. The English word "gauze" comes from Gaza, where the fabric originated. Gauze (better known in Arabic as *shash* or *shasheh*) is a thin, lightweight, translucent fabric with a loose open weave, which today is used primarily as surgical bandage; originally, the material was not intended for medical use, but rather for clothing. When used for clothing, gauze is made of fine silk, linen, or cotton. The traditional Palestinian headpiece, known as *hatta* (often with the keffiyeh pattern) is also made of gauze. Woven with silk, gauze is similar to chiffon; it is extremely soft to the touch and has excellent color retention after being dyed.

52. Since 2006 fishermen have been forbidden from going farther than three nautical miles from shore. If they fail to respect that limit their boats are shelled by the Egyptian naval forces in charge of surveilling the maritime space. As a result, the fishing sector in Gaza has been largely incapacitated.

53. I borrow this expression from Carolyn Dinshaw, who writes about imagined affective relations between queer people across different generations. See Dinshaw, *Getting Medieval*, 2–3.

54. Abourahme argues that "settler colonialism is as much a conquest of land as it is a conquest of time. . . . Settler order relies on the creation of new beginnings" that rewrite history according to the temporal logic of "civilizational sovereign time, which, in the context of Israel, is rhetorically translated in the Zionist refrain 'making the desert bloom.'" See Abourahme, "Time Beneath the Concrete."

55. Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 10.

56. De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv.

57. Hoda El Shakry has similarly argued that contemporary Palestinian cultural producers share a commitment to exposing and unsettling "the chronopolitics of settler occupation." See El Shakry, "Palestine and the Aesthetics of the Future Impossible," 669.

58. Interview by author, April 2022.

59. Lauren Berlant theorized love as a "queer feeling" that can "open up the intimate to the political." See Berlant, "Love: A Queer Feeling," 437–38.

60. Interview by author, April 2022.

61. Krähenbül, "Gaza as a Metaphor for Unsustainability," 53.

62. Interview by author, April 2022.

63. Rachel Dedman has traced a history of the literary and artistic representation of Palestinian embroiderers, highlighting the resulting politicization of the clothed bodies of (especially female) Palestinians, the appropriation of their image for the purpose of nationalist propaganda, and the exploitation of their expertise by both pro-Palestine social enterprises and Israeli companies. See Dedman, *Labour of Love*.

64. Hirsch, *Generation of Postmemory*.

65. Hatoum and Assali, "Attending to the Fugitive," 153.

66. Anna Ball has argued that "a dialectical interplay between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence lies at the core of Palestine's history." See Ball, "Communing with Darwish's Ghosts," 136. Following Ball, Kamran Rastergar has emphasized how Gaza, for Palestinian cultural producers, is a site where visibility and invisibility are constantly negotiated; this dialectic is rendered visible only at times of violent upheavals. See Rastergar, "Rendering Gaza Visible," 94.

67. Seikaly, "Gaza as Archive," 230–231; Li, "Gaza Strip as Laboratory."

68. Baconi, "Gaza and the One-State Reality," 78. In "Gaza as Larger Than Life," Helga Tawil-Souri has emphasized Baconi's call for "de-exceptionalization."

69. Sherene Seikaly has similarly argued that the events occurring in the Gaza Strip are "instances of the historical experience that is the Palestinian condition . . . they are instances of [the] confrontation with colonialism." See Seikaly, "Gaza as Archive," 225.

70. Interview by author, April 2022.

71. Abu Hatoum and Assali have written that Palestinians oppose the colonial and imperialist interpellation of their lives as ontologically linked to violence and catastrophe—something that can be understood, following Mirzoeff, as "colonial surveillance gaze" or, in their words, "the Israel visual regime of surveillance." See Hatoum and Assali, "Attending to the Fugitive," 146. Tawil-Souri has beautifully celebrated the patience, vitality, resourcefulness, and ability of Gazans to engage in daily practices, such as using the rubble as a platform for parkour and transforming every piece of fabric they can find into a garment. See Tawil-Souri, "Gaza as Larger Than Life." Along adjacent lines, Nour Joudah has contested the idea of a disappearing Gaza and has argued that we should look at Gaza as a model of Indigenous survival. See Joudah, "Gaza as Site and Method."

72. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 41.

73. Seikaly, "Gaza as Archive," 129, 131.

74. Laleh Khalili has made the same point about Palestinian filmmakers, as she wrote that they "work against the widespread understanding of Gaza as a humanitarian space controlled by a terrorist regime in which victimhood is overdetermined" as well as against "representations of heroism, steadfastness, and sacrifice that have come to define Palestinian national culture more generally." See Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*, 42.

75. On visual containment and the refusal to be framed within a discourse of humanitarianism, see Abu Hatoum and Assali, "Attending to the Fugitive," 137, 140.

76. These two kinds of resistance—armed and creative—are not necessarily in contradiction with one another. While a discussion of armed militancy exceeds the scope of this book, the work of Dababeer Nest as well as, less explicitly, the words of Meera Albaba in this chapter, and other conversations with Palestinian creatives that have not been shared here, suggest—in varied declinations and not without occasional, surfacing doubts—a

general endorsement of legitimate armed responses to the occupation in view of the excruciating psychic and physical repercussions of the Israeli military violence, a violence that, according to the Zionist settler colonial entity, will end only when Palestinian life ends.

77. In the words of Hamid Dabashi, Palestine "is a nation without a state, trapped in the colonial vagaries of a European settler colonial garrison state on the perpetual goose chase of manufacturing a nation for itself." See Dabashi, "Afterword: Palestine Without Borders," 180.

78. Sabella quoted in Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic*, 26–27.

79. Abu Hatoum, "Decolonizing [in the] Future," 399, original emphasis.

80. It must be emphasized, though, that, in practice, the psychic violence of Zionism has had severe repercussions on the intensification of frequent sexist and/or queerphobic attitudes in Palestine, and thus it is plausible that the dissolution of Zionism would have a substantial impact on gender relations and their understanding within Palestine itself. Nada Elia has thoroughly discussed how Israel's proclamation of being a pro-gay, Western-style liberal democracy has exacerbated reactionary, hetero-patriarchal tendencies within Palestinian society, especially with regard to issues of gender and sexual justice, which are interpreted by some communities in Palestine as Western colonial impositions. Elia cites several Indigenous women from Palestine and Turtle Island who affirmed that the gender violence they have experienced in their own communities is the outcome of the violence of colonialism that constantly humiliates men by repeatedly arresting them and/or beating them, thus depriving them of cultural indicators of manhood, such as spatial freedom and financial autonomy. Elia has also warned that, while pinpointing the colonial origins of patriarchy, misogyny, and queerphobia, it is also of the essence to address such forms of oppression from within, as part of the Palestinian struggle, as opposed to dismissing them as secondary concerns to be dealt with after liberation. See Elia, *Greater Than the Sum of Our Parts*, 47. Further, Sarah Deer, whose work is also central to Elia's reasoning, has not only stressed that gendered violence stems from colonialism and its internalization, but also that decolonization implies a "decolonization of the mind," which consists of expunging the culture of the oppressor from the culture of the oppressed. See Deer, *Beginning and End of Rape*.

81. Abdelrazaq, "Disappearing in High Definition."

EPILOGUE: THE AFFECTIVE AFTERLIVES OF CLOTHES

1. "Nnbynn" is a play on words. The double "n" refers to the pronunciation of the first syllable of the name of the founder (Angham), while "bynn" conjures "bint" (بِنْت), which means "girl" in Arabic.

2. This twofold capacity of the glitch hints at what Laila Shereen Sakr construes as "the double valence of technology as a site of oppression and struggle." See Sakr, *Arabic Glitch*, 9.

3. Interview by author, August 2022.

4. On the excavation, reproduction, and resignification of Palestinian archives for the purpose of future-oriented artistic production, see Gil Hochberg, *Becoming Palestine*.

5. Interview by author, August 2022.

6. Jansen, "Fashion and the Phantasmagoria of Modernity, "832.

7. Gramsci, *Odio gli indifferenti*, 7–8.

8. Byrd et al., "Predatory Value," 13.

9. Kapadia, *Insurgent Aesthetics*, 166–68, 152.

10. Said, *After the Last Sky*, 77. On the imaginaries of nationalist sovereignty, see Allen, "What's in a Link?," 112.

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INDEX

Abdellatif, Najla, *Zero Waste Palestine*, 90
abjection, 55–56, 143, 169n45
Abourahme, Nasser, 138–39
Absentees' Property Law, 83–84
Abu Hatoum, Nayrouz, 13, 118–19, 130–31, 143, 146, 161n11, 183n81, 190n71
Abu-Lughod, Lila, 5–6, 163n40
activism: community and, 52–53, 151; creativity and, 12, 15–16, 109, 150–52, 156–58; culture and, 109; decolonization and, 12, 151–52; digital, 18, 162nn18,19, 165n3, 181n45; environment and, 91–92, 174n13; fashion and, 7, 22, 29–30, 52–53, 91–92, 96–98, 109, 119–20, 127, 150–52, 156–58; land and, 65; media, 102–3, 165n3; nonviolent, 96–97; photography and, 7; queerness and, 29–30, 52–53, 105–6, 109, 127; resistance and, 15–16, 29–30, 97–98, 105–6, 109, 119–20, 156–58; sexuality and, 168n34. *See also* resistance
advocacy, 72, 140–41
aesthetics: affect and, 13, 19, 96, 105, 147; agency and, 144; art and, 6; community and, 89, 109; creativity and, 4–6, 11, 87, 146, 151; decolonization and, 11, 65–66, 92, 105–6, 118, 147, 180n34; fashion and, 6–7, 11–13, 18–19, 21–23, 25–29, 33–34, 39, 42, 46, 49–53, 61, 63–66, 73–74, 78, 81–82, 85–87, 89–92, 96–98, 105–10, 113–14, 116–19, 121–22, 127–28, 132–33, 136–39, 147, 150–51, 156, 182n61, 190n63; gender and, 12, 58, 78, 127–28, 136–38, 147, 190n63; indigeneity and, 11; land and, 58–59, 61, 65–66, 73–76, 90–92, 174n15; music and, 18, 33–37, 42; nation and, 81–82, 109, 118, 136–38, 162n17; politics and, 2–5, 12–13, 28–29, 46, 53, 106–7, 109, 116–17, 144, 162n17, 166n12; queerness and, 19, 23, 26–29, 33–37, 42, 53, 64–65, 78, 90–92, 105, 107–9, 116–18, 127–28, 137–38, 147, 182n61; relationality and, 105, 109; resistance and, 2–3, 11–12, 33–37, 42, 49–50, 53, 87, 96, 109, 136–38, 150–51; senses and, 58, 113–14, 166n12
affect: aesthetics and, 13, 19, 96, 147; belonging and, 24, 126, 136–37; body and, 118, 127, 131–32, 136; collective, 27–28, 64, 108, 137–39, 145, 161n11, 162n17, 179n5, 188nn33,37; colonialism and, 13, 26, 69, 84–85, 126; decolonization and, 116, 118; environment and, 64, 74–76, 131, 175n40; fashion and, 7–8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 26–28, 37–39, 41–42, 46, 51–52, 64–65, 69, 71, 73–76, 83–85, 89, 91, 96, 100–101, 105, 110, 113–14, 118–20, 125–28, 130–31, 134, 136–38, 147, 149, 152–53; history and, 91; indigeneity and, 69, 175n40; labor and, 26, 130; land and, 65, 69, 100–101, 110, 174n15; materiality and, 84–85, 119–20; narrative and, 47; nation and, 136–37; occupation and, 3, 11, 16, 42, 110, 119–20, 125–26, 130, 132–33, 170n62; photography and, 26, 167n15, 170n62; politics and, 13, 24, 28–29, 46, 51–52, 153; queerness and, 28–29, 41–42, 64–65, 105, 118, 127, 188n50, 189n53; resistance and, 93, 107–8, 119–20, 153; technology and, 107–8; time and, 71, 138–39, 189n53; tourism and, 47

agency, 26; aesthetics and, 144; body and, 37, 40–42, 52–53, 81, 100–101, 170n64; collective, 5–6; creativity and, 5–6, 66–67; culture and, 5–6; environment and, 63; fashion and, 4, 24–27, 37, 40–42, 52–53, 65–67, 81, 91, 100–101, 112, 139, 150–51; land and, 65–66; politics and, 26–27, 144; queerness and, 40–41, 63; resistance and, 25; time and, 130–31; visuality and, 25–27, 139
agriculture, 55, 71–72, 83–84, 112, 124, 132, 185n14
Ahmed, Sara, 27–28, 96, 108
Albaba, Meera, 131–44, 146–47, 155–56, 190n76
algorithmicity, 113–14, 117–18
Ali, Naji al-, 121–22. *See also* Handala
Allen, Lori, 24, 161n9, 165n56, 166n8, 178n1
Alqaisiya, Walaa, 8–9
alQaws, 23, 29, 78, 168nn31,34
alterity, 29, 65
ANAT, 121–28, 130–31, 140–43, 145–47, 155–56, 185n18, 187n27
androgyny, 40
animacy, 91
Ankori, Gannit, 49–50
anti-apartheid, 15–16, 33–34, 42, 50–53, 91–92
anticapitalism, 6, 15–16, 82, 124–25, 128, 130–31
anticolonialism, 7–8, 29–30, 36–37, 46, 142–43, 171n76
antiracism, 151
Aouragh, Miriyam, 26–27, 165n3, 186n19
apartheid, x–xi, 15–16, 27–28, 32–34, 41–46, 50–53, 66–67, 91–92, 103–4, 108–9, 116–17, 125, 140, 171n76, 173n9. *See also* colonialism; occupation
Appadurai, Arjun, 25–26
appropriation, 19, 42–43, 49–50, 57–58, 61, 80–82, 95–97, 103–4, 119–20, 130, 190n63
al-Aqsa Intifada. *See* Second Intifada
Arab, 59, 61, 87–89, 169n54; queerness and, 21–24, 27–30, 35–36
Arabic, 15, 97, 106–7, 140, 181n41. *See also* language
Arab-Israeli War, 121–22, 184n8
Arab Spring, 5–6, 18, 125, 162nn18,19, 165n4
archive, 7, 11, 67–68, 87, 143–44, 150, 152, 158, 162n22, 169n38, 170n62, 186n23, 191n4
art: collaboration and, 22–23; collectivity and, 4–5; colonialism and, 30, 42–43, 118–19, 150–51; commodification and, 80; community and, 5–6, 26–27; digital, 17, 21–22, 30–31; environment and, 74–76; indigeneity and, 10–11, 180n25; nation and, 4–5, 8, 71–72, 163nn33,34, 176n54; occupation and, 7, 25–26; politics and, 4–6, 118–19; queerness and, 30; representation and, 49–50; resistance and, 4–5, 8, 71–72, 145, 150–51; tradition and, 82; visuality and, 118–19
artisans, 2, 14–15, 68–69, 76–77, 82, 87, 122, 124, 126, 141–42
artwashing, 42–43
Assali, Hadeel, 143, 183n81, 190n71
assimilation, 26, 28–29, 168n34
Atshan, Sa'ed, 56–57, 127–28
al-Auja village, 63–64
authoritarianism, 5, 18; Israel and, 116–17; of Palestinian governing bodies, 2–3, 5, 162n18, 182n72; piracy and, 96
autonomy, 37, 116
Azoulay, Ariella, 113

BabyFist, 72–73
Baconi, Tareq, 143
balaclavas, 99–100, 104–5, 110
Barakat, Rana, 56–57, 62–63, 174n26
Bayat, Asef, 24
bazaars, 1–2, 97, 119
BDS (Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions) movement, 43
beauty: resistance and 6, 11, 64, 74–76, 84–86, 114, 119, 130–31, 144–47; Western ideals of, 19–22
beauty pageants, 42–46
belonging, 166n12; affect and, 24, 126, 136–37; fashion and, 7, 12, 24, 61–62, 69, 74, 76, 87, 91–92, 108, 110, 112–13, 126, 136–38, 144–46; gender and, 136–38; indigeneity and, 10, 112–13; land and, 10, 69, 91–92, 112–13, 144–46; nation and, 14, 31–33, 136–38, 145–46; queerness and, 31–33, 64–65; sexuality and, 31–33; state and, 64–65, 145–46
Benjamin, Walter, 134, 188n41
Bennett, Jane, 74–76
Berda, Yael, 41–42
Berlant, Lauren, 24, 83–84, 118, 182n66
Berlin Fashion Week, 27–28
biometrics, 3
biopolitics, 41–42, 127, 137–38
Bishara, Amahl, 18, 108, 181n47
body: affect and, 118, 127, 131–32, 136; agency and, 37, 40–42, 52–53, 81, 100–101, 170n64; colonialism and, 46, 49–50, 57–59, 64–65, 114, 128; environment and, 61–63, 74–76, 91; fashion and, 12, 15–16, 19, 24, 40–41, 46,

64, 69, 74–76, 80–81, 89, 91, 113–14, 119–20, 131–34, 138, 142–43, 150; gender and, 12, 15–16, 19, 24, 46, 57–59, 105–6, 132–34, 138, 142–43, 170n60, 186n25; indigeneity and, 134; land and, 15–16, 69, 108–9; normativity and, 18–19, 29, 41, 114, 134; occupation and, 89; queerness and, 24, 63–65, 105–6, 133–34; race and, 29, 33, 35–39, 41, 73–74, 87–89, 105; relationality and, 108–9; resistance and, 108–9, 119–20; sexuality and, 12, 15–16, 24, 59, 105–6; technology and, 19; time and, 80; visuality and, 24
bootlegging, 19–22, 28–29, 50–51, 96–97, 166n11, 167n13; queer Arabic, 21–22, 27–29
boycott, 2, 43
Boym, Svetlana, 132–33
Braika, Omar, 17–22, 24–26, 29–33, 36–37, 42, 44, 46–47, 51–52, 97–98. *See also* Trashy Clothing
Braverman, Irus, 176n59
British Mandate, 43, 54, 131–32, 149–50, 177n68, 183n1, 184n8
Brown, Elspeth, 26
Bruno, Giuliana, 113
B'Tselem, 172n5
Byrd, Jodi, 175n38

camouflaging, 46, 58–59, 105, 107, 109, 114, 127–28, 183n77
camp (aesthetic), 19–20, 29, 35, 167n28
capitalism, 161n10, 175n33; colonialism and, 124, 139–40; fashion and, 1–2, 6, 14–15, 21–22, 26–27, 80–82, 110, 114, 124–25, 128, 130, 139–40; time and, 15–16, 82, 124–25, 130, 139–40, 174n13
carcerality, 3, 103–4, 17, 139, 143
care, 186n25; community and, 130, 140; creativity and, 5; environment and, 56; fashion and, 69, 78, 83–84, 112–13, 118, 126; land and, 54–55, 69, 78, 83–84, 104–5, 174n15, 175n40
Censored Arab (Majlaton), 59–63
censorship, 59, 156, 162n22; digital, 107–8
checkpoints, 1–2, 4, 33–35, 37, 39–42, 160n1, 170nn58,59,62, 187n34
chronopolitics, 1–2, 139, 189n57
circulation, 2, 11, 65–66, 77–78, 91, 96, 108, 120, 124–26, 130–31, 142–43, 151–52; digital, 21–22, 30–31, 108, 149; of images, 21–22, 30–31, 108, 149
class, 121–22; consumption and, 140; fashion and, 12; gender and, 177n67; occupation and, 161n10
classification, 3, 35–36, 50–51, 116, 119–20, 127, 130
collaboration, 2, 14, 22–23, 69–72, 77–78, 82–83, 124–26, 130–31, 141–42; resistance and, 55
collectivity: affect and, 27–28, 64, 108, 137–39, 145, 161n11, 162n17, 179n5, 188nn33,37; agency and, 5–6; art and, 4–5; creativity and, 4–6, 92, 114–16, 131–32; culture and, 4–5; decolonization and, 116, 118–20; environment and, 92; fashion and, 6–7, 12, 63, 74, 76–77, 84–85, 92, 99–101, 104–9, 114–18, 137–38, 151; identity and, 12, 76, 100–101, 145–46; indigeneity and, 12, 69; labor and, 142; land and, 69; liberation, 29–30, 74, 76–77; memory and, 54–55; resistance and, 104–7, 137–38, 145, 166n7
colonialism, 165n3, 186n19; affect and, 13, 26, 69, 84–85, 126; art and, 30, 42–43, 118–19, 150–51; body and, 46, 49–50, 57–58, 64–65, 114, 128; capitalism and, 124, 139–40; environment and, 55–58, 65–66, 74–76, 90, 92, 173n9, 174n14, 176n57; fashion and, 21–22, 29, 44–47, 96–97, 124, 151, 181n37; gender and, 8–10, 12, 21–22, 33–34, 44–46, 57–58, 137–38, 147–48, 191n80; governmentality and, 65–66, 130, 153; history and, 134, 138–39; human/nonhuman and, 64–65, 75–76, 91, 103–5, 112; indigeneity and, 12, 150–51, 175n40; land and, 46, 54–58, 62–65, 172n2, 175n40; narratives and, 12, 26; nation and, 12, 21–22, 57–58; normativity and, 9–10, 35–37, 44–46, 57–58, 64–65, 146, 170n60; politics and, 13, 52; queerness and, 8–10, 12, 29–30, 62–63; race and, 8–10, 12, 21–22, 55–58, 137–38; senses and, 64, 69; settler, 3–5, 7–13, 15–16, 25–26, 29–31, 46, 51–53, 55–58, 64–65, 77–78, 84–85, 92, 105–6, 126, 137–39, 147–48, 150–51, 153, 172n2, 173n9, 180n34, 182n72, 190n76; sexuality and, 8–10, 12, 29–31, 33–34, 42, 57–58, 64–65, 69, 147–48; space and, 4–5, 14, 125, 140, 143; state and, 21–22, 57–58, 153; surveillance and, 4–5, 105–6, 190n71; time and, 138–39; tourism and, 47–50; violence and, 9–10, 12–13, 24–25, 31–42, 44–46, 58–59, 65, 72–74, 84–86, 94, 124, 130–32, 138, 143, 145, 147, 150, 153, 156, 170nn59,62, 178n4, 190nn71,76, 191n80; visuality and, 25–26, 29–30, 33, 42–43, 44–47, 50–51, 105–6, 116, 118–19, 128, 143, 147–48, 190n71. *See also* occupation; Zionism
commodification, 186nn23,24; of affect, 126–28, 177n67; of art, 80; fashion, 26, 80–82, 126–28; of identity, 26, 80
communication, 6, 77–78, 97, 128, 140–41, 159n1, 166n8, 184n7; fashion and, 96–97, 107, 118–19; technology and, 18–19

community: art and, 5–6, 26–27; creativity and, 11, 52–53, 67, 89, 91–92, 97–98, 125; culture and, 6, 11; decolonization and, 65–66, 92, 118; fashion and, 11, 17–18, 26–27, 52–53, 65–67, 89, 92, 97–98, 102–5, 109–10, 118–19, 130–31, 140, 151–52, 171n73; politics and, 104–6, 109; queerness and, 52–53, 92; technology and, 5, 17–18, 108. *See also* relationality
conservation, 56–57, 172n4
consumerism, 26, 47, 122, 128
consumption: capitalism and, 14–15, 22, 26; class and, 140; in diaspora, 22–23, 73, 76–77, 97, 109, 122; fashion and, 22–23, 26, 90, 92, 122, 140; media, 17–18; tourism and, 47
co-optation, 81–82
cotton, 71, 98–99, 112, 176n53, 179n7, 189n51. *See also* fabric
counterfeiting, 21, 22, 96–97. *See also* bootlegging
counternarrative. *See under* narrative
COVID-19 pandemic, 12–13, 76–77
craft, 6–7, 68–69, 76–82, 84–85, 91–92, 98–99, 117, 120, 121–22, 126–27, 130–31, 141–42, 147–48, 177n67
creativity: aesthetics and, 4–6, 11, 87, 146, 151; agency and, 5–6, 66–67; care and, 5; collectivity and, 4–6, 92, 114–16, 131–32; community and, 11, 52–53, 67, 89, 91–92, 97–98, 125; decolonization and, 5–6, 12, 25, 29–30, 78, 91–92, 150–52, 180n34; environment and, 73–76, 78, 91–92, 142–43; nation and, 5–6, 145, 153; nostalgia and, 131–33; occupation and, 1–4, 6, 11, 15–16, 51–52, 96, 120, 125, 131–33, 139–40, 142–45, 151, 188n50; pedagogy and, 66–67; politics and, 4–5, 162n22; queerness and, 53, 107, 127, 145, 147; resistance and, 4–6, 10–11, 15–16, 25–27, 42, 51–53, 66–67, 76–77, 89, 91–92, 94, 96–98, 109, 125, 144–45, 151, 153, 190n76; state and, 145–46; technology and, 1–2, 18–19, 125–26, 140, 179n10; time and, 15–16, 142–43; tradition and, 7, 71, 76–77, 87; visuality and, 25–26, 107
cross-stitch, 121–22
culture: activism and, 109; agency and, 5–6; appropriation of, 42–43; collectivity and, 4–5; community and, 6, 11; decolonization and, 5–6, 8, 51, 66–67, 127, 144, 150–51, 158; identity and, 7–10, 28–29, 51; indigeneity and, 10–11, 66–67, 82; nation and, 4–6, 145–46; occupation and, 3–7, 156–58, 189n57, 191n80; politics and, 4–7, 10–11, 26, 66–67; popular, 10–11, 18–22, 25–26, 29, 50, 58; queerness and, 8–10, 147, 150–51, 166n11; resistance and, 5–6, 10–12, 96–97, 109, 144–45, 147, 152, 162n23; tradition and, 7, 82, 87, 124–25; visuality and, 23–24, 26, 128, 143, 190n66

Dababeer Nest, 93–109, 112–14, 116–20, 128, 155–56, 178n8, 190n76
dabke, 43, 61
dancing, 43, 61, 85, 125, 163n31
Darwish, Mahmoud, 34–35
data, dataization, 3, 104–5, 117, 128
de Certeau, Michel, 139
De Cesari, Chiara, 7–8, 82
death, 55–56, 113–14, 130–31, 138–39, 153, 173n11
debility, debilitation, 11, 35, 41–42, 55–56, 62–63, 74–76, 112, 117, 182n71, 185n12, 186n19
decolonization: activism and, 12, 151–52; aesthetics and, 11, 65–66, 92, 105–6, 118, 147, 180n34; affect and, 116, 118; collectivity and, 116, 118–20; community and, 65–66, 92, 118; creativity and, 5–6, 12, 25, 29–30, 78, 91–92, 150–52, 180n34; culture and, 5–6, 8, 51, 66–67, 127, 144, 150–51, 158; environment and, 12, 64, 78, 131, 150–51; fashion and, 7–8, 11–12, 25, 29–30, 37, 50–53, 64–67, 84–85, 90–92, 97, 105–6, 109, 116–17, 119–20, 127, 131, 137, 142–43, 146–48, 150–52, 158; gender and, 8–10, 12, 137; history and, 90; indigeneity and, 5–6, 10, 12, 91–92, 164n44; land and, 65; nation and, 12, 146; pedagogy and, 66–67, 84–85; politics and, 5–6, 11, 25, 106, 151–52; queerness and, 8–10, 12, 29–30, 37, 50–53, 91–92, 116–17, 119–20, 127, 131, 146–47, 150–52; race and, 12, 29–30; senses and, 64, 84–85, 142–43; sexuality and, 8–10, 12, 29–30; sovereignty and, 10; time and, 142–43; visuality and, 25–26, 29–30, 105–6, 109, 116–17, 119–20. *See also* indigeneity; queerness
de-development, 11, 124, 185n13
Dedman, Rachel, 79–82, 177n67, 190n63
denim, 78–79, 121–23, 128, 142
design: activism and, 7, 22; appropriation of, 95–97, 109; diaspora and, 14–15, 97; environment and, 58–59, 65–67, 78, 92, 100–101, 112, 141; fashion, 1–2, 5–8, 11–15, 17, 19–23, 26, 37–39, 41–42, 44–46, 51–53, 58–59, 65–67, 72–73, 77–80, 82–83, 85–87, 89–90, 92, 95–97, 99–101, 103–5, 109–10, 112, 114, 116–18, 121–28, 130–34, 139–42, 144–47, 149–53, 167n13, 179n7; queerness and, 12, 19–23, 41–42, 44–46, 52–53, 58–59, 78, 114, 116–17,

133–34, 147; resistance and, 5–7, 11, 52–53, 124–25, 147–48; tradition and, 7–8, 68–69, 79–80, 82–83, 87, 90, 92, 121–22, 141–42; visuality and, 21–22, 26, 37–39, 114, 133, 147
desire, 33, 37–42, 47, 64–65, 182n61
developmentalism, 9–10, 161n10, 165n56
diaspora, 11, 14–15, 145–46; consumption and, 22–23, 73, 76–77, 97, 109, 122; gender and, 57–58; solidarity and, 140–41
dignity, 37, 72, 153
disidentification, 9–10, 19–20, 28–30, 32–33, 37, 49–51, 105
disorientation, 27–28, 49–50
displacement, 55–56, 68–69, 80–81, 124, 130–31, 138, 149–50, 155–56, 174n13, 178n4
dispossession, 10, 47, 49–50, 54–57, 62–63, 124, 131, 175n38
dissensus, 123, 166n12
dissent, 3–4, 9, 18, 21–22, 81, 116–17, 126, 139, 145, 166nn6,12. *See also* resistance
DIY, 22, 166n11
documentation, 11–12, 16, 65, 92, 108, 110, 151–52; resistance and, 4, 108, 119–20; tradition and, 82, 90; visual, 12, 47, 90–91, 108, 128, 139, 147
dressmaking, 7, 67, 76–82, 98–99, 109–10, 177n68
dyeing, 68–69

East Jerusalem, 4–6, 11, 33–34, 160nn1,6, 184n7
ecocide, 54, 64–65, 84–86, 92, 100–101, 173n9
economy: agricultural, 55, 71–72, 83–84, 112, 124, 132, 185n14; environment and, 91–92, 131; fashion and, 6–7, 14–15, 21–22, 26, 67, 69–70, 91–92, 98–99, 124–25, 131, 135–36, 153, 184n11, 185n13; occupation and, 3, 5, 83, 97–99, 123–25, 145, 153, 161n10, 162n18, 176n55, 177n67; visual, 21, 118, 126–27, 144, 186n24
Egypt, 19, 176n53, 183n1, 184nn7,8, 185n12, 189n52
Elia, Nada, 164n40, 176n55, 191n80
El-Ariss, Tarek, 107
El-Kurd, Mohammed, 24
Elissa (Elissar Zakaria Khoury), 47–49
embroidery, 7, 76–82, 98–99, 117–18, 121–24, 130, 141–42, 152, 177n68, 178n77, 187n27
emo, 18. *See also* music
empathy, 24, 26, 113–14, 126–27
enclosure, 4, 16, 33, 120, 130, 160n1, 173n9
environment: activism and, 91–92, 174n13; affect and, 64, 74–76, 131, 175n40; agency and, 63; art and, 74–76; body and, 61–63, 74–76, 91; care and, 56; collectivity and, 92; colonialism and, 55–58, 65–66, 74–76, 90, 92, 173n9, 174n14, 176n57; creative production and, 73–76, 78, 91–92, 142–43; decolonization and, 12, 64, 78, 131, 150–51; economy and, 91–92, 131; fashion and, 12, 58–59, 61–62, 65–66, 71, 73–76, 83–86, 90–92, 112, 130–31, 150–51, 171n73; gender and, 12, 58–59, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 91–92, 150–51; occupation and, 11, 15–16, 55–58, 61–62, 72, 74–76, 83–84, 91, 172n4, 174n14, 185n14; queerness and, 104–5, 175n38; race and, 12, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 91–92, 150–51, 185n14; senses and, 55–56, 58, 61–62, 64; sexuality and, 12, 58–59, 65–66, 90, 91–92, 150–51; tourism and, 47; violence and, 11, 58–59, 65, 83–86, 174n13, 185n14
environmental (in)justice, 15–16, 61–62, 65–66, 71, 78, 91–92, 173n9, 174n13
environmental racism, 55–56, 65, 92, 174n13
erasure, 5, 7, 18, 26, 55, 62–63, 124–25, 149–50, 181n47
erotic, 19, 40–42, 58
ethnic cleansing, 11, 14, 25–26, 54–55, 68, 143, 147, 162n22, 172n2
ethnicity, 81, 160n6; fashion and, 21–22, 117–18; gender and, 33, 41, 146; nation and, 33, 118, 146; queerness and, 8–9, 33, 41, 127–28; state and, 15–16, 33, 42–43, 92, 117, 146, 187n29. *See also* race
ethnography, 12–13, 165n50
eugenics, 57–58
Eurovision Song Contest, 42–43
extraction, 54–55, 80, 124, 131, 150–51, 172n5, 175n40

fabric, 41–42, 44–46, 49, 63–64, 68–71, 73–74, 82, 98–99, 112–13, 116, 119, 122–23, 125–26, 141–42, 152, 176n53, 178n7, 189n51, 190n71. *See also* cotton; denim; fiber; silk; wool
Facebook, 125–26. *See also* social media
Fanon, Frantz, 7, 66–67, 116, 132, 153
Farsakh, Leila, 4, 9, 29–30
fashion: activism and, 7, 29–30, 52–53, 91–92, 96–98, 109, 119–20, 127, 150–52, 156–58; aesthetics and, 6–7, 11–13, 18–19, 21–23, 25–29, 33–34, 39, 42, 46, 49–53, 61, 63–66, 73–74, 78, 81–82, 85–87, 89–92, 96–98, 105–10, 113–14, 116–19, 121–22, 127–28, 132–33, 136–39, 147, 150–51, 156, 182n61, 190n63; affect and, 7–8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 26–28, 37–39, 41–42, 46, 51–52, 64–65, 69, 71, 73–76, 83–85, 89, 91, 96, 100–101, 105, 110, 113–14, 118–20, 125–28, 130–31, 134, 136–38, 147, 149, 152–53; agency and, 4, 24–27, 37, 40–42, 52–53, 65–67, 81, 91, 100–101, 112, 139, 150–51; belonging and, 7,

fashion *(continued)*
12, 24, 61–62, 69, 74, 76, 87, 91–92, 108, 110, 112–13, 126, 136–38, 144–46; body and, 12, 15–16, 19, 24, 40–41, 46, 64, 69, 74–76, 80–81, 89, 91, 113–14, 119–20, 131–34, 138, 142–43, 150; capitalism and, 1–2, 6, 14–15, 21–22, 26–27, 80–82, 110, 114, 124–25, 128, 130, 139–40; care and, 69, 78, 83–84, 112–13, 118, 126; circulation of, 2, 65–66, 77–78, 91, 96, 108, 120, 124–26, 130–31, 142–43, 151–52; class and, 12; collectivity and, 6–7, 12, 63, 74, 76–77, 84–85, 92, 99–101, 104–9, 114–18, 137–38, 151; colonialism and, 21–22, 29, 44–47, 96–97, 124, 151, 181n37; community and, 11, 17–18, 26–27, 52–53, 65–67, 89, 92, 97–98, 102–5, 109–10, 118–19, 130–31, 140, 151–52, 171n73; consumption and, 22–23, 26, 90, 92, 122, 140; decolonization and, 7–8, 11–12, 25, 29–30, 37, 50–53, 64–67, 84–85, 90–92, 97, 105–6, 109, 116–17, 119–20, 127, 131, 137, 142–43, 146–48, 150–52, 158; design and, 1–2, 5–8, 11–15, 17, 19–23, 26, 37–39, 41–42, 44–46, 51–53, 58–59, 65–67, 72–73, 77–80, 82–83, 85–87, 89–90, 92, 95–97, 99–101, 103–5, 109–10, 112, 114, 116–18, 121–28, 130–34, 139–42, 144–47, 149–53, 167n13, 179n7; economy and, 6–7, 14–15, 21–22, 26, 67, 69–70, 91–92, 98–99, 124–25, 131, 135–36, 153, 184n11, 185n13; environment and, 12, 58–59, 61–62, 65–66, 71, 73–76, 83–86, 90–92, 112, 130–31, 150–51, 171n73; ethnicity and, 21–22, 117–18; gender and, 8–9, 12, 15–17, 21–22, 42, 44–47, 53, 63–66, 72–74, 78–81, 87–90, 98–99, 104–5, 116–18, 122, 126–28, 130–39, 141–43, 147–48, 150–52, 170n61, 178n77, 187n27, 190n63; history and, 7, 12, 15–16, 67–70, 73, 83–85, 87, 89–91, 98–99, 109–10, 121–22, 125, 132–34, 138–39, 142–43, 147, 150, 177n68, 189n51; human/nonhuman and, 62–66, 75–76, 91, 100–101, 103–5, 112–13, 118, 127, 151; identity and, 7, 12, 19–22, 59, 61, 69–70, 74, 76, 81–82, 87–89, 97–98, 100–101, 110, 113–14, 116–17, 127, 130, 156–58; indigeneity and, 65–66, 68–69, 71, 73–74, 76–78, 80, 82–83, 90–92, 112–13, 130, 133–34, 141–42, 147–48, 150–51; knowledge and, 7–8, 12, 71, 76–78, 80–81, 84–85, 90–91, 150–51; labor and, 15–16, 23, 79–81, 123–25, 130–31, 139–43, 150–52, 184n10; land and, 58–63, 69, 71, 73–74, 78, 80–81, 85–86, 91–92, 108–10, 112–13, 141–42, 145–46, 150–52; language and, 20–21, 97, 182n62; legibility/illegibility and, 42, 96–97, 105–6, 119, 128, 130; liberation and, 2–8, 12, 15–16, 51–53, 66–67, 76–77, 90–92, 96–98, 105–6, 109, 121–22, 127, 137, 144, 147, 150–53; materiality and, 6–8, 14–16, 26, 37–39, 50–52, 65–67, 76–78, 82–85, 87, 91–92, 94, 97–99, 110, 113–14, 119, 123, 127–28, 130–31, 140, 142–43, 152–53, 182n62, 189n51; media and, 2, 20–27, 50–51, 77–78, 89, 108–9, 127–28, 140, 151–52, 179n10; memory and, 76, 83–84; narrative and, 6–7, 10–12, 26, 59, 61, 85, 91–92, 113–14, 126–27, 139, 147, 153; nation and, 7, 80–81, 136, 147–48, 170n61, 178n77, 187n27, 190n63; occupation and, 14–15, 19–20, 32–33, 40–41, 46–47, 51–53, 72–73, 85–87, 110, 123–26, 130–31, 142–43, 145, 147–48, 170n62; pedagogy and, 27–28, 51–52, 66–67, 76–77, 84–85, 125, 134, 151–52; politics of, x–xii, 2–3, 6–8, 10–13, 15–16, 20–21, 23, 26–27, 46, 50–53, 73–74, 77, 80–81, 91–92, 97–99, 106, 108–9, 116–17, 121–22, 130, 139, 151–53, 155–58, 165n56, 190n63; production and, 1–2, 6, 11–12, 14–16, 19–20, 49, 65–72, 74, 77–80, 82–83, 90–92, 97, 112–14, 122–28, 130, 133, 142–43, 150–52, 155–56; queerness and, 12, 15–16, 21–30, 32–33, 36, 40–42, 44–46, 50–53, 62–65, 72, 78, 87–89, 90–92, 104–6, 114, 116–20, 127–28, 131, 133–38, 146–47, 150–52, 166n11, 167n28, 182n61; race and, 8–9, 12, 15–16, 19–20, 29, 42, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 87–89, 118, 126–27, 130–31, 150–52, 167n28; relationality and, 15–16, 71, 104–5, 127, 151, 156–58; representation and, 20–22, 24–27, 41, 46–47, 50–51, 65–67, 73, 78–80, 98, 108, 110, 112–14, 117–20, 127–28, 136, 141–42, 144, 150–52, 190n63; resistance and, 8–9, 12, 26–27, 51–52, 61, 71, 74–76, 81–82, 93–98, 101–3, 106–9, 119–20, 128, 141, 144–46, 150–53, 181n37; senses and, 7–8, 64–65, 74, 91, 134–36; sexuality and, 8–9, 12, 15–17, 21–22, 29–30, 40, 42, 53, 73–74, 118, 127–28, 134, 137–39, 150–51; social and, 6–7, 80, 84–85, 91, 107, 113–14, 116–17, 124–27, 130–31, 134–36, 139, 150–51, 155–56, 165n56; space and, 15–16, 19–20, 27–28, 99, 130–31; state and, 15–16, 26–27, 36–37, 41–42, 80–81, 109, 145–46; stealth and, 102–3, 105–9, 114, 116–20, 127–28, 133, 183n80; storytelling and, 7, 11, 13–14, 16, 19–20, 33, 50–52, 65–67, 71, 89–92, 106–9, 112–13, 119–20, 125, 136, 140–43, 147, 182n62; sustainability and, 15–16, 22–23, 49, 54, 56, 58–59, 62–65, 67–69, 72–74, 76, 80, 82–83, 85, 89–92, 110, 112–14, 141–43; time and, 7, 15–16, 71, 80, 82–83, 85–86, 99, 120, 130–31,

134, 138–39, 141–43, 147, 150, 163n26, 188n43; tradition and, 7–8, 61, 67–71, 76–83, 87, 89–90, 98, 109–10, 112–13, 121–22, 124–27, 189n51; visibility/invisibility and, 14–15, 25–28, 79–80, 87–89, 105–6, 113–14, 118–19, 144, 147, 151, 171n73; visuality and, 27–28, 37–42, 91–92, 97–98, 106, 108, 117–20, 127–28, 134–36, 147–48, 150–51, 167n22. *See also* circulation; design; production
fashion justice, 65–67, 69, 91–92, 130, 151–52
Fatah, 4–5, 121–22
feminism, 29–30, 43, 55, 76, 151; decolonial, 14, 168n34; environment and, 73–74; queer, 10, 73–74, 146, 180n27
fetishization, 25–26, 58
fiber, 98–99, 112, 176n53. *See also* fabric
film, 4, 5–6, 13, 19–20, 39, 44–46, 52, 63–67, 77, 89–90, 100–104, 108, 110–12, 119–20, 145–46, 149–53, 163n28, 166n8, 170n62, 190n74; pornographic, 56–57
First Intifada, 4, 81, 137, 160n1, 163n34, 169n50
flag, 17, 46, 81, 93, 99–100, 121–22, 162n22, 169n49, 187n27
Flatley, Jonathan, 98, 134, 163n26
fugitivity, 15–16, 106, 109, 119–20, 130–31, 142–43

Galilee, 82–84, 98–99, 176n53
Gaza, 11, 169n49, 170n58, 183n1, 184nn7,8, 186n22, 187n3; disengagement from, 124, 185nn12,16; economy of, 69–70, 162n18, 184n9; environment and, 103–4, 141–42, 185n14; freedom of movement in, 3–6, 48–49, 143–44, 183n2; gender in, 132–38; Hamas in, 5, 145, 162n18, 183n4; history and, 147–48, 152, 189n51; isolation of, 3–6, 123, 126, 130, 143–44; Israeli attacks on, 4, 43, 136, 141, 143, 149, 155–58, 159n1, 178n4, 186n19; labor in, 126–27; nostalgia and, 132–33; queerness in, 127; resistance in, 96–97, 138–39, 145; sea and, 138, 150, 152, 189nn51,52; textile industry in, 68–69, 71–73, 122–25, 130–31, 141–42, 183n3, 184nn10,11, 185n13, 189n51; visibility/invisibility in, 143–44, 190nn66,71
gaze. *See* visuality
gender: aesthetics and, 12, 58, 78, 127–28, 136–38, 147, 190n63; belonging and, 136–38; body and, 12, 15–16, 19, 24, 46, 57–59, 105–6, 132–34, 138, 142–43, 170n60, 186n25; care and, 186n25; class and, 177n67; colonialism and, 8–10, 12, 21–22, 33–34, 44–46, 57–58, 137–38, 147–48, 191n80; decolonization and, 8–10, 12, 137; diaspora and, 57–58; environment and, 12, 58–59, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 91–92, 150–51; ethnicity and, 33, 41, 146; fashion and, 8–9, 12, 15–17, 21–22, 42, 44–47, 53, 63–66, 72–74, 78–81, 87–90, 98–99, 104–5, 116–18, 122, 126–28, 130–39, 141–43, 147–48, 150–52, 170n61, 178n77, 187n27, 190n63; history and, 142–43; identity and, 8–9, 21–22, 24, 105–6; indigeneity and, 57, 133–34, 191n80; labor and, 78–81, 98–99, 126–27, 141–42, 151–52, 184n10, 186n25; land and, 56–58, 65, 73–74, 163n33; liberation and, 9–10, 57–58, 105, 137, 146–47, 163n34, 176n55, 191n80; narrative and, 58, 139, 186n25; nation and, 8, 21–22, 31–32, 41, 57–58, 80–81, 126–27, 136, 139, 146–48, 153, 163nn33,34, 170nn60,61, 174n20, 178n77, 186n25, 190n63; normativity and, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 64–65, 105–6, 114, 127–28, 133–34, 136, 139, 146–47, 153, 170n60; occupation and, 8, 72–73, 87, 147, 191n80; photography and, 78; politics of, 133–34, 137–38; production and, 79–80, 126–27; queerness and, 24, 64–65, 106, 133–38, 147, 191n80; race and, 35–36, 41, 57–58, 73–74, 170n59, 174n20; religion and, 21, 58; representation and, 15–16, 41, 73, 78–80, 136, 141–42, 151–52, 163n33, 190n63; resistance and, 8, 80–81, 137, 163n34, 176n55, 186n25; sexuality and, 12, 24, 58–59, 163n34; social and, 116–17, 151–52; state and, 21–22, 31–32, 35–37, 42, 57–58, 80–81, 117, 127, 170nn59,60; technology and, 19; time and, 15–16; tradition and, 78–80; violence and, 36–37, 191n80; visuality and, 128, 133–34, 147
genocide, 12–13, 156–58, 159n1, 160n2
gentrification, 63, 149–50
Ghnaim, Wafa, 76–77
Glissant, Édouard, 105, 116
glitch, glitching, 42, 102–3, 109, 113, 118, 150, 153, 180n27, 191n2
glitchfrastructure, 118, 183n78
globalization, 68–69
GmbH fashion collective, 22–23
Golan Heights, ix–x, 184n7
Goldstein, Alyosha, 175n38
Gopinath, Gayatri, 133–34, 180n35
governmentality, 10, 127, 153; colonialism and, 65–66, 130, 153
graffiti, 4, 24–26, 93
Gramsci, Antonio, 66–67, 153, 182n66, 188n41
Great March of Return, 125, 185n17
greenwashing, 56, 92, 174n14

hacking, 24–29, 50–51, 96–97, 117–18
Hallaj, Muhammad, 7

halutz (pioneer). *See* Sabra
Handala, 121–22
Hatari, 46
haute couture, 39–40
heritage, 7–8, 82, 87, 89–92, 98, 121–22, 126–27, 178n77; biocultural, 71–72. *See also* tradition
Herzl, Theodor, 57–58
heterocoloniality, 8–9
hetero-nationalism, 36–37
heteronormativity, 9–10, 41, 44–46, 52, 127–28, 145–46, 170n60
heteropatriarchy, 8–9, 12, 29–30, 73, 92, 163n34
hijab, 27, 39–40, 46–47, 50
hijacking, 21–22, 26–27, 147–48
Hirsch, Marianne, 142–43, 187n37
history: affect and, 91; colonialism and, 134, 138–39; decolonization and, 90; fashion and, 7, 12, 15–16, 67–70, 73, 83–85, 87, 89–91, 98–99, 109–10, 121–22, 125, 132–34, 138–39, 142–43, 147, 150, 177n68, 189n51; gender and, 142–43; identity and, 7; knowledge and, 90–91; land and, 56–59, 138; nation and, 56–57, 145–47; photography and, 147, 152; queerness and, 133–34; sexuality and, 133–34; social and, 133–34, 163n26
Hochberg, Gil, 24–25, 41, 46–47, 170n62
homonationalism, 31–33, 52, 57–59, 92, 105–6, 170n64. *See also* pinkwashing
homonormativity, 9–10, 46
homophobia, 31, 139, 170n60
hope, 130–31, 147–48, 152, 155–58, 188n41
human/nonhuman, 15–16; colonialism and, 64–65, 75–76, 91, 103–5, 112; fashion and, 62–66, 75–76, 91, 100–101, 103–5, 112–13, 118, 127, 151; indigeneity and, 49, 100–101, 104–5, 175n40; land and, 62–65, 100–101, 104–5, 112, 175n40; queerness and, 64–65
humanism, 126–27
humanitarianism, 24, 126–27, 165n56, 177n67, 183n6, 186n24, 190n75
human rights, 31, 161n9, 183n6
hybridity, 8–9, 29

i-D, 23–24, 167n14
identity, identification, 109; collective, 12, 76, 100–101, 145–46; culture and, 7–10, 28–29, 51; fashion and, 7, 12, 19–22, 59, 61, 69–70, 74, 76, 81–82, 87–89, 97–98, 100–101, 110, 113–14, 116–17, 127, 130, 156–58; gender and, 8–9, 21–22, 24, 105–6; history and, 7; indigeneity and, 12, 69; land and, 55, 91–92, 144; language and, 20–21; narrative and, 12, 113–14; nation and, 8–9, 29–30, 55, 81–82, 145–46, 166n6; occupation and, 89, 162n22; politics of, 69, 87; queerness and, 8–9, 29–31, 59, 61, 106; religion and, 87; sexuality and, 8–9, 21–22, 24, 105–6, 166n6; social and, 89; tradition and, 76, 81–82; unity and, 105; visuality and, 116
Ihmoud, Sarah, 14
illegibility. *See* legibility
immobility. *See* mobility
imperialism, 73, 96–97, 146, 181n37; environment and, 59, 75–76; visuality and, 25–30, 36–37, 118–19, 147–48, 151, 190n71
indigeneity, 5–7, 49, 161n11, 163nn40,42,44; aesthetics and, 11; affect and, 69, 175n40; art and, 10–11, 180n25; belonging and, 10, 112–13; body and, 134; collectivity and, 12, 69; colonialism and, 12, 150–51, 175n40; culture and, 10–11, 66–67, 82; decolonization and, 5–6, 10, 12, 91–92, 164n44; fashion and, 65–66, 68–69, 71, 73–74, 76–78, 80, 82–83, 90–92, 112–13, 130, 133–34, 141–42, 147–48, 150–51; gender and, 57, 133–34, 191n80; human/nonhuman and, 49, 100–101, 104–5, 175n40; identity and, 12, 69; knowledge and, 133–34, 175n40; land and, 55–57, 62–63, 65–67, 69, 73–76, 78, 100–101, 104–5, 112–13, 141–42, 174n31, 175n40, 176n51; narrative and, 10–12; politics of, 69; queerness and, 9–10, 12, 62–65, 104–6, 133–34, 175n39, 180n31; relationality and, 12, 175n40, 176n47, 180n31; sexuality and, 57; sovereignty and, 146, 163n42, 176n47, 183n81; time and, 141; tradition and, 80, 82–83
Instagram, 17–20, 73, 99–100, 106–8, 125–26, 155–56, 158, 166n7, 185n18, 187n27. *See also* social media
intelligibility/unintelligibility, 24, 42, 64–65, 105, 114, 118–19, 147
intersectionality, 5–6, 8–10, 12, 30, 73–74, 77–78, 92, 97, 127–28, 146–47, 151–52
invisibility. *See* visibility
Islam: association with terrorism, 20–21; fashion and, 21, 50; gender and, 21, 58; queerness and, 36, 50, 127; unity and, 114–16
Islamophobia, 36
Israel: environment and, 15–16, 55–56, 58–59, 61, 63–64, 74–76, 91, 100–101, 103–4, 112–13, 172nn1,4,5, 173nn9,11, 175nn33,40, 176nn57,58, 185n14; gender in, 57–58, 170nn59,60; media and, 18, 24–25, 42–46, 144, 166n8, 178n2, 179n8, 181n47; occupation of Palestinian territories, 1–7, 9–16, 17–18, 24–26, 30, 33–53, 54–59, 63–69, 72, 74–78, 82–86, 91, 94, 98–99, 101–5, 110, 114, 116–20, 123–28, 130–31, 138–41, 143–45,

149–50, 155–56, 159n1, 160nn1,6, 162nn18,22, 163n34, 164n42, 165nn1,3, 169nn49,50, 170n64, 172nn4,5, 173nn9,11, 175n40, 176nn57,58, 178n4, 179nn5,6, 182n72, 183nn4,6, 184nn7,9, 185nn12,14,16, 186n19, 190n76; pinkwashing and, 9–10, 30–33, 36–37, 42–43, 50, 56, 127, 168n34, 169n38, 191n80; textile industry and, 67–69, 80–82, 123–24, 183n3; tourism in, 47–50
Israr (alias), 93–97, 102–4, 107–8, 112–13

jalabiyya, 39–40
Jawabra, Hazar, 109–10, 116–19, 128, 155–56; Different Skin Tones, 110–16
Jenin, 93–94, 96–104, 106–8, 112–13, 119–20, 155–56, 178nn4,5,6,8
jewelry, 82–89
Jewish National Fund (JNF), 54–55, 104, 172nn1,4,5, 174n14
Johnson, Penny, 103–4
Jordan, 17, 32–33, 68–69, 80, 142, 156, 159n1
joy, 46, 51, 74–76, 89, 108–10, 150, 152

Kanaaneh, Rhoda, 9, 29–30
Kanafani, Ghassan, 161n11, 162n23
Kapadia, Ronak, 153
Kavasmi, Reem, 23–24
keffiyeh, 61, 81, 104–5, 174n29, 187n27
Kelly, Jennifer, 31, 171n76
Khaled, Leila, 25–26
Khalil, Angham, 150
al-Khalil village, 141–42
Khass, Sereen and Yasmine, 63–64, 89–90
Kimmerer, Robin Wall, 71
kinship, 62–63, 130, 140, 186n22
knitting, 7, 98–99, 109–10, 112–14, 121–22, 124–25, 152
knowledge: fashion and, 7–8, 12, 71, 76–78, 80–81, 84–85, 90–91, 150–51; history and, 90–91; indigeneity and, 133–34, 175n40; labor and, 150–51; land and, 7, 174n31, 176n58; violence toward, 156
Kuntsman, Adi, 58

labor, 14–15; affect and, 26, 130; collective, 142; fashion and, 15–16, 23, 79–81, 123–25, 130–31, 139–43, 150–52, 184n10; gender and, 78–81, 98–99, 126–27, 141–42, 151–52, 184n10, 186n25; knowledge and, 150–51; land and, 124, 139; occupation and, 80–81, 124, 130–31, 177n69; production and, 15–16, 123–25; race and, 185n12; time and, 15–16, 124–25, 130, 142–43
land: activism and, 65; aesthetics and, 58–59, 61, 65–66, 73–76, 90–92, 174n15; affect and, 65, 69, 100–101, 110, 174n15; agency and, 65–66; belonging and, 10, 69, 91–92, 112–13, 144–46; body and, 15–16, 69, 108–9; care for, 54–55, 69, 78, 83–84, 104–5, 174n15, 175n40; collectivity and, 69; colonialism and, 46, 54–58, 62–65, 172n2, 175n40; decolonization and, 65; fashion and, 58–63, 69, 71, 73–74, 78, 80–81, 85–86, 91–92, 108–10, 112–13, 141–42, 145–46, 150–52; gender and, 56–58, 65, 73–74, 163n33; history and, 56–59, 138; human/nonhuman and, 62–65, 100–101, 104–5, 112, 175n40; identity and, 55, 91–92, 144; indigeneity and, 55–57, 62–63, 65–67, 69, 73–76, 78, 100–101, 104–5, 112–13, 141–42, 174n31, 175n40, 176n51; knowledge and, 7, 174n31, 176n58; labor and, 124, 139; materiality and, 65, 91–92, 103–4, 113–14, 131, 138; narratives of, 59, 61; occupation and, 57–63, 112, 175n40, 185n14; photography and, 58–59; politics of, 74–76; queerness and, 58–59, 63–65, 73–74, 104–5; race and, 57–58; relationality and, 65, 69, 71–72, 83–84, 91; resistance and, 69; senses and, 69, 113; sexuality and, 58–59, 65; sovereignty and, 15–16, 62–64, 66–67, 69, 74–76, 91, 100–101, 177n60; state and, 15–16, 69; visuality and, 55, 57–58, 100–101
language, 14–15, 97, 140–41; fashion and, 20–21, 97, 182n62; identity and, 20–21; visuality and, 106–8
Lawrence, Shukri, 1–2, 17–26, 29–33, 36–37, 42–46, 51–53, 97–98
Lebanon, 19, 47–49, 80–81, 159n1
legibility/illegibility, 26, 87–89, 119, 147; body and, 36, 105, 107, 128; fashion and, 42, 96–97, 105–6, 119, 128, 130; politics of, 26; queerness and, 105–6; resistance and, 105, 107, 128; sovereignty and, 109, 117–18; state and, 107
LGBTQ+ rights. *See* pinkwashing
liberalism, 31, 36, 63, 78, 81–82, 108–9, 118, 126–27, 133–34, 177n67
Li, Darryl, 143, 185n16
liberation, 25–26, 33–35, 93, 161nn10,11; animals and, 112–13; disidentification and, 28–29, 105; environment and, 15–16, 65, 92, 146; fashion and, 2–8, 12, 15–16, 51–53, 66–67, 76–77, 90–92, 96–98, 105–6, 109, 121–22, 127, 137, 144, 147, 150–53; gender and, 9–10, 57–58, 105, 137, 146–47, 163n34, 176n55, 191n80; nation and, 57–58, 121–22, 146, 163n34, 164n40; queerness and, 29–30, 90, 92, 105–6, 127, 146–47, 176n55, 191n80; race and, 57–58, 65, 146; sexuality and, 9–10, 105, 146, 191n80; state and, 3–6, 10
Lifta village, 56–57, 59–63, 174n26

linen, 81, 176n53, 189n51. *See also* fabric
love, 139–41

Maikey, Haneen, 29
maiming, 11, 69, 183n6
Maira, Sunaina, 4–5
Majd al-Krum village, 82–85
al-Majdal village, 68–69
majdalawi, 71, 189n51
Majlaton, Shady, 35, 59–63, 65, 90, 92
manufacturing, 7, 71–72, 80–81, 97–98, 124, 141, 177n68, 184n10
Marks, Laura, 96, 113–14
Martineau, Jarrett, 106
martyrs, martyrdom, 41, 58, 93–94, 99–100, 107–8, 178nn1,2
Massad, Joseph, 163n34
Matar, Dina, 6, 126–27, 186n24
materiality: fashion and, 6–8, 14–16, 26, 37–39, 50–52, 65–67, 76–78, 82–85, 87, 91–92, 94, 97–99, 110, 113–14, 119, 123, 127–28, 130–31, 140, 142–43, 152–53, 182n62, 189n51; land and, 65, 91–92, 103–4, 113–14, 131, 138; occupation and, 14–16, 26, 34, 37–39, 50–52, 57, 65, 83, 97, 103–4, 110, 119, 123, 130–31, 142–43, 153, 186n22, 188n50; resistance and, 6, 24, 93–94, 125, 142–43, 153
media, 49–50, 165n4, 166n5, 181n46; activism and, 102–3, 165n3; consumption of, 17–18; digital, 2, 20, 26–27, 108, 127–28, 156–58; fashion and, 2, 20–27, 50–51, 77–78, 89, 108–9, 127–28, 140, 151–52, 179n10; occupation and, 17–18, 24–26, 33, 50–53, 57–58, 96, 156–58, 178n4; Palestinians and, 4–6, 18–19, 24–26, 33, 50–51, 128, 137–38, 143–44, 159n1, 165n3, 166n8, 178nn1,2,4, 179n8; piracy and, 96–97; social, 2, 5, 17–19, 21–22, 30–31, 43, 51–52, 77–78, 89, 94, 108–9, 133, 140, 149, 155–58, 162n19, 179nn5,10, 181n47, 185n18
Meera Adnan, 131–33, 140–43; Nice Guys, 134–38, 147
Melamed, Jodi, 175n38
memory, 93; body and, 150; collective, 54–55; erasure of, 26; fashion and, 76, 83–84; history and, 187nn37,39; land and, 56–57
migration, 54
militancy: fashion and, 15–16, 52, 80–81, 89, 95–100, 102–4, 109, 119–20, 151; resistance and, 15–16, 52, 97–100, 109, 119–20, 179nn5,8
militarism, 31–33, 119–20, 124, 145–46, 159n1, 170n60, 171n76; sexuality and, 57; tourism and, 47
Mirzoeff, Nicholas, 127–28
misdirection, 117–18
misogyny, 56, 73, 139, 191n80
Miss Universe, 42–46
mobility/immobility, 3, 15–16, 93, 130, 143–44, 160n6, 186nn19,22; tourism and, 47–49
modernity, 9–10, 42–43, 133–34, 161n10
Morgensen, Scott Lauria, 57
mountain deer, 103–4
mourning, 83–85, 94, 108
movement: freedom of, 5–6, 112–13; occupation and, 3, 16, 185n16
multiculturalism, 32–33
multitude, 104–5, 114–18, 182n64
Muñoz, José, 28–29
Murad, Bashar, 1, 52, 54, 58–59, 72, 89–90, 169n53; "Maskhara," 33–37, 42
museums, museumification, 56–57, 87, 119, 174
music, music videos, 2, 4–6, 10–11, 18–19, 33–37, 42–43, 166n6
mutuality, 5, 40, 42, 64–65, 108–9, 126, 139–40, 175n40

Nablus, 68, 71, 73–74, 98–99, 119–20, 170n58
Nabulsi, Jamal, 69, 90
Nakba, 43, 54, 57, 61–63, 69–70, 80–81, 98–99, 125, 130–32, 149–50, 184n8, 187n37; time and, 138–39, 141–44, 150
Naksa. *See* Six-Day War
narrative: affect and, 47; colonial, 12, 26; counternarrative, 6–7, 144; environment and, 91–92; fashion and, 6–7, 10–12, 26, 59, 61, 85, 91–92, 113–14, 126–27, 139, 147, 153; gender and, 58, 139, 186n25; identity and, 12, 113–14; indigeneity and, 10–12; land and, 59, 61; nation and, 12, 56–57, 147, 153, 186n25; of Palestinians, 6, 10, 30, 58–59, 113–14, 126–27, 139, 143–44, 158, 186n25; queerness and, 12, 30–33, 127, 139; sexuality and, 30–33; tourism and, 47; visibility/invisibility and, 113–14, 143
Nasser-Khoury, Omar, 80
nation, nationalism, 4, 10, 109, 161n11, 162n17, 168n34; aesthetics and, 81–82, 109, 118, 136–38, 162n17; affect and, 136–37; art and, 4–5, 8, 71–72, 163nn33,34, 176n54; belonging and, 14, 31–33, 136–38, 145–46; colonialism and, 12, 21–22, 57–58; creative production and, 5–6, 145, 153; culture and, 4–6, 145–46; decolonization and, 12, 146; ethnicity and, 33, 118, 146; fashion and, 7, 80–81, 136, 147–48, 170n61, 178n77, 187n27, 190n63; gender and,

8, 21–22, 31–32, 41, 57–58, 80–81, 126–27, 136, 139, 146–48, 153, 163nn33,34, 170nn60,61, 174n20, 178n77, 186n25, 190n63; history and, 56–57, 145–47; identity and, 8–9, 29–30, 55, 81–82, 145–46, 166n6; liberation and, 57–58, 121–22, 146, 163n34, 164n40; narrative and, 12, 56–57, 147, 153, 186n25; normativity and, 41, 57–58, 136, 139, 146; politics and, 8–9, 153, 162n17; queerness and, 29–30, 41, 64–65, 145; race and, 15–16, 21–22, 31–32, 41, 57–58; religion and, 31–32; resistance and, 8, 71–72, 162n17, 186n25; sexuality and, 15–16, 29–33, 41, 57, 146, 163n34, 166n6, 168n34; time and, 145–46. *See also* state
National Geographic, 68–69
nature, 61–62, 91, 138, 149, 175n33; body and, 64–65, 91–92, 110; queerness and, 63–65; resistance and, 74–76, 100–101. *See also* environment; land
Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo, 117
neoliberalism, 9–10, 21–22, 24, 63, 105–6, 161nn9,10, 165n56, 177n67, 186n24
niqab, 20–21
Nizri, Yigal, 39–40
Nnbynn, Sudden Attack, 149–50, 152–53
Nöl Collective, 55, 67–73, 90–92, 97–98, 124–25, 155–56
nonviolence, 6, 94, 96–97, 125, 145. *See also* violence
Noora, 76–80. *See* Taita Leila
Nordau, Max, 57–58
normativity: body and, 18–19, 29, 41, 114, 134; colonialism and, 9–10, 35–37, 44–46, 57–58, 64–65, 146, 170n60; gender and, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 64–65, 105–6, 114, 127–28, 133–34, 136, 139, 146–47, 153, 170n60; legibility and, 26; nation and, 41, 57–58, 136, 139, 146; queerness and, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 57–58, 64–65, 105–6, 127–28, 134, 146–47, 170n60; race and, 35–37, 41, 57–58, 114, 127–28, 146; representation and, 8–9, 144; sexuality and, 9–10, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 57–58, 64–65, 105–6, 127–28, 146–47, 170n60
nostalgia, 131–34, 187nn37,39, 188n43; prefigurative, 132–34, 138, 150
#NotYourHabibti movement, 72

occupation: affect and, 3, 11, 16, 42, 110, 119–20, 125–26, 130, 132–33, 170n62; art and, 7, 25–26; body and, 89; class and, 161n10; creative production and, 1–4, 6, 11, 15–16, 51–52, 96, 120, 125, 131–33, 139–40, 142–45, 151, 188n50; culture and, 3–7, 156–58, 189n57, 191n80; economy and, 3, 5, 83, 97–99, 123–25, 145, 153, 161n10, 162n18, 176n55, 177n67; environment and, 11, 15–16, 55–58, 61–62, 72, 74–76, 83–84, 91, 172n4, 174n14, 185n14; fashion and, 14–15, 19–20, 32–33, 40–41, 46–47, 51–53, 72–73, 85–87, 110, 123–26, 130–31, 142–43, 145, 147–48, 170n62; gender and, 8, 72–73, 87, 147, 191n80; identity and, 89, 162n22; labor and, 80–81, 124, 130–31, 177n69; land and, 57–63, 112, 175n40, 185n14; materiality and, 14–16, 26, 34, 37–39, 50–52, 57, 65, 83, 97, 103–4, 110, 119, 123, 130–31, 142–43, 153, 186n22, 188n50; media and, 17–18, 24–26, 33, 50–53, 57–58, 96, 156–58, 178n4; movement and, 3, 16, 185n16; production and, 1–2, 12, 74, 77–78, 97, 124–26, 130–31, 142, 155–56; queerness and, 15–16, 24, 29, 32–33, 35, 41–42, 53, 64–65, 72, 145, 168n34; race and, 8, 41–42, 47–49, 147, 185n14; senses and, 74, 173n11; sexuality and, 8, 41–42, 65, 72, 168n34; social and, 17–18, 89, 145, 165n4; space and, 1–3, 17–18, 34, 123, 126, 130–33, 139, 144, 187n34; technology and, 186n19; time and, 1–3, 85–86, 123, 126, 130–33, 139, 142–44, 187n34; tourism and, 47–49; violence and, 35, 37–39, 72, 94; visuality and, 24–28, 34, 40–41, 46–47, 144, 185n14
olive trees, 83–84
oneness, 15–16, 116–18. *See also* unity
opacity, 8–9, 26, 105, 113–14, 116, 118–19, 127–28, 180n35
optimism, 77, 132–33, 139–40, 155–56, 188n41
Orientalism, 29, 47–51, 88–89, 118, 126–27, 171n74; dis-Orientalism, 49–51
Oslo Accords, 3–11, 47, 145, 160n1, 161n7, 163n42, 165nn1,56, 166n8, 169n49, 172n5, 184n7
Ottoman Empire, 131–32, 184n8

Palestine, Palestinians, 14, 56–57; '48 territories, 11–13, 59, 68–69, 77, 109, 112–13, 147–48, 156; body and, 35–39, 40–41, 50–51, 57–58, 69, 104–6, 119–20, 128, 134–36, 156, 170nn59,64, 190n63; diaspora and, 11, 14–15, 22–23, 73, 76–77, 97, 127, 140–41, 157–58; economy of, 14–15, 97, 123–24, 161n10, 162n18, 171n76, 177n67; environment and, 12, 15–16, 54–62, 65–68, 71, 74–76, 78, 89–92, 112–13, 141–42, 150–51, 172nn4,5, 173nn9,11, 176n58; gender and, 8–10, 12, 36–37, 41, 56–58, 65–66, 72–73, 78–81, 105–6, 116–17, 126–28, 134–39, 147–48, 150–51, 163nn32,33, 170nn59,61,62, 176n55, 177n67, 178n77, 186n25, 190n63, 191n80;

Palestine, Palestinians *(continued)*
identity and, 7–9, 11–12, 19–20, 29–30, 43, 55, 59, 61, 76, 80–82, 87, 97–98, 127, 144, 146; indigeneity of, 7, 9–12, 55, 62–63, 65–66, 82–83, 90, 92, 141–42, 147–48, 153, 164nn40,42,44; land and, 54–59, 61–63, 66–67, 69, 71–72, 82–84, 100–101, 103–4, 138, 144–46, 163nn32,33, 172n2; in media, 4–6, 18–19, 24–26, 33, 50–51, 128, 137–38, 143–44, 159n1, 165n3, 166n8, 178nn1,2,4, 179n8; narratives of, 6, 10, 30, 58–59, 113–14, 126–27, 139, 143–44, 158, 186n25; nation and, 4–6, 8–9, 41, 55, 71–72, 80–82, 126, 136, 145–48, 161n11, 162n17, 163nn32,33, 170n61, 178n77; nostalgia and, 131–33, 187n37; race and, 12, 36–37, 41, 57–58, 65–66, 78, 137–38, 150–51, 170n59; representations of, 6, 8–9, 20–21, 24–30, 46–47, 49–51, 127–28, 141–42, 144, 178nn1,2, 190n63; queerness and, 8–10, 12, 15–16, 18–26, 29–39, 41–42, 50–53, 73, 90, 92, 105–6, 118–19, 127–28, 147, 176n55; sexuality and, 8–10, 12, 29, 31–33, 36–41, 57–59, 65–66, 105–6, 116–17, 127–28, 137–39, 147–48, 150–51, 191n80; state and, 3–5, 30, 41, 80–81, 136, 145–46, 161nn10,11, 178n4; symbols of, 17–18, 61–63, 81–82, 93, 101–4, 121–22, 150, 162n22, 169n49, 187n27; technology and, 18–19, 108, 162n19, 165nn3,4, 166n8, 181nn45,47, 186n22; textile industry in, 22, 67–69, 123–27, 176n53, 177n68, 179n7, 184n11, 190n63; time and, 13, 15–16, 71, 85–86, 120, 130–33, 138–39, 143–44; tourism and, 47–50, 171n76; tradition and, 7–8, 40, 68–70, 76–82, 87, 92, 94, 98–99, 109–10, 117–18, 121–22, 126–27, 141–42, 147–48, 150, 157–58, 178n77; visibility/invisibility of, 14–15, 24–26, 46–47, 57, 79–80, 87–89, 105–6, 113–14, 118–19, 143–44, 147, 151, 160n6, 190n66; visuality and, 24, 26, 46–47, 59, 62–63, 88–89, 109, 113–14, 118–19, 147–48, 160n6, 178nn1,2
Palestinian Authority (PA), 3–5, 8–10, 16, 18, 77, 92, 94, 99, 104, 109, 117, 139, 159n1, 160n1, 161nn9,10, 162nn17,23, 163n42, 166n8, 173n11, 178nn4,5
Palestine Heirloom Seed Library, 71–72
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), 80–81, 121–22
Pappé, Ilan, 10–11, 67
Parkins, Ilya, 128, 188n43, 190n71
parkour, 4
parody, 46–47
partitionism, 3–5, 126
patriarchy, 36–37, 65, 72, 137–38, 175n33, 186n25, 191n80
Patshuro, 30–31
Payne, Alice, 65–66
Peteet, Julie, 161n12, 169n47
photography, 19–21, 66–69, 85–86, 106, 108–9; activism and, 7; affect and, 26, 167n15, 170n62; gender and, 78; history and, 147, 152; land and, 58–59; legibility/illegibility and, 128; politics of, 26–27, 139, 167n22; spectacle and, 42–43, 52
pinkwashing, 30–33, 36–37, 43–46, 52, 56–57, 92, 105–6, 127, 139, 169n38, 170n64. *See also* greenwashing; sexuality
piracy, 96–97
pleasure, 6, 37–42, 47, 63–64, 67, 74, 89, 119, 130–31, 145
PLO Bulletin, 80–81
pluralism, 74, 104–6, 116–17
policing, 3–4, 6–7, 30, 73, 119, 145
politics: aesthetics and, 2–5, 12–13, 28–29, 46, 53, 106–7, 109, 116–17, 144, 162n17, 166n12; affect and, 13, 24, 28–29, 46, 51–52, 153; agency and, 26–27, 144; art and, 4–6, 118–19; colonialism and, 13, 52; community and, 104–6, 109; creative production and, 4–5, 162n22; culture and, 4–7, 10–11, 26, 66–67; decolonization and, 5–6, 11, 25, 106, 151–52; of fashion, x–xii, 2–3, 6–8, 10–13, 15–16, 20–21, 23, 26–27, 46, 50–53, 73–74, 77, 80–81, 91–92, 97–99, 106, 108–9, 116–17, 121–22, 130, 139, 151–53, 155–58, 165n56, 190n63; of gender, 133–34, 137–38; of identity, 69, 87; of indigeneity, 69; of land, 74–76; nation and, 8–9, 153, 162n17; of photography, 26–27, 139, 167n22; of queerness, 8–9, 105–6; of senses, 7–8, 64, 74, 166n12; of sexuality, 133–34, 137–38; of time, 1–2, 139, 146, 189n57; visual, 24–26, 57, 97–98, 106, 108, 133–34, 167n22, 178n1
pollution, 55–56, 67, 69, 74–76, 100–101, 151–52
polyester, 112. *See also* fabric
Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, 25–26
pornography, 56–58
Povinelli, Elizabeth, 63
pride, 9–10, 32–33, 43, 81, 87
primitivism, 57–58
Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, 27
production: environment and, 65–67, 91–92, 112–13; fashion and, 1–2, 6, 11–12, 14–16, 19–20, 49, 65–72, 74, 77–80, 82–83, 90–92, 97, 112–14, 122–28, 130, 133, 142–43, 150–52, 155–56; occupation and, 1–2, 12, 74, 77–78, 97, 124–26, 130–31, 142, 155–56; over-production, 14–15; time and, 15–16, 82–83, 130, 133, 142–43, 150
profiling, 104–5, 114, 119–20, 185n12

progress, 9–10, 188n41
propaganda, 57–58, 78, 92, 127, 159n1, 190n63
Puar, Jasbir, 36, 41, 170n64

queerness: activism and, 29–30, 52–53, 105–6, 109, 127; aesthetics and, 19, 23, 26–29, 33–37, 42, 53, 64–65, 78, 90–92, 105, 107–9, 116–18, 127–28, 137–38, 147, 182n61; affect and, 28–29, 41–42, 64–65, 105, 118, 127, 188n50, 189n53; agency and, 40–41, 63; art and, 30; belonging and, 31–33, 64–65; body and, 24, 63–65, 105–6, 133–34; colonialism and, 8–10, 12, 29–30, 62–63; community and, 52–53, 92; creative production and, 53, 107, 127, 145, 147; culture and, 8–10, 147, 150–51, 166n11; decolonization and, 8–10, 12, 29–30, 37, 50–53, 91–92, 116–17, 119–20, 127, 131, 146–47, 150–52; environment and, 104–5, 175n38; ethnicity and, 8–9, 33, 41, 127–28; fashion and, 12, 15–16, 21–30, 32–33, 36, 40–42, 44–46, 50–53, 62–65, 72, 78, 87–89, 90–92, 104–6, 114, 116–20, 127–28, 131, 133–38, 146–47, 150–52, 166n11, 167n28, 182n61; gender and, 24, 64–65, 106, 133–38, 147, 191n80; history and, 133–34; human/nonhuman and, 64–65; identity and, 8–9, 29–31, 59, 61, 106; indigeneity and, 9–10, 12, 62–65, 104–6, 133–34, 175n39, 180n31; land and, 58–59, 63–65, 73–74, 104–5; legibility/illegibility and, 105–6; liberation and, 29–30, 90, 92, 105–6, 127, 146–47, 176n55, 191n80; narrative and, 12, 30–33, 127, 139; nation and, 29–30, 41, 64–65, 145; normativity and, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 57–58, 64–65, 105–6, 127–28, 134, 146–47, 170n60; occupation and, 15–16, 24, 29, 32–33, 35, 41-42, 53, 64–65, 72, 145, 168n34; politics of, 8–9, 105–6; race and, 9–10, 32–33, 35–36, 41, 57–58, 167n28; relationality and, 62–63, 104–6, 175n38, 180n31, 182n61, 188n50, 189n53; religion and, 36, 50, 127; representation and, 22, 25, 41, 73, 78, 166n7; resistance and, 30–31, 36–37, 146–47, 176n55, 180n27; state and, 52, 64–65, 116–17, 145; subjectivity and, 8–9, 30, 65, 105–7, 116–17, 127, 146; time and, 120; visuality and, 30, 105–6, 114, 180n35, 183n77
queer decolonial fashion, 12, 52, 119–20, 131
queer indigenous fashion justice, 65–67, 69, 91–92, 130
queerphobia, 11, 15–16, 35–36, 50, 73, 117, 127, 191n80
queer stealth, 105–9, 114, 117–20

race: body and, 29, 33, 35–39, 41, 73–74, 87–89, 105; colonialism and, 8–10, 12, 21–22, 55–58, 137–38; decolonization and, 12, 29–30; environment and, 12, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 91–92, 150–51, 185n14; fashion and, 8–9, 12, 15–16, 19–20, 29, 42, 65–66, 73–74, 78, 87–89, 118, 126–27, 130–31, 150–52, 167n28; gender and, 35–36, 41, 57–58, 73–74, 170n59, 174n20; labor and, 185n12; land and, 57–58; liberation and, 57–58, 65, 146; nation and, 15–16, 21–22, 31–32, 41, 57–58; normativity and, 35–37, 41, 57–58, 114, 127–28, 146; occupation and, 8, 41–42, 47–49, 147, 185n14; politics of, 137–38; queerness and, 9–10, 32–33, 35–36, 41, 57–58, 167n28; religion and, 36; representation and, 15–16, 22, 41; sexuality and, 29–30, 41, 174n20; state and, 15–16, 21–22, 29–33, 35–37, 42, 47–49, 57–58, 117; visuality and, 134
racism, 11, 35–36; colonialism and, 55–56; environmental, 55–56, 65, 92, 174n13
radio, 19, 166n8
Ramallah, 1–2, 55, 71–72, 76–77, 140, 155–56, 165n56, 170n58
recognition, 42, 109, 171n65
Reddy, Chandan, 175n38
refugees, 68–69, 71, 79–81, 94, 121–22, 124–27, 138, 142, 178n4, 184n8
refusal, 14–16, 26, 35, 41–42, 105, 109, 113–14, 118–20, 125–28, 142–43, 180n27, 186n24, 190n75
relationality: aesthetics and, 105, 109; body and, 108–9; fashion and, 15–16, 71, 104–5, 127, 151, 156–58; indigeneity and, 12, 175n40, 176n47, 180n31; land and, 65, 69, 71–72, 83–84, 91; queerness and, 62–63, 104–6, 175n38, 180n31, 182n61, 188n50, 189n53
religion, 8–9; fashion and, 21, 50; gender and, 21; identity and, 87; nation and, 31–32; queerness and, 36, 50, 127; race and, 36; sexuality and, 36; state and, 31–32
reorientation, 74
reparation, 5–6, 85–86, 131
representation: crisis of, 4–5; fashion and, 20–22, 24–27, 41, 46–47, 50–51, 65–67, 73, 78–80, 98, 108, 110, 112–14, 117–20, 127–28, 136, 141–42, 144, 150–52, 190n63; gender and, 15–16, 41, 73, 78–80, 136, 141–42, 151–52, 163n33, 190n63; misrepresentation, 6; normativity and, 8–9, 144; of Palestinians, 6, 8–9, 20–21, 24–30, 46–47, 49–51, 127–28, 141–42, 144, 178nn1,2, 190n63; queerness and, 22, 25, 41, 73, 78, 166n7; race and, 15–16, 22, 41; self-representation, 10, 25–27, 29–30, 46–47, 83–84, 108, 166n7; sexuality and, 15–16; visual, 6, 20–21, 46–47, 50–51, 73, 127–28, 144, 166n7, 178nn1,2, 186n24

resistance: activism and, 15–16, 29–30, 97–98, 105–6, 109, 119–20, 156–58; aesthetics and, 2–3, 11–12, 33–37, 42, 49–50, 53, 87, 96, 109, 136–38, 150–51; affect and, 93, 107–8, 119–20, 153; agency and, 25; art and, 4–5, 8, 71–72, 145, 150–51; body and, 108–9, 119–20; collectivity and, 104–7, 137–38, 145, 166n7; creative production and, 4–6, 10–11, 15–16, 25–27, 42, 51–53, 66–67, 76–77, 89, 91–92, 94, 96–98, 109, 125, 144–45, 151, 153, 190n76; culture and, 5–6, 10–12, 96–97, 109, 144–45, 147, 152, 162n23; documentation and, 4, 108, 119–20; fashion and, 8–9, 12, 26–27, 51–52, 61, 71, 74–76, 81–82, 93–98, 101–3, 106–9, 119–20, 128, 141, 144–46, 150–53, 181n37; gender and, 8, 80–81, 137, 163n34, 176n55, 186n25; land and, 69; legibility/illegibility and, 105, 107, 128; materiality and, 6, 24, 93–94, 125, 142–43, 153; nation and, 8, 71–72, 162n17, 186n25; queerness and, 30–31, 36–37, 146–47, 176n55, 180n27; time and, 132–33, 139; unity and, 103–4, 107; violence/nonviolence of, 6, 24–25, 94, 96–97, 145, 190n76; visuality and, 93, 97–98, 106, 108, 183n81
return, 5–6, 10, 55, 63, 80–81, 110, 125
re-worlding, 9–10, 131
Richter-Devroe, Sophie, 4–5
Ritskes, Eric, 106
roadblocks, 4, 33
ruination, 54–62, 64, 74–76, 139, 174n26
runway shows, 27–29, 39–40, 46–47, 52–53, 171n73

Saad, Dima, 81–82
Sabella, Steve, 146
Sabra, 57–58, 174n20
sadness, 26, 108, 145, 158, 170n62
Said, Edward, 3–4, 6, 26–27, 139, 144–45, 147, 153, 161n7, 177n69, 186n23, 188n50
Sakr, Laila Shereen, 102–5, 162n19, 191n2
Salem, Um, 69–70
Salih, Ruba, 4–5
sameness, 105–7, 114–16. *See also* unity
Samou' village, 69–70
Sansour, Vivien, 71–72
Sarkar, Bhaskar, 96–97
satire, 33–37, 50–51, 96–97
Schulman, Sarah, 31–2
sea, 62–63, 138, 152
Second Intifada (al-Aqsa Intifada), x–xi, 4–6, 18, 39, 94, 143, 165n4, 168n34, 178nn1,2,4, 183n4, 186n25
security, securitization, 3–4, 30, 41–42, 96–97, 114, 143–44, 153, 160n1, 169n50, 170n64
Seely, Stephen, 114
segregation, 4, 32–33, 41, 52, 103–4, 126, 130, 143, 160n6, 189n51
Seikaly, Sherene, 9, 29–30, 143–44
senses: aesthetics and, 58, 113–14, 166n12; belonging and, 166n12; colonialism and, 64, 69; decolonization and, 64, 84–85, 142–43; environment and, 55–56, 58, 61–62, 64; fashion and, 7–8, 64–65, 74, 91, 134–36; land and, 69, 113; occupation and, 74, 173n11; politics of, 7–8, 64, 74, 166n12
sentience, 91
sentimentality, 126–27, 132
separation, 4–5, 18, 24, 33, 35–36, 53, 55, 63, 67, 69, 103–4, 122–23, 130, 169n50, 170n64
Separation Wall, 4, 23–28, 33–35, 103–4, 167nn20,22, 169n50
settlements, 34, 82–83, 184n7; environment and, 54–57, 83–84; expansion of, 3–4, 54–55, 178n4; sexuality and, 57
sexuality: activism and, 168n34; belonging and, 31–33; body and, 12, 15–16, 24, 59, 105–6; colonialism and, 8–10, 12, 29–31, 33–34, 42, 57–58, 64–65, 69, 147–48; decolonization and, 8–10, 12, 29–30; environment and, 12, 58–59, 65–66, 90, 91–92, 150–51; fashion and, 8–9, 12, 15–17, 21–22, 29–30, 40, 42, 53, 73–74, 118, 127–28, 134, 137–39, 150–51; gender and, 12, 24, 58–59, 163n34; history and, 133–34; identity and, 8–9, 21–22, 24, 105–6, 166n6; indigeneity and, 57; land and, 58–59, 65; liberation and, 9–10, 105, 146, 191n80; narrative and, 30–33; nation and, 15–16, 29–33, 41, 57, 146, 163n34, 166n6, 168n34; normativity and, 9–10, 35–37, 41, 44–46, 52, 57–58, 64–65, 105–6, 127–28, 146–47, 170n60; occupation and, 8, 41–42, 65, 72, 168n34; politics of, 133–34, 137–38; race and, 29–30, 41, 174n20; representation and, 15–16; settler, 57; state and, 15–16, 29–33, 36–37, 42, 116–17, 127; time and, 15–16; tourism and, 31, 50; visibility/invisibility and, 9–10, 29–30, 133–34; visuality and, 58–59, 134
Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Nadera, 117, 173n11, 182n72
Sharif, Lila, 55
Shawa, Salma, 122–23, 125–28, 130, 140–41, 145–47, 155–56. *See also* ANAT
shawal, 81
Sheehi, Lara and Stephen, 84–85, 182n72
Sheikh Jarrah, 33–34, 183n6

shipping, 68–69, 82–83, 122–23, 142
Shohat, Ella, 57–58
shoqet shatara, 71
Signal, 158
silk, 63–65, 78–79, 176n53, 189n51. *See also* fiber
Sim Sim (alias), 55, 67–76, 90–91, 97–98, 155–56. *See also* Nöl Collective
Six-Day War (Naksa), 68–69, 169n49, 183n1, 184n7
Skin Tone (dir. Hamin), 110–12
slowness, 1–2, 13, 15–16, 80, 82–83, 120, 124–25, 130–31, 133, 138–39, 141–43, 174n13. *See also* time
Smilges, Logan, 106–7
social: colonialism and, 84–85; fashion and, 6–7, 80, 84–85, 91, 107, 113–14, 116–17, 124–27, 130–31, 134–36, 139, 150–51, 155–56, 165n56; gender and, 116–17, 151–52; history and, 133–34, 163n26; identity and, 89; occupation and, 17–18, 89, 145, 165n4; time and, 139
social justice, 15–16, 43, 78, 155–56
social media, 2, 5, 17–19, 21–22, 30–31, 43, 51–52, 77–78, 89, 94, 108–9, 133, 140, 149, 155–58, 162n19, 179nn5,10, 181n47, 185n18
solidarity, 5, 14, 24, 66–67, 97, 109, 121–22, 125–27, 140–41, 156–58, 159n1, 169n49, 183n6; tourism and, 47–50, 171n76
sourcing, 77, 82, 111–13, 119, 125–26, 142, 179n7
sousveillance, 100–101, 104
souvenirs, 47–50
sovereignty, 137–38, 153; indigeneity and, 146, 163n42, 176n47, 183n81; land and, 15–16, 62–64, 66–67, 69, 74–76, 91, 100–101, 177n60; legibility/illegibility and, 109, 117–18; state and, 5–6, 10, 145–46, 164n42; visual, 109, 118–19, 153, 180n25, 183n81, 185n14
space: colonialism and, 4–5, 14, 125, 140, 143; fashion and, 15–16, 19–20, 27–28, 99, 130–31; occupation and, 1–3, 17–18, 34, 123, 126, 130–33, 139, 144, 187n34; technology and, 19. *See also* time
spectacle, 24–25, 40–43, 46–47, 128, 143, 151
Stacey, Jackie, 133
starvation, 143, 159n1, 183n4
state, 3–4; belonging and, 64–65, 145–46; colonialism and, 21–22, 57–58, 153; creative production and, 145–46; ethnicity and, 15–16, 33, 42–43, 92, 117, 146, 187n29; fashion and, 15–16, 26–27, 36–37, 41–42, 80–81, 109, 145–46; gender and, 21–22, 31–32, 35–37, 42, 57–58, 80–81, 117, 127, 170nn59,60; land and, 15–16, 69; legibility/illegibility and, 107; liberation and, 3–6, 10; queerness and, 52, 64–65, 116–17, 145; race and, 15–16, 21–22, 29–33, 35–37, 42, 47–49, 57–58, 117; sexuality and, 15–16, 29–33, 36–37, 42, 116–17, 127; sovereignty and, 5–6, 10, 145–46, 164n42; time and, 130–31, 145–46; tourism and, 47–49; violence by, 31–37, 41, 130–31, 143, 145, 156, 170nn59,62, 178n4; visuality and, 25–26
stealth, 102–3, 106, 109, 114, 116–20, 127–28, 133, 183n80; queer, 105–9, 117–20, 180n32
steganography, 117–18
Stein, Rebecca, 43, 47, 52, 165n4
Stoler, Ann, 64, 176n57
storytelling: communal, 102–3; fashion, 7, 11, 13–14, 16, 19–20, 33, 50–52, 65–67, 71, 89–92, 106–9, 112–13, 119–20, 125, 136, 140–43, 147, 182n62; image, 33; indigeneity and, 71, 92; material, 50–52, 182n62; pedagogical, 125; resistance and, 11, 19–20, 106–9; stealth and, 117–19; visual, 50–52, 89–90, 112–13, 136
streetwear, 96, 138
strip-downs, 37–39, 170n62
subalternity, 35–36, 57–58
subjectivity: collectivity and, 4, 114–17; political, 4–5, 107; queerness and, 8–9, 30, 65, 105–7, 116–17, 127, 146
suffering, 24–25, 143, 162n18, 177n67, 178n1
Sumud (alias), 93–97, 102–4, 107–8, 112–13
sunbird, 103–4
surveillance, 3–4, 15–17, 35–39, 55, 105–7, 109, 116–20, 131, 138, 140, 145, 156–58, 183n77, 185n12, 190n71
survival, 17–18, 28–29, 52, 67, 125, 150, 190n71
survivance, 153
sustainability: fashion and, 15–16, 22–23, 49, 54, 56, 58–59, 62–65, 67–69, 72–74, 76, 80, 82–83, 85, 89–92, 110, 112–14, 141–43; indigeneity and, 15–16, 69, 72–74, 82–83, 90, 92, 112–13, 141–42; occupation and, 56, 63–64, 89–90, 142–43. *See also* environment; land
Swedenburg, Ted, 165n55, 166n4
SYKO Project, 54, 89–90, 92, 98; "Pure Love," 63–65
Syria, 19, 50, 80–81, 176n53, 184n7

Tabar, Linda, 131
Taita Leila, 76–82, 90, 92, 98, 127
Tamir Law, 81, 162n22
tatreez, 80–81, 87, 98, 121–22, 156–58, 187n37. *See also* embroidery
Tawil-Souri, Helga, 6, 10–11, 165n3, 166n8, 186n19, 187n34, 190n71

taxonomy, 65, 130; racial, 33, 35–36
technology: activism and, 18, 162nn18,19, 165n3, 181n45; affect and, 107–8; body and, 19; community and, 5, 17–18, 108; creative production and, 1–2, 18–19, 125–26, 140, 179n10; digital, 18, 162nn18,19, 165n3, 181n45; gender and, 19; space and, 19
Tel Aviv, 160n1; Eurovision and, 43; gay tourism to, 31, 43; Miss Universe pageant and, 43
telecommunications, 77–78, 166n8
Telegram, 94–95, 107–8, 178n5, 181nn41,43
television, 10–11, 19, 42–43, 166n8. *See also* media
terrorism, 4, 19–21, 24–25, 36–39, 41, 59, 96–97, 143
textile industry, 22, 65, 67–69, 124–25, 155–56, 177n68, 185n13, 189n51
textuality, 117–18
texture, 113–14, 116–19, 147, 182nn61,62
thobe (woman's dress), 7, 43, 63–64, 78–81, 98, 117–18
TikTok, 73, 91, 125, 155–56, 185n18. *See also* social media
time: affect and, 71, 138–39, 189n53; agency and, 130–31; body and, 80; capitalism and, 15–16, 82, 124–25, 130, 139–40, 174n13; colonialism and, 138–39; creative production and, 15–16, 142–43; decolonization and, 142–43; fashion and, 7, 15–16, 71, 80, 82–83, 85–86, 99, 120, 130–31, 134, 138–39, 141–43, 147, 150, 163n26, 188n43; gender and, 15–16; indigeneity and, 141; labor and, 15–16, 124–25, 130, 142–43; Nakba, 138–39, 141–44, 150; nation and, 145–46; occupation and, 1–3, 85–86, 123, 126, 130–33, 139, 142–44, 187n34; politics of, 1–2, 139, 146, 189n57; queerness and, 120; sexuality and, 15–16; slowness and, 1–2, 13, 15–16, 80, 82–83, 120, 124–25, 130–31, 133, 138–39, 141–43, 174n13; social and, 139; state and, 130–31, 145–46
togetherness, 104–5, 107, 114–16, 119–20, 145–46, 165n1, 176n54. *See also* unity
tourism: colonialism and, 47–50; solidarity and, 47–50, 171n76; sexuality and, 31, 50
tradition: art and, 82; creative production and, 7, 71, 76–77, 87; culture and, 7, 82, 87, 124–25; documentation and, 82, 90; fashion and, 7–8, 61, 67–71, 76–83, 87, 89–90, 98, 109–10, 112–13, 121–22, 124–27, 189n51; gender and, 78–80; identity and, 76, 81–82; indigeneity and, 80, 82–83
transparency, 105, 113–14, 116, 119–20, 128. *See also* visuality
Trashy Clothing, 17–31, 50–53, 96–98, 116–17, 171n73; Arsenal of Democracy, 156; Errorvision, 42–46, 73–74; Humiliation Rituals, 156; Pride for Pay, 32–33, 37–39, 41–42, 73–74; Souvenirs of Conquest, 47–50, 73–74
Tuck, Eve, 66–67

understandability, 118–19
unemployment, 5, 124
unfamiliarity, 27–28
uniform, 46, 94–96, 113–14, 119–20, 181n37
uniformity, 106
United States, 22–23, 73, 122–23, 166n6; relationship with Israel, 31, 145, 156, 159n1
unity (*tawhid*), 3–4, 15–16, 55, 74, 96, 100–101, 103–9, 114–16, 118, 126, 155–56
Unity Intifada, ix–x
UNRWA (United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine), 98–99
utopia, 147–48, 187n39, 188n41

vanishment, 55, 59, 174n26
Veracini, Lorenzo, 172n2
victimhood, 25–26, 143–44, 178n2
violence: activism and, 96–97; colonialism and, 9–10, 12–13, 24–25, 31–42, 44–46, 58–59, 65, 72–74, 84–86, 94, 124, 130–32, 138, 143, 145, 147, 150, 153, 156, 170nn59,62, 178n4, 190nn71,76, 191n80; environment and, 11, 58–59, 65, 83–86, 174n13, 185n14; gender and, 36–37, 191n80; knowledge production and, 156; nonviolence, 6, 94, 96–97, 125, 145; occupation and, 35, 37–39, 72, 94; state and, 31–37, 41, 130–31, 143, 145, 156, 170nn59,62, 178n4; visual, 42, 114, 150
Virno, Paolo, 114–16
visibility/invisibility, 166n12, 183n77, 185n14; fashion and, 14–15, 25–28, 79–80, 87–89, 105–6, 113–14, 118–19, 144, 147, 151, 171n73; of Palestinians, 14–15, 24–26, 46–47, 57, 79–80, 87–89, 105–6, 113–14, 118–19, 143–44, 147, 151, 160n6, 190n66; sexuality and, 9–10, 29–30, 133–34
visuality: agency and, 25–27, 139; art and, 118–19; body and, 24; colonialism and, 25–26, 29–30, 33, 42–43, 44–47, 50–51, 105–6, 116, 118–19, 128, 143, 147–48, 190n71; creative production and, 25–26, 107; culture and, 23–24, 26, 128, 143, 190n66; decolonization and, 25–26, 29–30, 105–6, 109, 116–17, 119–20; fashion and, 27–28, 37–42, 91–92, 97–98, 106, 108,

117–20, 127–28, 134–36, 147–48, 150–51, 167n22; gender and, 128, 133–34, 147; identity and, 116; imperialism and, 25–30, 36–37, 118–19, 147–48, 151, 190n71; land and, 55, 57–58, 100–101; language and, 106–8; narrative and, 113–14, 143; occupation and, 24–28, 34, 40–41, 46–47, 144, 185n14; politics of, 24–26, 57, 97–98, 106, 108, 133–34, 167n22, 178n1; queerness and, 30, 105–6, 114, 180n35, 183n77; race and, 134; resistance and, 93, 97–98, 106, 108, 183n81; sexuality and, 58–59, 134; sovereignty and, 109, 118–19, 153, 180n25, 183n81, 185n14; state and, 25–26; violence and, 42, 114, 150
Von Busch, Otto, 26–27, 91

Wadi Salib neighborhood, 149–50
waiting, 130–31, 187n33
Waked, Sharif, 52; Chic Point, 39–42
al-Walaja village, 112
wasps, 94–95, 99–104, 179n6,8
waste, 55–56, 74, 173n11
watchtowers, 33–35, 184n7
water, 54–56, 63–64, 68–69, 110, 124, 138, 172n5, 173n11
watermelon, 34, 169n49
weaving, 7, 68–71, 79–82, 124–25
West Bank, 1–6, 11–13, 19, 23–24, 48–49, 69–70, 82–83, 93, 96–99, 106–8, 112–13, 119–20, 122–26, 130, 140, 147–48, 155–58, 159n1, 160n1, 162n22, 163n34, 165nn1,56, 166n8, 169n50, 175n35, 178n4, 180n22, 183n1, 184nn7,11, 187n33; environment and, 55–56, 103–4, 172n5, 173n11. *See also* Jenin
WhatsApp, 125–26, 158
Wilson, Alex, 62–63
wool, 69–70, 98–99, 112, 176n45

xenophobia, 11, 15–16, 31–32, 117

Yang, Wayne, 66–67
Yaqub, Nadia, 162n28

Zarkawi, Mai, 82–90, 92
Zidani, Sulafa, 19–20, 166n5
Zionism: environment and, 54–56, 65, 73–74, 90, 92, 103–4; gender and, 8–11, 15–16, 33, 35–37, 41–42, 56–58, 92, 105–6, 117–18, 127, 139, 146, 151, 163n34, 170n60, 191n80; land and, 56–58, 67, 92, 163n34; modernity and, 9–10, 42–43; race and, 8–9, 11, 15–16, 29–30, 33, 35–37, 41–42, 55–56, 92, 117–18, 127, 146–47, 151; resisting, 6, 9–11, 14–16, 36–37, 41–42, 119–20, 125, 162n23; sexuality and, 8–11, 15–16, 29–30, 33, 35–37, 42, 52, 57–58, 90, 92, 105–6, 117–18, 127, 146, 191n80; space and, 14, 33–34; time and, 14, 33; violence of, 33–34, 37, 65, 73–74, 190n76, 191n80

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