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EDITORS' NOTE

This issue of Postcolonial Interventions begins with an essay on Palestine and Palestine remains the topic of the final general paper of this issue as well. This, of course, is a conscious choice. The emancipatory ideals embedded in the postcolonial discourse since its inception demand a united response in support of Palestine, the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and an unequivocal condemnation of the indescribable imperial barabrity that is being inflicted on them by the state of Israel, supported as it is by various European and American powers. This issue, the work of this journal, the individual papers of different authors collected in this issue on the literary, cultural representations of the Palestinian plight and what it means for humanity are expressions of solidarity and documentations for posterity with the hope that some distant future will bring a reckoning of these infernal crimes that the people of Palestine have had to endure for so long.

What lies at the root of the international ineffectuality and indifference is perhaps a worldwide systemic commerical network with crucial nodes either in Israel or controled by Israeli-Zionist interests because of which imposing sanctions on Israel seems so utterly impossible for either individual countries or such organisations

as the United Nations. This further demonstrates how empire, in the words of Hardt and Negri operates as this vast network of Capital which instead of being controlled, controls the ways in which the world is governed, where ethics, values and ideals are all insubstantial.

This same insubstantiality is also evident from the ways in which the war that continues to devour hundreds of lives along the borders of Russia and Ukraine is a catastrophe brought about by dictatorial ambitions and suspension of democratic potentialities which poses a threat to the entire region. Incidentally the same dictatorial, megalomania is again on the rise in the United States which could well culminate in another astonishing victory for a convicted felon who cares neither about democratic instiutions nor about ecological futures nor about fundamental human rights. Closer to home, the same fundamental rights have been subjected to bloody decimation in Bangladesh where hundreds of protesting students have been subjected to indiscriminate police brutalities leading to the deaths of hundreds. It would be fallacious to identify these events as being sporadic, isolated or unconnected. The machinations of international finance capital have given birth to a series of local, regional and global forms of discontent which manifest themselves in the form of violence, counter-violence and attendant vicious cycles from which there is apparently no escape.

Academicss cannot be numb to all such mayhem happening all around them. It is their duty to represent these crises as honestly as evocatively they can through their performances in classroom, through what they write, through the values and actions they inspire and disseminate as evident from the steadfast actions of various academics associated with different American colleges and universities where they attempted to resist the actions of police officials who were beating up and arresting students participating in movements in support of Palestine.

Of course, carrying out such actions and showing such steadfastness is even more precarious in countries of the global south where dissent can lead to prolonged incarceration, loss of employment, loss of property and even loss of life, as so many people have had to learn at the cost of their own lives.

What makes all these considerations even more problematic is the stress that many academics have to constantly combat with regard to their quality of life because of inummerable constraints associated with academia which is not only being subjected to greater precarity but is also concomitantly breeding a kind of solipsism that makes either commitment to or engagement with collectives and ideals greater than ourselves even more difficult and tenuous. And of course, the academia is also filled with parochial individuals of vested interests who only delight in subjecting others to varied miseries by exercising their microcosmic circles of authority.

Yet, giving up is not an option. The only option available is to consistently devote oneself to the performnce of those small, daily actions through which we can cultivate our sense of autonomy, our standards of ethics and our perception of beauty. This journal itself is an example of such an enterprise which contiues to thrive because of the unpaid labour dedicated by so many academics across different spaces and strata. Reading, editing and publishing these academic papers not only contributes-to the propagation of knowledge which we hope will someday, somehow dispel the darkness of division, hatred and violence that often asphyxiates our daily lives, but serves to expand our own intellectual and emotional horizons so that we might stand up to the vortex of adversities constantly threatening our individual and collective well-being by refusing to surrender those values which can lead us towards a better future for the whole of humanity.

I understand the virtually insurmountable challenge that lies in front of us and the sheer difficulty of cultivating hope at a time such as this. But like the cannons of Utpal Dutt's Khyber in *Kallol*, based on the mutiny of the Royal Indian Navy against British colonial rule, even in the face of unavoidable defeat, the salvos must continue for a future that might yet be, beyond the perils of the present. It is through your support that we will keep this struggle alive.

From Carthage to Gaza - Palestine at the end of the Imperiocene

Detlev Quintern

It is difficult to move one's fingers over the keyboard and write about Gaza in Palestine. About how the number of victims of the genocide increases daily, far beyond the "mark" of 35,000 people, murdered, buried under the rubble of their homes. Behind every human loss there is grief and pain for generations. We are witnesses when relatives try with their last reserves of strength to save the lives of their loved ones. The killings are taking place before our eyes in real time, which Israel is trying to prevent by killing journalists. As of today, more than one hundred journalists have been killed in Gaza (Abreu 2024).

Writing about Gaza in Palestine was already difficult a few years ago, when thousands of people stormed against

the wall that surrounds them, cutting them off from survival and from their relatives in occupied Palestine, as part of the "*Great March of Return*" from March 2018 to December 2019. Hundreds of people were injured, dozens killed. They were mostly mowed down by the bullets of Israeli snipers. The snipers had made themselves comfortable on ramparts above what is probably the world's most perfectly secured fence. And the people continued to run against the insurmountable bulwarks, aware that they could be struck down by a deadly bullet at any second.

The keyboard had already resisted writing in 2009, when tons of bombs and phosphorus rained down on Gaza in Palestine. And it did so in 1987, when I heard the footsteps of the occupiers' military boots stamping over the hut's tin roofs in Jabaliya in Gaza. On the eve of the first *Intifada*, I saw the wide corridors that army bulldozers had carved into residential neighbourhoods so that the military could move inside densely populated Gaza. I talked to those tortured in Israeli prisons. During this time, it was popular to put a plastic bag filled with excrements over the heads of Palestinian prisoners and seal it around their necks[1].

Prisoners' legs are nowadays amputated because the inflammation caused by shackles is not adequately treated. This is reminiscent of Prime Minister Rabin's call in 1987 for the bones of youngsters throwing stones at

Israeli soldiers to be broken. Israeli soldiers on the hills near Nablus in Palestine smashed a young boys' hands with rocks. Deliberate crippling functions as a counter-insurgency strategy, be it in 1987, in 2024 and in-between or before those years. Now settlers are burning down Palestinian wheat fields near Nablus. The genocide was accompanied from the beginning on by an ecocide that first and foremost affected Palestinian agriculture, an ecocide motivated by greed for Palestinian land. The permanent genocide in Palestine makes time melt away. When I write about it, memories merge with the present. Only the atrocities of the occupiers become more and more unimaginable.

The long-lasting Genocide in Palestine

The genocide in Palestine has a long history despite the shortening of human memory in the age of the internet. And one of the biggest profiteers of de-memorization recently reminded us of that long history. Cynically, Facebook billionaire Mark Zuckerberg posed for his 40th birthday in a T-shirt with the Latin inscription "*Carthago delenda est*" (the original reads *Carthaginem esse delendam*): "Carthage must be wiped out" (delenda = delete) (*The Economic Times* 2024). We do not know whether Zuckerberg can read Latin.

The slogan praising genocide caused an outcry not only in Tunisia. The slogan is a reminder of the long history of the scorched earth policy that characterizes imperial-

ist foreign rule over the peoples of the world. Carthage was a flourishing trading city on the Tunisian Mediterranean coast before Roman tyranny razed the city to the ground in 146 BC. The Roman senator Cato said that the African city of Carthage must be wiped out. Today, the consul Cato the Elder deserves a place of honour in the Israeli Knesset and Zuckerberg could have written: "*Gaza delenda est*". But today it is hardly possible to simply bulldoze the mountains of rubble into the ground. Just to defuse the unexploded bombs and warheads and the rubble of the former residential complexes would take about fourteen years. Ecocide is an integral part of the genocide in Palestine. As early as 2009, the sewage purification plants in Gaza were bombed to mix the contaminated water with the drinking water (AK Südnord 2009).

But the situation in Palestinian Gaza today is different from what the new Romans, striving for world domination, want to admit. The destruction of Carthage introduces the long imperialist tyranny over humanity. The genocidal and all-life-destroying epoch of the Imperiocene comes to an end in Gaza in Palestine.

From catastrophe to catastrophe - the enduring Nakba

Every year, May 15 commemorates the Zionist expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in 1948, a day that has become part of the culture of remembrance in

Palestine and the peoples of the world. *Nakba* is the Arabic word for catastrophe. Over five hundred Palestinian villages were razed to the ground.[2] Only the Palestinian ruins of the village of *Lifta* near *al-Quds* (Jerusalem) are reminiscent of the once flourishing Palestinian agriculture with its terraced gardens around *al-Quds*. Cynically, Israel claims *Lifta*(h) as a World Heritage Site (UNESCO 2015). The village is listed as abandoned by the Palestinians. The massacre carried out by a Zionist terrorist group in the village coffee house and the expulsion of the inhabitants is concealed.

Various Zionist terrorist groups, be it the *Haganah*, including the *Irgun* with the infamous prime minister Menachem Begin, *Leumi* or *Stern* (*Lechi*) - from which the Israeli army emerged during the founding process of the colonialist settler state of Israel - competed in the war of conquest of Palestine.

They carried out massacres in *Deir Yassin*, *Tantura* and many other places in which hundreds of Palestinians were murdered in cold blood. The news of the massacres was broadcast over loudspeakers by the Zionists to the neighbouring villages to spread panic so that people flee their homes. Many of the politicians in Israel who have made a name for themselves since the first Nakba in 1948, whether they are called Begin, Shamir or Sharon, came from one of the Zionist terror organizations that have been inflicting death and terror on Palestinians since the 1930s.

Then as well as now, if the dead bodies of Palestinians were not burnt then they were hastily buried in mass graves. Mass graves from the time of the Nakba in 1948 are still being excavated today, sometimes under Israel's beaches where European tourists sunbathe. For them, the imperial Wilhelmine slogan "A place at the sun" (*Ein Platz an der Sonne)* finally seemed to become reality. What lay beneath their bath towels or beyond the apartheid wall was beyond their horizon and interest.

As if all this were not enough, today hospitals are being attacked by the Zionist army and stormed under all kinds of pretexts, such as al-Shifa and many other hospitals in Gaza. Recently, more and more mass graves have been dug out in the courtyards of and next to hospitals in Gaza. Seven hundred and twenty-one bodies have been recovered in these mass graves so far (as of May 22). This has never happened before in the history of "war". Minimum standards of shying away from unimaginable cruelties have been met in genocidal crimes against humanity in the long history of the Imperiocene, if not respected, then not propagandistically justified. The genocide in Gaza in Palestine, which is escalating anew, knows no borders in this respect. In addition to the terms scholasticide, ecocide, etc., a term should also be found for the destruction of medical infrastructure and personal, an important component in the ongoing genocide: Medicide. And, as if this is not already beyond imagination, the dead bodies of Palestinians are also be-

ing kidnapped from the hospitals (*Aljazeera* 2024). Not for the first time, Palestinian corpses are plundered (*TRT World* 2024; *Euro News* 2024; *Euromedmonitor* 2024). Israel is a hub for trafficking human organs (*The Cradle* 2024).

The day on which I begin to write these lines is dedicated to the memory of the Nakba in Palestine and is at the same time the 221st day of the Israeli and American-European war against Gaza. Not only do the US and Germany, among other imperial powers, supply the weapons and ammunition without which the Zionists could not carry out their never-ending crimes against humanity in Palestine and around the world, mercenaries also come from the US and European countries, e.g., France and Switzerland, who boast of committing atrocities in Palestine. Since quite a few of the soldiers have dual citizenship, including German citizenship, future independent courts will also have a lot of work to do in Europe.

But the support for the Zionist state of Israel, which has always been propagated in Europe as uniform, is beginning to erode more and more, despite an almost synchronised (*gleichgeschaltet*) media. In Ireland, Spain and Belgium, voices are increasingly being raised officially to denounce the genocide against the Palestinians. Spain and Italy are withholding arms deliveries.

The wave of student protests can no longer be suppressed and marginalized in Europe and the USA. Recently, students occupied parts of Berlin's Humboldt

University in solidarity with Palestine. They followed the example of Columbia University in New York, which soon set a precedent in England, France and other cities in the world. The wave of student resistance is reminiscent of the protests which, contrary to popular belief, followed not a 1968 but a 1967 wave of protest.

Germany - Israel: "Brother Hood in Arms" (*Waffenbrüderschaft***)**

While it seemingly started with the student protesting the US aggression in Vietnam, the myth of Israel collapsed in the face of the Zionist war of expansion in June 1967, both in the USA and in Germany. German arms exports had made this possible. The situation is no different today. Once again, the large Euro-American arms companies of the military-industrial complex that are enabling Israel to escalate the genocide. Consequently, the students are calling for a stop to any cooperation with university institutions that conduct research for the Zionist killing machine.

From 1956 at the latest, state-of-the-art air weapons were supplied to Israel from Finkenwerder in Hamburg via France. The then German Minister of War, Franz Joseph Strauß, played a leading role in the German Israeli arms fraternity. The photos of war minister Strauß and Uzi Gal, the designer of the handy Israeli submachine gun, flashed in the West German newspapers (VDI 2019). The German army was soon equipped with the

so-called Uzi as standard. US M 48 tanks were delivered to Israel via Germany and France and later produced in Israel. Naturally, Germany paid for the tank production. Until the 1970s, the Federal Republic of Germany transferred around 70 billion German marks to Israel (Khella 1982), in addition to arms deliveries free of charge, most recently including nuclear-powered submarines.

It is particularly tragic that under the pretext and cover of so-called reparations for crimes against humanity under the Nazis, mainly Israel and not the victims of fascism were compensated. At the beginning of the 1950s, the first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Konrad Adenauer, was responsible for negotiating the so-called *Luxembourg Agreement* (1952) with Israel. At the end of the 1920s, Adenauer was already active in the German pro-Zionist *Palestine Committee*. The history of German-Zionist relations has continued unbroken beyond the Nazi regime to the present day[3].

It is therefore not surprising that Franz Joseph Strauss launched Israel's so-called "Blitzkrieg", in 1967 in which Israel occupied the rest of Palestine, the West Bank, Gaza and Sinai - until then under Egyptian administration - the eastern part of Jerusalem and the Syrian Golan Heights, using napalm, among other things. Again, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians were displaced. In this second wave of forced displacement in 1967, Palestinians were expelled foremost to Jordan.

While the Palestinians fought mainly under the command of Arabic States and had previously relied primarily on diplomacy, in the battle of *al-Karamah* the Palestinian resistance managed to beat an Israeli tank unit into flight (WAFA 2021).

The Palestinian freedom fighters (*fedayeen*) inspired worldwide solidarity with the *Palestine Liberation Organization* (PLO), a broad alliance of various resistance organizations, over the next 20 years or so. The anti-imperialist solidarity of the peoples of Asia, Africa and the Americas was of course also an anti-Zionist solidarity, which emphasized the importance of settler colonialism in Palestine as a bulwark of imperialism at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and the Americas. The resistance of the Palestinian people was embedded into the solidarity of the Afro-Asian populations and the solidarity of the peoples in the Americas. And it remains so to this day, as is emphasized again and again at the worldwide solidarity demonstrations: "No one will be free until Palestine is free" (echoing South African freedom fighter and later president Nelson Mandela (*Middle East Eye* 2020).

Global Intifada against Global Zionism

The parallels to the current global intifada are obvious. In Germany, the "*German-Israeli brotherhood in arms*" opened the eyes of students from the *Socialist German Student Association* (SDS) back in the mid-1960s. The rac-

ist myth of Israel as a democratic island in the "Arabian Sea" had collapsed. The Kibbutz, too, sometimes mystified as an educational model in the West-German left, turned out to be a tool of settler colonialism. Settlers, not least from Eastern Europe and Russia, were won over to the colonialist project at the beginning of the 20th century through the staging of utopian collectives in the "Holy Land".

Theodor Herzl, one of the most important founding fathers of political Zionism, was aware that Zionism was diverting revolutionary potential from Europe to Palestine. All other emigration routes from Russia and East-Europe were closed to the refugees by notorious anti-Semites, including James Balfour - infamous for his counter-insurgency activities in Ireland - he had led the Conservative Party in the English House of Commons since 1891.

Herzl used anti-socialist Zionism to appeal to European governments. Once settled in Palestine, there was no turning back for the European settlers. At the beginning of the 20th century, Zionist organizations were already recruiting their "Human potential" (*Menschenmaterial*), as Theodor Herzl called his target group (Herzl 1896), out of large refugee camps on the Prussian border.

The poor, of whom Herzl saw pioneers, the first to emigrate to Palestine, came mainly from Russia. In the socialist parties, fierce debates started, confronting Zi-

onism which became a counter ideology to internationalism and universalism. Luxemburg, to name just one example, had clearly positioned herself against Zionism (Luxemburg 1921). For socialists the rejection of Zionism was a matter of survival. Anti-colonialism, anti-Fascism and anti-Zionism are inextricably interwoven.

In an exchange of letters with Lord Rothschild in 1917, Balfour secured a so-called *Jewish Homeland* for the Zionists (a tactical move that obscured the intentions of the Anglo-Zionist enterprise to install a settler colony in Palestine). British colonialism incorporated the doctrine into its so-called *Mandate Rule* over Palestine from 1918 onwards. The Zionist settlements served imperial-colonialist and long-term strategies to subordinate Palestine to European-Zionist rule.

The Palestinians had been resisting the gradual land robbery since 1884 - the year in which the imperialist so-called *Africa Congress* in Berlin concluded, initiating the colonialist invasion of Africa. Already Napoleon planned to settle Jews, especially from Africa and Asia, in Palestine at the beginning of the 19th century. The settler colony was supposed to secure trade routes to the Indian Ocean and Asia. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882, of Sudan in 1884 and other Afro-Arabic countries cannot be understood independently of the goal to subdue Palestine to colonialist rule, which begun in 1917.
There were major popular uprisings against the colonial-

ist-zionist domination in the early 1920s. The large and long-lasting popular uprising between 1936 and 1939 was brutally suppressed by the imperialist powers. While Britain bombed from the air, the Zionist gangs operating on the ground terrorised the Palestinians. The notorious colonial butcher Churchill agreed - as the only one in his own party - with fascist Germany to promote settler colonialism in Palestine at the end of the 1930s.

This is an agreement that continues to the present day among the neo-nationalist and fascist parties in Europe and the USA. They see the 'bulwark of civilisation against barbarism' (Theodor Herzl) threatened not only by the resistance in Palestine, but also by the worldwide solidarity of the global intifada. This is the reason why gangs of Nazi hooligans (Na-Zi = nationalist-Zionists) are attacking solidarity camps and demonstrations in Paris or Los Angeles. The supremacy of the (old) white man over Palestine and the world is being called into question. They fear the decline of the Imperiocene, whose bulwark is the Zionist state of Israel.

Palestine - a long history of domination and resistance

Since the Roman occupation of Egypt and Palestine in 33 BC at the latest, the rise of the Imperiocene has taken its course. Rule over Palestine was always the focus of imperial world domination. Although Alexander the

Great was already injured in his attempt to take Gaza in 312 BC, and eventually succeeded in capturing the city, it was only Roman rule that was able to establish itself in Palestine, Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor for a longer period. Just think of the deportation of the Syrian-Palmyran queen Zenobia to Rome in 272 AC. According to some sources, she was beaten to death, others write that she had already died during her abduction to Rome because of a hunger strike.

The Imperium Romanum, which had endeavoured to rule over large regions of the Arabo-African area, was heading for its decline. The emergence of Christianity as a rebellious form of civil disobedience contributed significantly to this. Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Palestine and spoke Palestinian Aramaic. St Paul later brought Christianity to the Arabian Peninsula, where many gospels survive, which are also preserved as apocrypha in the Koran. Gaza was an important centre of early Christian monasticism and Neoplatonic philosophy in the third and fourth centuries. The current destruction of the churches and early Christian artefacts is erasing all traces of the significant Christian history in Gaza. Some of the oldest depictions of the crucifixion of Jesus come from Gaza (Gaza 2010: 109).

The spreading of Christianity in the 3rd and 4th century finally caused the Roman Constantine to see a vision, according to legend a cross; he then defeated the rival Ro-

man troops in the Battle of the Tiber in 312 AC before moving the centre of the former Roman Empire to the city of Constantinople, which was later named after him.

After the decline of the Western Roman Imperium and its rise in the East in the first quarter of the 4th century, Gaza became one of the most important harbours for the empire under Emperor Constantine. Gaza had long before been the final port for the Incense Route, starting from Yemen and Southern Arabia and the Silk Road, starting from Xi'an and Beijing, from where goods were traded via Gaza to Alexandria, Africa or southern Europe.

The father-in-law and important counsellor of the Prophet Muhammad Ummar Ibn al-Khattab (592-644 AC), among others, was already trading along these long-distance trade routes in pre-Islamic times. The mosque named after him in Gaza is one of the many hundreds of mosques that were destroyed during the genocide. It was already laid in ruins by the British during the bombings in 1918 before being rebuilt again and again.

Gaza in Palestine was the first, which was liberated from imperial Byzantine rule in the 630s. Palestine experienced from then on a universalist era in which different communities lived together in harmony.[4] The culture of tolerance is broken only by successive waves of the so-called Crusades - they have as little to do with Chris-

tianity as Judaism has to do with Zionism - but could not establish any permanent rule over Palestine.

It was the Anglo-Zionist occupation since 1918 that created the conditions for the Zionist settler state in the sense of Theodor Herzl as a Jewish State. The racist construct is moulded into the Israeli constitution in 2018. Because the Zionists had driven their former ally England out of the country at the end of the 1940s, also with German support, England abstained during the UN vote on the partition of Palestine (Resolution 181) in 1947. In true colonialist manner, the Palestinians were not consulted anyway. A Yugoslavian alternative plan was not voted on. If we consider that it was primarily European states and their (settler) colonial offshoots that voted in favour of the partition of Palestine, it is not surprising that in the dawning era of post-colonialism, the peoples of the world today stand in solidarity with Palestine. The overwhelming majority of the world's peoples and states recognise Palestine. Some European states, recognizing the signs of the dawning post-imperial and post-zionist times e.g. Ireland, Spain and Norway, also recognise Palestine today.

No post-colonialism without a free Palestine

However, we cannot speak of an era of post-colonialism as long as Zionist settler colonialism reigns over Palestine. Postcolonial studies are currently being reorientated. Resistant students around the world are realising that

decolonisation only unfolds its humanist and universalist potential when the likes of Frantz Fanon, Ghassan Kanafani and Edward Said are studied together.

The Palestinian writer, poet and journalist Ghassan Kanafani - we will focus primarily on his historical works - is one of the most important anti-colonial thinkers and writers of the 20th century. Without a study of his works, there can be no talk of postcolonial studies. However, one of the tricky elements of postcolonial studies, not least the marginalised postcolonial studies in German-speaking countries, is to thematise about everything but Palestine.

Ghassan Kanafani

The podcast series on history of philosophy at Ludwig-Maximilian University in Munich encompasses voices of anti-colonialist resistance from Africa, the Caribbeans and other parts in Asia, Africa and the Americas, be it Amílcar Cabral, Kwame Nkrumah or Frantz Fanon. I followed the podcast on Claudia Jones, an Afro-Caribbean socialist activist who was expelled from the US in 1955 due to her anti-racist, anti-militaristic and anti-imperialist engagement. But I searched in the long list for the name Ghassan Kanafani in vain. This also holds true for the biographical entrances of *The Palgrave Encyclopaedia of Imperialism and Anti-Imperialism* (Ness, Cope: 2016). Colonialism in Palestine has been a blind spot in post-co-

lonial studies from the very beginning of its entry into academia. Moreover, as Patrick Williams has shown in "Gaps, Silences and Absences: Palestine and Postcolonial Studies" (2018): silencing Palestine in the academia, went hand in hand with denuding of memories from archives. The looting of the Palestinian material culture of memories goes back to the 1930s and found its peak, so far, in the plundering of the Palestine Research Centre (PCR), the Palestinian Cinema Institution (PCI) and the Cultural Arts Centre (CAS) in Beirut in 1982. Palestinian memories are buried in the cellars of the Israeli military complex or looted and burned as it happens currently in Gaza.

In Palestine, colonialism cannot be silenced into a post-colonial past. On the contrary, Zionist settler colonialism is, under the protective umbrella of successive imperialist powers, expanding continuously since around 150 years, and so striving for the fulfilment of Theodor Herzl's racist vision of a "Jewish State" between the river and the sea as the program of the zionist Likud Party emphasises.

Although the Palestinian scholar Edward Said is often understood as a founder of post-colonial studies (Conrad, Shalini: 2002), his late study *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), beside many studies on the Palestinian Question, was often not included in the emerging academic field of postcolonial studies. Said analysed the Palestinian popu-

lar resistance, the Intifada since 1987 - the Arabic word stands for rising-up (more precisely for a sleepy camel getting-up) - in the context of the coming-up of "various social, ecological and women movements" (Said: 1993, 311) throughout the Americas, where the long resistance wave yielded its fruits only recently. Re-reading *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) makes one aware of the entanglement of anti-imperialist resistance and opposition in Asia, Africa and the Americas. Said was far-sighted, seeing a global Intifada on the horizon.

Selective readings of anti-colonial resistances, although it might not be consciously reflected, seem to correspond with an unspoken longing for white supremacy - a role Zionism plays as representative in Palestine. Strangely enough, the consensual imperiousness is ascertainable for Euro-American racists and illusive antiracists alike.

During his first visit to Israel, US-President Joe Biden confirmed that he is, even without being Jewish, a Zionist: "You need not be a Jew to be a Zionist." (Jewish Chronicle 2022). And, he is right. Any religious affinities to the believed so-called "Holy Land" are, to keep the imperial bulwark alive, exploited shamelessly.

Postcolonial studies referred to Said' s study on *Orientalism* (2019) - where he applied at the end of the 1970s mainly the Foucauldian discourse analysis to Franco-English literature - while silencing at the meantime voices

of Palestinian resistance, thus even inside the oeuvre of Edward Said. After Edward Said had passed away in September 2003, Frantz Fanon's *Les Dammés de La Terre* (1961) begun to enjoy a postcolonial renaissance, holding on up to this day. Homi Bhabha wrote a forward for the new translation of Fanon's anti-colonialist manifesto in 2004 which was published anew with an introduction by Cornel West in 2021. West had left Harvard University the same year before returning in solidarity with Palestine, joining the students' protest activities at Harvard campus (The Harvard Crimson 2024).

Josie Fanon, the widow of Frantz Fanon, removed Sartre's preface from new editions after the Israeli 1967 expansionist war, the year Zionist settler colonialism expanded brutally in Palestine, occupied Gaza and the Sinai in Egypt, Palestinian territories under Jordanian administration and the Golan Heights in Syria. In an interview in 1978 Josie Fanon shattered the myth of Jean-Paul Sartre - he sided with Israel in 1967 - as a French anti-imperialist and humanist: "Whatever Sartre's contribution may have been in the past, the fact that he did not understand the Palestinian problem reversed his past political positions."[5]

Edward Said was disappointed bitterly when visiting Jean-Paul Sartre, Simon de Beauvoir and Michel Foucault in Paris. As a French critic of settler colonialism in Algeria, Said had held Sartre in great respect. Following

the great disappointment of broken solidarity - Sartre had lauded the Sadat and the Camp David spectacle (Peace treaty between Egypt and Israel of 1978) - he praised Jean Genet as a French counterexample, expressing "passion for Palestinians" in an extended sojourn with them and by writing the extraordinary *Quatre Heures à Sabra et Chatila*.[6] Rereading Genet's *Prisoner of Love* (2003) will hopefully be reserved for future Palestine studies.

While in Algeria the anti-colonial resistance was victorious against the long and brutal occupation of French settler colonialism in 1962, the years after the defeat of the Arab States in June 1967 introduced a new wave of Palestinian resistance which from now on relied preliminary on its own strength, abilities and creativity, establishing new movements of popular resistance.[7]

For inspiring Palestinian confidence, Ghassan Kanafani raised his voice mainly through literature and criticism. Understanding the 19th and 20th century up to our present, requires intellectual and emotional access to the history and presence of anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist resistance in Asia, Africa and the Americas. The Palestinian resistance is of particular importance in this context. And Ghassan Kanafani one of its utmost important voices, which also was the reason for his treacherous assassination together with his niece Lamees by Israeli Agents in Beirut on July the 8th in 1972 (Wild: 1975, 23). The life of Ghassan Kanafani, is woven into the history

of the Palestinian people and its resistance (Interactive Encyclopedia). His life is insightfully told by his widow Anni, the daughter of a Danish Antifascist fighting the Nazi occupation (Kanafani 1973). Stefan Wild portrayed the rich literary work in *Ghassan Kanafani. The Life of a Palestinian* (Wild 1975). In German speaking lands Kanafani is mostly known for his translated novels and shorts stories, for which he ranks among the most well-known and appreciated writers in the Arabic World, but he is only very little known as a literary critic, e.g., his study "On Zionist Literature" (Kanafani 2023),[8] as a painter, a graphic designer and not least a political analyst and historian. Kanafani's political analyses are sometimes lost, others published anonymously.

Anti-colonialism in Palestine which cannot be other than Anti-Zionism has no place in the German academia and cultural landscapes as the stereotyping campaign against the anti-colonial philosopher Achille Mbembe in 2020 in Germany already has shown. Not long ago the sparks of inquisitorial suspicion flew into the fields of arts, censuring the international Art Festival *Documenta* in German's Kassel. Whenever there might be indices of solidarity with the Palestinian culture of resistance the inquisition intervened.

In Germany the Palestinian people's culture is erased to its widest extent, be it from academic curricula and publishing, arts and culture or the public sphere and thinking in general. At the best, the history of the Palestinian

people is traumatized, becoming an object of therapeutic projections which tend to victimize the Palestinians. I agree with Mohammed Madiou when writing that critics "cannot write on colonial matters, reflect on them, and try to 'intellectually' study / criticize them without speaking of Palestine; their anticolonialism would otherwise be a lot of hot air." (Madiou 2021)

Ghassan Kanafani was born in Accra in Palestine the 9th of April in 1936, the year the Palestinian uprising against expanding settler colonialism under the protection of British Imperialism begun with a general strike. Following a more Marxist-Leninist theoretical explanation, social and economic layers were in the foreground of Kanafani's historic-materialist and dialectical analysis. The social and economic reasons, mainly the increasing marginalisation and proletarianisation of the Palestinian small farmers, caused by the seizure of land by Zionist settlers, and the zionisation of labour, the exclusion of Arab labour from colonialist production, are historicised and analysed by Kanafani with great attention to details, figures and statistics (Kanafani 2020).

There were also other factors, that have led to the popular uprising in Palestine. In October 1935 the Haganah, the main Zionist terror organisation, smuggled a huge number of machine-guns, rifles, and ammunition into the port of Jaffa, preparing for an extension of the armed land-robbery in Palestine. This raised the awareness of

the leadership of the Palestinian resistance, among them *Izz al-Din al-Qassam*, who plays - Kanafani compares him with Che Guevara and his martyrdom (Kanafani 2020) - an important role in Kanafani's political analysis of the uprising . But where did the weapons for the terrorist zionist gangs come from? Historians should research these, and other questions related to the long Palestinian Uprising in depth.

During the uprising the British occupational army used all its resources available, its air, navy and ground forces to crack down on the resistance brutally. Torture, extra-legal killings of resistance fighters, deporting political leaders far away from Palestine to the Seychelles, installing detention camps, razing down to the ground villages and entire blocks in Palestinian cities, and blowing up houses were on the daily agenda of the ruthless counter-insurgency war.

At the same time several Zionist terror organizations operated in the shadow of the imperialist warfare against the popular resistance. Detonating, among other war crimes, bombs on busy Palestine markets in Jaffa and Accra, which killed dozens of civilians, were included in the repertoire of Zionist terror organizations like Haganah, Irgun, Stern or Lechi. The terrorist organizations worked with different imperialist powers, sometimes with imperialist England and Nazi-Germany at the same time. After the German Nazi Regime signed an agreement

with the World Zionist Organization in Berlin in 1933, the *Ha'avara Agreement*, tens of thousands of settlers were transfered from Germany to Palestine. The agreement provided for the settlers to deposit funds in a bank in Berlin and re-use the German Reichsmark on the condition of buying exclusively German products, e.g. agricultural machines, in Palestine.

Most of the tens of thousands of settlers in the years from 1933 to 1936 came from Germany. After the uprising in 1939, when England tried to limit immigration to Palestine (Peel Commission), Nazi Germany forced - according to the English colonial law as the Palestinians never had been asked - the illegal settlement of Palestine. The settlers were trained in over one hundred camps in Nazi Germany. Probably not only in agriculture.

Zionist organizations had welcomed the so-called "race laws" of the Nazis in 1936. Their newspapers were never banned in Nazi-Germany, unlike the anti-fascist and anti-Zionist ones. Postcolonial research from a Palestinian, wider global south and anticolonial perspective opens wide fields of research. The uprising in Palestine from 1936 to 1939 from a universal-historical and comparative perspective requires a new approach, building on the groundbreaking study by Ghassan Kanafani (Kanafani 2020).

The final defeat of the long and intense anti-zionist and

anti-colonialist resistance in Palestine, lasting for three years from 1936 - 1939, led to the formation of what will seven years later become the Israeli Army. After the formation of the Zionist State on the ruins of Palestine in May 1948, 12-year-old Ghassan was forced to flee with his family from Haifa.

Resisting Genocide

One of the most densely populated areas in the world is currently under constant bombardment. In Gaza, over two million and three hundred thousand people are concentrated in an area of 360 square kilometres, which is roughly the size of the smallest federal state of Bremen in Germany. Famine is now on the rise there, accompanied by the threat of epidemics. The infrastructure has been destroyed in all areas of society in Gaza, be it health, education or science (Worldbank 2024).

Most of the refugees in Gaza, from where they were expelled in successive waves in 1948 and 1967, are now on the run again. Israel has currently driven them inside Gaza to the south on the Egyptian border in Rafah, where they hoped to survive. These days, shelling from land and sea and aerial bombardment in Gaza are escalating, not least at Rafah, the border crossing with Egypt. Israel has now taken control of this crossing so as not to interrupt the starvation of the population. Many aid supplies entered Gaza via the Egyptian side

of Rafah. In the long history of the Palestinian people, Israeli bombs have always followed the people who have fled from their places to where they hoped to find shelter. This was already the case in 1947/48, 1967 and at the beginning of the 1970s in Jordan and soon afterwards in Lebanon, at the latest since the beginning of the 1980s.

The Palestinians in Gaza are once again living in makeshift tents, with virtually no food or clean drinking water, and they are once again forced to flee. Just like in 1948 during the first *Nakba*, which never came to an end. Unlike in 1948, however, there are no more escape routes. In front of them lies the wall to Egypt's Sinai Desert and the sea.

Some families have fled up to nine times in seven months within the Gaza Strip alone. Among those fleeing the 500-, 1000-, and 2000-pound bombings are people who fled the Zionist terror from the towns and villages in Palestine as early as 1948. But where to flee to in these times under constant bombardment? All supposed escape routes and corridors turn out to be traps. They are also under fire from the Zionist army. Though the Zionists have always cynically accused the Palestinians of propagandistically wanting to drive the Jews into the sea, they are executing exactly that before the eyes of the world: they are literally driving the Palestinians, surviving the genocide, into the sea.
If they had not previously been torn to pieces by the hail

of bombs or buried under the rubble of their homes, they were gunned down by Israeli soldiers at aid distribution points or shot in a desperate attempt to return to the ruins of their homes. Even aid deliveries, which, because Israel blocks all access to Gaza, were dropped from the air, became deadly cargo.

The lines by Theodor Herzl in his pamphlet 'The Jewish State', published in German in 1896, which stimulated the Zionist settler movement towards the end of the 19th century, already point to its genocidal intentions: '... we would organise a large and active hunting party, drive the animals together, and throw a melinite bomb into their midst.' (Herzl 1988, 94) 'The Terrible Melinite. An Explosive with ten Times the Power of Nitroglycerin", was the title of an article in the *New York Times* in 1887 (New York Times, 1887). How much higher is the explosive power of today's bombs, which are now also being dropped over the last place of refuge in Rafah in Gaza?

It is this racist intention to round up the 'animals' and bomb them away that must be considered against the background of South Africa's genocide claim before the International Court of Justice (ICC), as the current wave of genocide has emerged from a long history of settler colonialism in Palestine. How could the Zionist legend of Palestine as a 'land without a people, for a people without a land' (Theodor Herzl) be imposed on the reality of life in Palestine if not through the systematic

and targeted expulsion of the indigenous population? 'There will be no electricity, no food, no water, no fuel, everything will be closed. We are fighting against human animals and will act accordingly.", said Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant in the second week of October 2023 (*The Palestine Chronicle* 2024).

Now even the memory of the Palestinians is to be erased. To this end, the universities in Gaza are being razed to the ground and scholars and academics who teach there are being murdered, which is sometimes referred to as scholasticide. The intention follows the systematic nature of genocide. Aid organisations whose coordinates were known to Israel during their journeys in Gaza were attacked and their occupants murdered, including two vehicles belonging to the *World Kitchen Organisation*. Not a word of the Israeli side's assurances can therefore be believed. In this way, vital aid is being "prevented". Zionist settlers are attacking parallel aid convoys and destroying the supplies.

Following the example of Carthage, Gaza is not only to be razed to the ground and ploughed into the earth - the memory of the life and history of the formerly flourishing harbour town is also to be erased from memory. Only survivors can report. Scholars, university members, writers and poets are killed. And to prevent this from becoming public knowledge, journalists are murdered at the same time.

In the long genocide in Palestine since Theodor Herzl, only the killing machinery has developed, which is generously provided to the Zionist state not least by the USA and other imperialist powers. The talk of 'human animals' already had its instructions for action at the end of the 19th century. The Palestinians are the target and testing ground for vacuum, bunker-busting and phosphorus bombs, which were already used against Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon in 1982. The internationally outlawed weapons are now being used again and again in the south of Lebanon. In November 2023, on a massive scale, phosphorus bombs were dropped in Gaza (*Euromed Montior* 2024). They were already used in 2008 / 2009 extensively during the cynically named "Operation Cast Lead".

In the current wave of genocide, artificial intelligence is being used for the first time. It 'locates' target coordinates for the deadly cargo via WhatsApp locations and contacts. Entire families have fallen victim to it. Is this what Mark Zuckerberg means when his T-shirt reads "*Carthage must be destroyed*"?
Israel has been imposing a blockade on Gaza since 2006, not only separating the fertile coastal strip from the sea, but also further dividing the historically integrated Palestine into small Bantustans. The inhabitants of Gaza not only had no access to the Mediterranean, but the import of goods was also subject to Israeli arbitrariness. For years, the electricity supply has been repeatedly restricted or cut off completely, so that hospitals have only

been able to operate under the most difficult conditions. The victims of the constant bombardments and drone attacks have often only been able to undergo emergency surgery without anaesthesia. The Palestinian doctor, surgeon and director of the University of Glasgow, Ghassan Abu Sitta, was not allowed to report on this in Europe, among other things, at Germany's initiative.

In the meantime, an administrative court in Germany has declared the revocation of Ghassan Abu Sitta's Schengen visa unlawful and cancelled it.

The Palestinians are also cut off from their relatives and friends in wider Palestine. The West Bank today resembles isolated and incoherent Bantustans, which have cemented and walled in the apartheid structures since the Oslo Accords of 1993. Only the Zionist settlers, who are currently carrying out pogroms in Palestinian villages, can move freely in the network of zones, most of which are under Israeli military administration.

Supported by the Israeli military, the Zionist land robbery continues, while life for the Palestinians becomes more and more impossible. Creeping and open expulsions are escalating, attacks by settlers on villages and neighbourhoods, raids and air raids by the army are also on the agenda in the West Bank. This also applies to Jerusalem, where the Zionist attempts at expulsion are accompanied by reprisals against other communities in

Palestine, including the Armenian community. Recently, Jenin in the West Bank was raided by Zionist army units. South African colleagues describe apartheid in Palestine as even more inhumane than that in South Africa. The racist apartheid system in southern Africa had close ties with Israel, including nuclear weapons production and testing.

The news and images from Gaza are almost unbearable. The catastrophe (*Nakba*) continues with a new wave of genocidal displacement. The word 'war' loses its meaning against the backdrop of the genocide lawsuit brought by South Africa against Israel in full detail before the International Court of Justice in The Hague at the end of 2023. While the imperialist wars in Iraq and Libya, to name just two examples from the short 21st century, were already wars against the people, in Gaza in Palestine they are reaching an unprecedented peak. The genocidal massacres wiped out entire families. According to figures from the health authorities, 37925 people fell victim to the genocide on July 3, 2024, 87 141 human beings are injured and c. 11.000 are missing (Palestine Chronicle, July 3, 2024).

From Salvation to Liberation

It seems that it has taken more than 2000 years for humanity - as Christians see in the figure of the Palestinian Jesus the saviour (*Soter*) - to be saved. If we understand

salvation in the sense of liberation, then that salvation becomes applicable universally in the clear distinction between justice and injustice, between genocidal occupation and indigenous resistance.

If 2000 years ago it was the martyrdom of Jesus on the cross, today it is the Palestinians who sacrifice themselves to resist the Germano-American and Zionist executed genocide as far as possible and show the whole world that Zionist foreign and tyrannical rule is doomed to failure. Whereas in the time of Jesus it was an *Intifada* of civil disobedience with which the Palestinians resisted the Roman occupation in the form of Christianity, the Palestinian people's willingness to resist today is not least inspired by Islam and a theology of liberation.

Gaza has always been an overlap of worldviews, cosmologies and philosophies. At the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe, the inspirations that motivate the steadfastness to resist (*sumud*) are borne by different visions, be they Islamic, socialist or patriotic. What unites them is the humanism that has emerged from the Palestinians' long history of resistance and their refusal to bow to imperial-Zionist foreign rule. Palestinians resisting the Euro-American and Zionist genocide today, open horizons for a future, more just world beyond the long Imperiocene.

Notes:

1. During the revision of this article, news from the prison camps under Israeli occupation came to light. Here, too, it is revealed that, compareable to the settler colonialist terror in the final phase of the French occupation in Algeria, brutality and cruelty exceed the imaginable. Experience, for example in Iraq under US occupation, has shown that it sometimes takes years for information on the horror of the occupation to reach the public sphere unless courageous investigative journalism (e.g. Julian Assange) succeeds in counteracting the disappearance of traces and memories.

2. Salman Abu Sitta and his team published after 40 years of intense study the Atlas of Palestine, giving a multi-discinplinary and deeply documented insight of the zionist errading of more than 500 Palestinian villages (Abu Sitta 2024). https://www.plands.org/en/villages-database

3. When Adolf Hitler delivered a speech in the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich on July 6,1920, he empasised: "Jews should seek their human rights in their own state in Palestine, where they belong ("Menschenrechte soll er sich da suchen, wo er hingehört, in seinem eigenen Staat Palästina"). (Phelps: 1963, 305)

4. I follow the theory and method of Karam Khella's Universalist Theory of History (1994/2008). History can only be understood in the interplay of long-term and

universal history. In contrast to the historical approaches in vogue today - think of 'entangled, global, transregional', etc. - Karam Khella focuses on the long-term and universal history. For Karam Khella, the unwritten, resistant history of the peoples takes centre stage.

5.https://frantzfanonspeaks.wordpress.com/2011/04/26/frantz-fanons-widow-speaks/

6.https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v22/n11/edward-said/diary

7.https://www.palquest.org/en/highlight/165/battle-al-karama

8. The Interactive Encyclopedia of the Palestine Question includes a relatively actual bibliography of the works of Ghassan Kanafani. https://www.palquest.org/en/biography/6566/ghassan-kanafani

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Between the Self and the Collective: An Examination of Palestinian Resistance in Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns*

Shaden Khoury

"سلام لأرض، خلقت للسلام وما رأت يوماً سلاماً" – محمود درويش[1]

Introduction

> "The occupation! The word had so many meanings. Exile: a reality we experience in the heart of the motherland itself. Torture: a topic defined to perfection by the pimps of politics at the United Nations. Sink in the mud, Palestine, kiss the world goodbye!" (Khalifeh 2011, 56).

When discussing the Israeli occupation of Palestine, it is imperative to gain a comprehensive understanding not only of the diverse manifestations of subjugation but also of the manifold expressions of resistance to said op-

pression—it is crucial to understand that the Palestinian resistance is not monolithic and can take various forms. Sahar Khalifeh, an author renowned for her exploration of the multi-faceted struggles of the Palestinian people, masterfully portrays this struggle through the characters of her novel, *Wild Thorns* (1976) where she underscores the interplay between an internal conflict, centered on individual choices for survival, and an external and existential struggle against the Israeli occupation. Khalifeh's narrative serves as an integral component in fostering a profound understanding of the Palestinian experience in the West Bank[2] , elucidating the intricacies of their resistance, both against the Israeli occupation and within their own society.

As such, this paper examines Sahar Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns*, discussing its portrayal of Palestinian resistance and identity within the Palestinian liberation struggle through the stories of four characters: Adil, Usama, Zuhdi, and Basil. While there is much scholarship on the content of *Wild Thorns*, there is very little written about how the novel itself is an act of resistance. In a study which examines the way literature represents reality, it is important to also discuss the material reality of the censorship of Palestinian literature and how the act of writing and publishing a novel depicting the Israeli occupation, and its effects on Palestinians, is an act which refuses to allow for the erasure of the Palestinian narrative. Within the novel, the treatment of resistance is

multifaceted, consisting of three key elements. The first section of the paper, then, underscores the notion that resistance takes many forms, one of which is literature, focusing on how it expresses people's oppression and their resistance to it, as well as how literature itself can exist as an act of resistance.

The role of education as a form of both oppression and resistance is not lacking within the scholarship regarding the Israeli occupation of Palestine; however, when discussed within the context of *Wild Thorns*, few (Mahmoud 2019; Priyanka 2016) discuss this issue at length vis-à-vis its representation and manifestation in the novel. Additionally, within the literary scholarship on this novel, there is surprisingly very little written on the role of everyday language as not only a tool of oppression but also a form of resistance. As such, the second section of this paper emphasises the pivotal roles of language and education in the context of both Israeli occupation and Palestinian resistance, as it is used not solely as a tool and form of resistance, but also as a tool of oppression imposed by occupying forces.

While each of the characters in the novel approach their oppression differently, each of them is eventually driven to violence. While it is important to note that violence does not always result in counter-violence, it is also imperative to understand exactly how people who face violent oppression and occupation may eventually resort

to armed resistance. As such, the third section of this paper examines how *Wild Thorns* dramatises the concept of armed resistance as manufactured by the Israeli occupation's violent nature, underscoring the cyclicality of violence within the context of oppression.

The Literature of Resistance

In *Wild Thorns*, Sahar Khalifeh elucidates the intricate struggles experienced by Palestinians in their resistance against the Israeli occupation, capturing the collective challenge of Palestinians to stay in their land. In accordance with Girma Negash, in "Art Invoked- A Mode of Understanding and Shaping the Political" (2014), art is the best mode of understanding the political, as it "takes account of the intentions, motivations, and reasons for human actions" (Negash 2014, 188). Negash reaches three main conclusions regarding the usefulness of the arts in the construction of political ideas and notions, as well as where the arts are located within the academic perception of politics: (1) Art "shape[s] political ideas or help[s] constitute politic;" (2) art "provides the fabric and setting from which political meaning is derived;" and (3) art provides us with the tools for "restoring and intensifying experience," thus amplifying our understanding of the political (Negash 2014, 196). Literature constitutes a platform for political discourse, as it is affected by historical conditions, both in the temporal and spatial sense.

Aman Sium and Eric Ritskes, in "Speaking Truth to Power – Indigenous Storytelling as an Act of Living Resistance" (2013), further explain that the notion of indigenous storytelling, a narrative form which "must also be a remapping project, one that challenges the sacrosanct claims of colonial borders and the hierarchies imposed on either side of the dividing line" (Sium and Ritskes 2013, VI). Sium and Ritskes quote Haunani-Kay Trask, saying that "our [indigenous] story remains unwritten. It rests within the culture, which is inseparable from the land. To know this is to know our history. To write this is to write of the land and the people who are born from her" (Sium and Ritskes 2013, VII). Sium and Ritskes further discuss the importance of indigenous storytelling in the preservation of memory and land, as "in the colonial order of things, indigenous stories are always threatening. They're threatening because they position the teller outside the realm of 'objective' commentary, and inside one of subjective action" (Sium and Ritskes 2013, IV). Historically, many Palestinian writers and poets were imprisoned by Israel for their work, while others were told that if they confessed to espionage, they would be pardoned and allowed to leave the country (Kanafani 1968, 23). As such, while *Wild Thorns* does capture the manifold forms of resistance, it is important to note that its narrative is not only a representation of resistance: the novel itself exists as an act of resistance.

In the discussion of Palestinians remaining in their land, the concept of *Sumud*— "steadfastness"—is significant.

It serves as a framework for understanding a multitude of everyday acts of resistance and offers a perspective that seeks to uncover gaps within resistance narratives. "The essence of sumud," Jedya Hammad and Rachel Tribe explain, "is endurance and perseverance in an anti-colonial struggle, opposing and resisting the occupation and the pervasive impact it has on everyday life" (Hammad and Rachel 2021, 138). In other words, *Sumud* is the maintenance of normalcy in an abnormal context; small, everyday acts such as eating, smiling, and having family and friends, are acts of resistance for Palestinians. Palestinian resistance is not only a response to Israel's territorial occupation, then, but also a reaction to Israel's persistent efforts to erase Palestinian culture and identity. The Israeli government's refusal to permit Palestinians to commemorate their own history is a testament to the exercise of power not only over the land and its inhabitants, but also over the narratives, perspectives, and overarching truths of memory and history, as explained by Helga Tawil-Souri in "Where is the political in cultural studies? In Palestine" (2011). Tawil-Souri goes further to define culture as a product of everyday lived experiences, illustrating that the cultural production of Palestinians is a form of resistance against attempts to silence and erase the Palestinian narrative (Tawil-Souri 2011, 470). This form of resistance through memory occurs in various moments in the novel, as characters reflect upon the past and the present, highlighting the importance of memory in the steadfastness of Palestinians. The first instance of this in *Wild Thorns* occurs as Usama

makes his way to Nablus, when another passenger tells him how the occupation burned the trees, but that they need to "leave some tracks" (Khalifeh 2011, 24) wherever they go to not forget the past and keep fighting for their liberation. Khalifeh's mission in the novel, then, is to leave her track by telling the story of Palestinian life under occupation through the characters in her novel.

Khalifeh, however, is not the first to undertake the mission of documenting and capturing the oppression of Palestinians. Following the *Nakba* in 1948, Palestinians faced the arduous task of maintaining their presence in their homeland. This struggle to remain rooted in their land imbued Palestinian literature with its distinctive character in expressing Palestinian identity (Zayyad 1970, 81). Poets and writers played a pivotal role in this mission, actively engaging in the ongoing struggle for Palestinian identity and survival. Their close connection to the people and the overarching struggle was instrumental in preserving the Palestinian cultural heritage, as they deliberately and consistently portrayed the Palestinian struggle and identity in their literary works (Zayyad 1970, 82). The poets and writers were entrusted with the responsibility of nurturing the national spirit among the Palestinian youth, many of whom had limited exposure to these poets and writers and only had access to them through prominent newspapers such as "Al-Ittihad" and "Al-Jadeed" (Zayyad 1970, 87). These writers succeeded in this mission, providing the younger generation with

poetry and literature that addressed national issues and heritage. Their connection to the working class, which represented the lived reality of the Palestinian people, contributed to the resonance and success of their works (Zayyad 1970, 92). This connection between the literature and the people can be seen in various points in the novel, most notably during Basil's time in prison, as his hesitation to become more actively resistant is alleviated through the prisoners singing folk songs and reciting poetry, specifically that of Kamal Nasser, a Palestinian poet and political activist:

> "Strike executioner, we're not afraid.
> These dark brows
> Beaded with sweat
> And burdened with chains
> So the nation will live.
> Strike then, and have no fear" (Khalifeh 2011, 119).

While this occurs within the text, it serves the metanarrative purpose of exemplifying how the poets and their work sustained the spirit of steadfastness in Palestinians; how their words eliminated fear and encouraged resistance, as well as created unity within the Palestinian community, which is crucial when fighting for the community. These lines from Nasser's poem highlight the role of the prisoners within the liberation movement: they are "Beaded with sweat/ And burdened with chains" as a sacrifice which will bring forth the liberation

of the Palestinian people. Speaking directly with the Israeli occupation saying, "strike executioner, we are not afraid," this poem emphasises the resilience and strength of Palestinians in the face of death.

Palestinian writers distinguished themselves by penning their works from within the heart of their homeland, describing the demolished villages and the stolen fields, thus embodying the essence of their lived experiences (Zayyad 1970, 84). Palestinian resistance literature effectively bridged the cultural and the political, with writers using their art to depict the lived struggles and resistance. During the period between 1952 and 1960, Palestinian literature elucidated the political, cultural, and societal challenges faced by Palestinians, characterized by optimism, and driven by widespread awareness of the struggle's objectives and a commitment to the Palestinian people (Kanafani 1968, 45). Through this understanding of storytelling, as well as the historical context of the literature, we can see how *Wild Thorns* emerges as a work of resistance, both through its existence and its narrative.

One prevailing belief in the Palestinian literary world is that "art for art's sake" is not enough; rather, writers need to communicate their identity to their audience (Kamel 2017, 6). This sentiment is evident in the works of many Palestinian poets and novelists, who often explore themes of sadness and conflict, as well as the effects

of displacement and exile (Kamel 2017, 7). Additionally, Palestinian literature offers a unique and important perspective on the cultural, political, and social issues facing the region. One question about the definition of Palestinian literature is whether it is resistant or oppositional and, in answering that question, Nabih Al-Qassem refers to Faisal Darraj's suggestion that it is "wishful literature": one which focuses on wishful thinking rather than material reality, allowing Palestinians to imagine a better future. Darraj assumes a moralist and humanist position on literature, saying first that humans should always be the focus of literature, and second that a work of literature must always point to what is right, but that the Palestinian writer often does not know what is right (Al-Qassem 2001, 173).

Highlighting this moral ambiguity, *Wild Thorns* does not take it upon itself to make judgements on either opinion or form of resistance. Rather, it creates a space for all opinions and approaches to be explored and critiqued. The novel does this through the inner conflict between Adil and Usama and the opposing perspectives and experiences they have. Adil lives in the West Bank and works in Israel as a means of providing financial support for his family, since his father's ailment prevents him from doing so, as "he's got nine people hanging around his neck, not to mention the kidney machine" (Khalifeh 2011, 31). He also believes, throughout most of the novel, that non-violent political action is the best way

in which he can resist the occupation. In contrast, his cousin, Usama, has now returned to his mother's house in Nablus, in the West Bank, after five years of working in the Gulf countries with the purpose of becoming a fighter with the Palestinian resistance (Khalifeh 2011, 38). Usama also opposes any sort of cooperation with Israel, irrespective of the circumstances. This opposition exemplifies the complexity of the Palestinian resistance and how, despite having a shared goal and mission, the resistance movement encompasses a variety of perspectives and approaches. The first time we see this is through an exchange between Usama and Adil at the beginning of the novel:

> "Usama insisted: 'What are young people like you doing to oppose what goes on inside?'
> 'The same as what you've done to oppose what's outside'" (Khalifeh 2011, 28).

We can see through this exchange that while Usama and Adil are ostensibly oppositional, they are, in fact, two sides of the same coin—each mourning for Palestine, each wishing for the end of the occupation, and each thinking that their own way is the best for the collective. We also see this later in the novel when Usama confronts Adil, as the narrator tells us that "in spite of their wide differences, they'd always agreed on one point: the value of the individual existed only through the group. Today, the difference between them lay in the fact that each be-

lieved he was in accord with the group" (Khalifeh 2011, 87). Each of them blames the other for their way of dealing with the occupation and their oppression, as we see how, despite what each of them thinks of the other, neither has forgotten about the cause of Palestinian liberation. Furthermore, at various points in the novel, each of them reiterates the same sentence, we encounter it first through Adil: "Sink in the mud, Palestine!" (Khalifeh 2011, 56) following Abu Sabir, his co-worker, being injured at work and not being able to provide for his family anymore as he was working in Israel illegally, which deems him ineligible to receive workers' compensation. The second time we encounter a variation of this sentence is through Usama: "Sink, Palestine…" (Khalifeh 2011, 69), following his interaction with the bread-seller who was selling bread brought from Israel, as he laments on what has become of Palestine. Each laments the loss of the land, and each blames the other for their way of dealing with it, as in one of their confrontations, Usama exclaims, "I can't believe it. I'll never believe it. I just don't believe you've forgotten your own country and the occupation!" to which Adil replies, "the proof that I haven't forgotten about my country is that I haven't left it" (Khalifeh 2011, 98). While Usama thinks Adil is treacherous for working inside Israel and aiding the Israeli economy, Adil holds contempt for Usama for fleeing the land. Neither, however, is portrayed as better nor worse within the story: the novel simply lays out each perspective for the reader to understand the various

perspectives and make their own judgements.

Language, Education, and Resistance

As we delve deeper into the novel and its themes, the importance of language and education becomes evident, as they play a role in both the occupation and its resistance. Ghassan Kanafani, in *The Literature of Palestinian Resistance Under Occupation, 1948-1966* (1968), discusses how the State of Israel viewed language and education as an important aspect of Palestinian resistance, thus carrying out illiteracy policies towards Palestinians through inadequate curricula and lack of qualified teachers: not only were there not enough subjects taught at school, but the topics themselves—such as history and literature—did not represent Palestinian identity and history (Kanafani 1968, 23). In addition, Palestinian university students in Israel were subject to anonymous threats, with no protection from Israeli authorities, causing many Palestinian students to drop out of universities, lowering the education rates among Palestinians in Israel (Kanafani 1968, 30). In inspecting the relationship between knowledge and power, Michel Foucault claims that neither can exist without the other, saying "it is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, [and] it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power, [as] the exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power" (Foucault 1980, 52). The importance of literacy, education, and linguistic skills are crucial elements in *Wild Thorns,*

as can be seen through Basil's and Zuhdi's prison narratives, as well as other characters' everyday interactions.

In examining everyday forms of oppression and resistance, language is a main tool in the novel, functioning in two ways: (1) it is used by the characters as a tool of resistance, and (2) it is used by the novel to reflect the occupation's influence on Palestinians' everyday lives. The first instance in which we encounter language as a form of resistance is when Usama is at the checkpoint at the entrance of the West Bank, being questioned by an Israeli soldier:

> "'[…] We were living in Tulkarm; then my father died and my mother moved to Nablus.'
> 'Why did your mother move to Shekem?'
> 'She likes Nablus.'
> 'Why does she like Shekem?'
> 'She's got lots of relatives in Nablus.'
> 'And why have you left the oil countries to return to Shekem?'
> 'I'm returning to Nablus because my father died.'
> […]
> 'And what are you going to do in Shekem?' he asked.
> 'I'm going to look for a job in Nablus.'" (Khalifeh 2011, 13).

This exchange between Usama and the soldier, wherein the former refers to the town as "Nablus" and the latter refers to it as "Shekem"—which is the Hebrew name for Nablus—is one example of how Palestinians can resist

the occupation through language. By insisting on referring to it by its Arabic name, Usama insists on the town's Palestinian nature, symbolically refusing its occupation through language. Another layer to this exchange highlights Usama's fearlessness in using his own language as he finds himself in a situation where the power dynamics are imbalanced. By insisting on calling the town by its Arabic name, Usama—the occupied—resists the occupation of his language despite being faced with an agent of the occupying force who is, by nature of the occupation, in a position of power over Usama.

On the other hand, language is also used in the novel to reflect how the occupation asserts its power over Palestinians through every aspect of their life, even everyday language, with Hebrew—the language of the occupier—used to dictate a hierarchy. One moment in which this is evident is when one of the Palestinians who works with Adil, Abu Sabir, explains to Usama the words they use in Hebrew, saying, "You'll learn soon – words like Adon, and Giveret, and islakhli, and shalom . Those words, my friend, mean that the person's educated" (Khalifeh 2011, 79). Here we can see how Israel asserts its domination over Palestinians through what Pierre Bourdieu refers to as "symbolic violence":

> Symbolic violence is the coercion which is set up only through the consent that the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominator (and therefore to the

> domination) when their understanding of the situation and relation can only use instruments of knowledge that they have in common with the dominator, which, being merely the incorporated form of the structure of the relation of domination, make this relation appear as natural (Bourdieu in von Holdt 2013, 115).

The prevalent notion in Abu Sabir's explanation is that anyone who does not use Hebrew is uneducated—those who do not know the language of the occupier are simply inferior to the occupier. Furthermore, symbolic violence requires the consent of the dominated, which Abu Sabir gives through the implication that the language of the occupier is superior to that of the occupied, thus strengthening Israeli dominance over Palestinians.

In addition to language, the theme of education plays a central role in the novel, with Basil and Zuhdi explaining how important education is for the growing Palestinian resistance. As previously mentioned, education is one way in which Israel has historically attempted to restrict Palestinian liberation and resistance. The first instance in which this occurs in the novel is not included in the English translation, appearing only in the original Arabic version of it wherein Usama thinks back to a poem he once wrote about his mother. In the English version of the novel, the poem reads:

> Mother doesn't read or write,

> Just her thumb print must suffice.
> Yes, he thought, my mother signs with her thumb (Khalifeh 2011, 38).

The Arabic version, however, reveals an important aspect of the role of education, as the poem continues:

> My mother signs with her thumb. Most mothers do. Fathers, too. And the responsibility of reading lies with this generation. And this generation is strong. Keen. Solid as granite, despite being slender as a bamboo stick (my translation, Khalifeh 1999, 45).

This passage, indicating that Usama's parents are illiterate, highlights the importance of literacy and education within his generation, the younger generation, who faces the "responsibility of reading" as a means to maintain and continue the steadfastness of the older generation. Usama here also ties the persistence and strength of Palestinians, especially his own generation, with education. While his parents are illiterate—a reference to the aforementioned illiteracy policies implemented by the Israeli government—he and his generation are resilient and will become literate and educated despite the occupation's attempts to prevent that.

The importance of education is further accentuated during Basil's and Zuhdi's time in prison. When Zuhdi is released, he tells Adil,

> "[the other prisoners] thought I was a spy when I

> went in, but by the time I left, I was a comrade. I got educated, not only school subjects but special evening sessions too. Proletariat, capitalism, bourgeoisie, compradorism, and all that, led by another Adil" (Khalifeh 2011, 176).

Historically, Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons viewed education as a tool of resistance; as "the education system [in prison] combined independent reading of progressive literature with political discussions and critical debates" (Norman 2020, 53). Education, then, is an important tool by which resistance can be achieved, as knowledge of current politics and how systems of oppression operate is required for the dismantling of these systems. In the novel, understanding of the structures and infrastructures of these systems is viewed by the characters as the first step by which they can be resisted and dismantled.

Basil's time in prison highlights not only the importance of education, but also refers back to Usama's poem regarding his generation's responsibility towards the struggle. During Basil's imprisonment, the Palestinian prisoners create a "people's school" (Khalifeh 2011, 123), wherein the prisoners split into different groups based on their level of literacy and education, ranging from basic literacy to high school education. The educated prisoners are responsible for the uneducated ones, and at one of the evening assemblies, Salih, an-

other prisoner, highlights the importance of education in the resistance, saying: "it's not enough just to admit 'I'm responsible' to expiate your guilt and find peace. The problem goes deeper than that. We must read, plan, act. We must turn our backs to the past and look to the future!" (Khalifeh 2011, 125). Salih here highlights the importance of knowledge in the resistance movement, as resistance requires action, which must come from a place of knowledge: knowledge of the system of oppression and knowledge of how to fight it. Salih also mentions responsibility here, bringing us back to the poem Usama thinks of earlier on in the novel: resistance is not a choice, but rather a responsibility. It is one's responsibility to its land and people, the responsibility to ensure life and freedom to their people.

Manufacturing Violence

In addition to the representation of the violence of the occupation, the novel also deals with the concept and practice of armed resistance, highlighting the inevitability of violent resistance. In discussing Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, Karl von Holdt compares it with Frantz Fanon's discussion of violence, saying that it echoes symbolic power through the feeling of inferiority within the dominated, as "the violence of colonial domination can only be met with the counter-violence of the colonised" (von Holdt 2013, 116). He further quotes Fanon in saying that violence can be a way for

the colonised to rid themselves of feeling inferior to the coloniser; however, there is an additional political meaning to violent resistance, as it "imbues its participants with political enlightenment and egalitarianism derived from a sense of their own collective agency, strengthening them against false leaders, demagogues and opportunists" (von Holdt 2013, 116). We can see, then, how this inevitable violence as a reaction to colonisation and oppression emerges within the novel, as each of Usama, Adil, Basil, and Zuhdi have either participated, or thought of participating, in armed resistance as a result of their experience with the Israeli occupation.

Firstly, Usama is depicted in the novel as a romantic turned activist, as we are told at the very beginning of the novel that "he'd never been romantic himself. At least, he wasn't any longer, or so he believed. How had he come to that conclusion? Training. Bullets. Crawling on all fours. Pulling in your stomach. Such things make you unromantic in thought and deed" (Khalifeh 2011, 5). While Usama constantly rejects his previous romantic nature, he revisits it multiple times throughout the novel with a reminiscent tone, such as when he thinks of the poem he once wrote about his mother,

> ...when poetry had been his sole means of expression. That was before all passion, all poetry and all personal dreams had died for him. Yes, they'd died, and all the figures in the equation had been set, and

> he'd become a link in the chain of the cause" (Khalifeh 2011, 38).

Despite these hesitations, however, Usama is killed by Israeli gunshots following his participation with the Palestinian guerrilla fighters in the attack on an Israeli bus carrying Palestinian workers, one of them being Zuhdi. Prioritising the cause over his own life, he thinks with his dying breath: "I'm a real lion, mother; tell everyone I died a martyr, a martyr to the cause. A martyr to the land" (Khalifeh 2011, 185). We can see, then, that resistance and violence are not ingrained in Usama; rather, they are slowly inculcated in him the more he experiences the occupation's violence. His violence is a by-product of a system of oppression, as viewed by Fanon, and to him, he is left with no other choice but to act against his oppressors, even if that means hurting other Palestinians.

Within this attack by the Palestinian guerrillas, we also see Zuhdi's hesitation in his methods of resistance. While previously Zuhdi had, like Adil, believed in non-violent resistance, when finding himself in the crossfire between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian guerrilla fighters, he decides to act in the moment. He kills an Israeli soldier who was firing at Usama—the person who had just attempted to kill him—and thinks to himself, "you've killed a man, Zuhdi! So what? You'd let Usama and the guerrillas be attacked over your head and

you do nothing?" (Khalifeh 2011, 182). Here we see the aforementioned Palestinian solidarity and commitment to the cause of Palestinian liberation, as, despite Zuhdi having differing opinions to Usama, and despite Usama attempting to murder him, they have a shared enemy, and the lives of the collective here are prioritised over the life of the individual. At this moment, they are a single entity, acting against the reality of colonial violence and subjugation, wherein individuals morph into a collective as a means of survival—not the survival of a single individual, but rather the survival of a community.

Adil's version of resistance, on the other hand, is what saves him from being killed during the attack on the bus, as he had gone that day to Haifa to demand compensation for Abu Sabir's work injury. Throughout the novel, Adil slowly moves from resistance through survival and steadfastness, to political action. Adil's first act of resistance is done through bureaucracy by demanding monetary compensation for Abu Sabir's work injury in which he lost some of his fingers. While at the beginning of the novel he tells Usama, "Convince me that what I'm doing isn't part of the struggle, that the fight has fixed ground rules" (Khalifeh 2011, 63), as the novel progresses, he begins to move more toward action, telling Zuhdi, "Abu Sabir must receive due compensation. We must adopt a new approach. Step by step we must learn how to become masters and not victims" (Khalifeh 2011, 109). To Adil, then, the move from victimhood to

masterhood is not through armed resistance, but rather through legal action. Later on, Adil succeeds in convincing Abu Sabir to demand compensation for his injuries, telling him:

> Come on, Abu Sabir! Your rights won't be delivered to you while you sit comfortably at home. You have to keep at it, make a determined effort. It's not just a matter between Arabs and Israelis. It's a question of workers and employers. And if you can't find a way to fight for your rights on this issue, how will you learn to fight for them in other areas? (Khalifeh 2011, 152).

Adil highlights here the importance of an intersectional analysis of oppression, exemplifying how decolonial efforts must encompass multiple domains and how, in order to achieve full liberation, one must dismantle all oppressive systems. While throughout the novel, he chooses to approach resistance through class conflicts between workers and employers, by the end of the novel, Adil begins questioning his method of resistance. As Basil becomes a fugitive, Usama is killed in the attack on the bus, and the Israeli army demolishes Adil's house due to Basil's involvement with the guerrilla attack, Adil loses all faith in his non-violent approach, asking himself "what could be worse than admitting you're an impotent god, unable to assert your own rights or anyone else's?" (Khalifeh 2011, 206). Following this realisation, Adil is filled with feelings of rage at both himself and the Israeli

occupation and is suddenly overcome with the same violent urge his cousin Usama experienced when he first arrived in Nablus, as he thinks to himself:

> If only you were more cruel, or harder of heart, you'd blow up everything you could lay hands on, from the Atlantic to the Gulf and on to the world's furthest reaches. You'd leave no two stones standing. You'd uproot trees, exposing the infections beneath the earth's surface to the light of the sun, to the breezes of the spring. You'd turn everything upside down (Khalifeh 2011, 206).

In the end, it seems, all characters have been pushed to violence as a result of the occupation's oppression and violence, further highlighting Fanon's claim regarding symbolic power: the feeling of helplessness in the face of the violent occupation only results in an imbued sense of violence within Adil, despite his best efforts to adhere to non-violent resistance. While each of the characters begins the novel having different opinions and values in life, eventually they all share the same fate of being driven to violence.

This story, however, is merely one out of many and each character — Adil, Usama, Zuhdi, and Basil — represents the daily struggles of Palestinians in the West Bank as they are unfairly imprisoned, persecuted, killed, and their homes demolished (Ober 1990, 100). This ongoing reality of Palestinians is further reflected at the

end of the novel, as Adil walks into the town following the demolition of his house:

> He stood on the pavement watching the people on their way home, on their way to work. They lived their everyday lives stoically, silently. Nothing had changed. The square stood where it always had; the town clock ticked slowly as it always had. Only the flowers seemed to have grown larger, taller; otherwise nothing had changed (Khalifeh 2011, 207).

This moment of reflection folds the novel neatly unto itself, as it mirrors Usama's reflection at the beginning of the novel when he arrives in Nablus, lamenting how nothing has changed since the last time he was there five years prior (Khalifeh 2011, 26). This moment in Adil's reflection marks the beginning of his insurgence against the occupation, which complements his previous remarks on his desire to be more assertive and violent. Here we can see the cyclicality of violence, which is manufactured by the Israeli occupation: despite Adil's attempts to participate in non-violent resistance, he faces the harsh reality of living under occupation. The lack of closure or resolution at the end of the novel further highlights this cyclicality, indicating that Adil's story will be the same as Usama's. This is not unique to either of them, but rather is a by-product of the brutality of the Israeli occupation—this is the story of Palestine.

Conclusion

It is important to approach the discussion of resistance not only with nuance and historical knowledge, but also with an understanding of how systems of occupation and oppression work. Just as there is no single correct method of resistance, there is also not only one method of occupation; oftentimes, the violence is not physical, but rather permeates all aspects of life, such as employment, language, education, etc. While Khalifeh's *Wild Thorns* has been criticised for its supposed critique of armed resistance, this type of narrative is extremely important, as it highlights Palestinians as individuals with differing perspectives and experiences, exemplifying how viewing Palestine through a monolithic lens creates a singular mould of the Palestinian reality and narrative and deprives Palestinians of their unique experiences and opinions. This paper's exploration of resistance within the novel allows for a deeper understanding of not only the daily struggles and challenges of Palestinians, but also forms a more critical and analytical approach to Palestinian resistance by which one may understand that the issue of Palestine is not one-dimensional and needs to be looked at from a variety of angles. While I explored the topic of literature, education, and armed resistance, this paper is merely a small part of what can be, and needs to be, explored, not only in *Wild Thorns*, but also in Palestinian cultural production as a whole.

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Drama Triangles in Nadine Gordimer's "*Once Upon a Time*" and the War in Gaza

Barry Mauer

> Yuval Noah Harari: "The same people can be victims and perpetrators at the same time" (Booth 2023).

Introduction

Aimé Césaire stated that colonialism "dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it; that the colonizer, who in order to ease his conscience gets into the habit of seeing the other man as an animal, accustoms himself to treating him like an animal, and tends objectively to transform *himself* into an animal" (Césaire 2000, 41). A precondition for treating humans like animals is that we degrade animals. Theodor Adorno

noted: "Auschwitz begins whenever someone looks at a slaughterhouse and thinks: they're only animals" (Patterson 2002, 53). But humans are also animals, according to James K. Stanescu: "Adorno is making a . . . subtle and . . . convincing argument, about what allows fascism and Auschwitz to exist in the first place. It is because we hate, or to use Adorno's word "insult", the animal in ourselves and others that we, we as a society, are able to control and to kill" (Stanescu 2008). In recognition of the struggle to grant personhood and rights to both people and animals, we replace the word "dehumanization" with "depersonalization."

The depersonalization bred from colonialism persists in a pernicious pattern of roleplaying theorized by Stephen B. Karpman in his Drama Triangle, a model for understanding how game and script roles perpetuate destruction. Karpman works in the field of transactional analysis, which studies people's dynamic interactions with each other and their interior dialogues with themselves. Describing his drama triangle, Karpman writes, "A person 'living in a fairy tale' usually has a simplified view of the world with a minimum of dramatic characters, acting in the destructive roles of victim, perpetrator, and rescuer" (Karpman 1968, 39). The drama triangle models the players' actions as they move the positions of victim, perpetrator, and rescuer. To be a settler colonialist is to live the roles on this triangle within the transactional frame of a fairy tale. Nadine Gordimer's short story,

"Once Upon a Time," brings readers into the hallucinatory world of the settler fairy tale while exposing its pathological dynamics.

These drama roles of victim, perpetrator, and rescuer are performative and psychological and not necessarily actual. As Claude Steiner states, "the Victim is not really as helpless as he feels, the Rescuer is not really helping, and the Persecutor does not really have a valid complaint" (Steiner 1990, 4). Karpman stresses that an actual rescuer responds to others' request for help without the motive of appearing as a hero or keeping the victim in a powerless position. Actual victims do not play the "role" of victim in a bid to gain sympathy. Perpetrators claim victimhood to justify aggression. Colonizers and settlers pose themselves as all three; they cast themselves as rescuers, offering "gifts" like their civilization and eternal salvation. The failure of others to accept these gifts with the expected gratitude shifts the rescuer to the victim position, which justifies their shift to the perpetrator position.

Both Césaire and Karpman, from quite different perspectives, describe a process of depersonalization – of self and others – that explains the murderous lose-lose dynamic gripping Israelis and Palestinians. No lasting resolution is possible without an end to settler colonialism, though there are steps towards this end that, if it is to be reached, must include self-recognition among

players that they are stuck in fixed transactional patterns. A critical reading of Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time" using Karpman's drama triangle offers us a way out, one that reverses the logic of fairytale roleplaying and moves us toward a fuller sense of humanity that can only be shared with others. To get to this place, we must go beyond just mourning the dead and must also mourn the loss of our collective humanity to colonial fairytale roles and the dynamics of violence they entail.

The Student Complaint

Early in spring semester, 2024, my department chair informed me that a student from my fall 2023 class had filed a complaint of antisemitism against me. At issue was a question on the final exam, one that I had used for over a decade:

> The United States, Israel, and South Africa (when it was under the apartheid regime) belong to what category?
>
> 1. Settler nations
> 2. Colonies
> 3. Native-ruled nations
> 4. Empires

The best answer to the question is "settler nations" (though all three were former colonies and have acted as empires). I had a hard time squaring the idea that the

question is antisemitic when two of the countries named do not have majority Jewish populations. I was not shown the actual complaint but only heard a summary of it; perhaps the student objected to the juxtaposition of Israel and apartheid South Africa.

The student who complained had previously contacted me on October 8 of 2023 to tell me that her close male friend, a member of the IDF, had been killed by Hamas the day before. I expressed my sympathies, told her I am Jewish, had spent time in Israel, and once visited the same area where her friend was killed. I told her to take as much time as she needed to process the loss and that she could turn in her class work later with no penalty.

The course was literary theory. One of our theories is postcolonialism and one of the literary works we read through this postcolonial lens is Nadine Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time," an allegory of settler nations told as a not-for-children fairy tale. Gordimer was a Nobel Prize-winning white South African author who devoted much of her life to anti-Apartheid activism. My goal in teaching Gordimer's work and postcolonialism is to help students think about the relationships of empires, colonies, settlers, and indigenous people.

Considering the complaint, I reassessed my exam question and decided it was fair and correct; most Israeli Jews are settlers or descendants of settlers, Israel has a large

settler movement which identifies itself as such and has established itself in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, and which has expressed intentions to expand into Gaza. Perhaps my student interprets the word "settler" as unjustly critical or equates any criticism of Israel as antisemitic. A campaign to equate criticism of Israel with criticism of Judaism has been ongoing for decades and she may have encountered it in one form or another.

In the United States, a campaign run by Kenneth Marcus conflates Judaism and Zionism, using civil rights statutes to, according to Vimal Patel, "crack down on speech supporting Palestinians," especially on college campuses. Zionist proganadists like Marcus conflate Judaism and Zionism to unify Jews in support of Israel and reject any criticism of Israel as antisemitic and thus an unjust form of persecution. But this conflation of Judaism and Zionism has become strained to the breaking point because Israel has killed over 35,000 Palestinian in Gaza since the Hamas attack on Israel, with more than two-thirds of those Palestinians killed being women and children, according to United Nations reports (Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights, 2024). In response to Israeli atrocities in Gaza, South Africa brought charges of genocide against Israel to the United Nations. South African Foreign Minister Naledi Pandor spoke to journalist Mehdi Hasan about its case:

> I think it had to be South Africa. [It's the] only country that has a similar experience to the Palestinian people and that has been firmly attached to the struggle for freedom and human rights. For us to be invisible in a massive human struggle where we know a huge murder is underway [in Gaza], I think that is unacceptable. … there has to be an ongoing campaign to say to the world: 'This can't be.' (Team Zeteo)

In January 2024, The UN's highest court ruled it was plausible Israel was committing genocide. On March 26, United Nations expert Francesca Albanese reported to the UN Human Rights Council that Israel's campaign in Gaza was genocide. She stated, "I find that there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating the commission of the crime of genocide against Palestinians as a group in Gaza has been met" (Farge 2024). Israel's Amos Goldberg, a genocide researcher at the Hebrew University, reached the same conclusion, writing: "Yes, it is genocide. It is so difficult and painful to admit it, but despite all that, and despite all our efforts to think otherwise, after six months of brutal war we can no longer avoid this conclusion" (Goldberg 2024). He adds: "The numerous declarations of extermination by senior Israeli government officials, and the general exterminating tone of the public discourse . . . indicate that [genocide] was also the intention." Peter Maass states: "The victims of genocide — which Jews were in the Holocaust — are not gifted with the right to perpetrate

one" (Maass 2024). The conflation of antizionism with antisemitism now perpetuates genocide and defends it from criticism.

Many Jewish people, however, reject Zionism and condemn Israel's colonial violence. Gabor Maté, a Holocaust survivor and trauma expert, wrote: "In order to make this Jewish dream a reality we had to visit a nightmare on the local population. There's no way you could have ever created a Jewish state without oppressing and expelling the local population. Jewish Israeli historians have shown without a doubt that the expulsion of Palestinians was persistent, pervasive, cruel, murderous and with deliberate intent – that's what's called the 'Nakba' in Arabic; the 'disaster' or the 'catastrophe' (Maté 2024). Yet Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who now faces a warrant request from the International Criminal Court's prosecutor, stated, "No one in the world will teach us what morality is and what norms are" (Fabian 2024).

Jewish Voice for Peace states:

> We have come to see that Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous antisemitism in Europe. . . the Zionism that took hold and stands today is a settler-colonial movement, establishing an apartheid state where Jews have more rights than others. Our own history

> teaches us how dangerous this can be" (Jewish Voice for Peace 2024).

As a result of its activism, Jewish Voice for Peace was suspended by the administration of Columbia University (Huddleston and Mendel, 2023).

Likud, like Hamas, feeds on the increasing cycles of violence and trauma that result from the settler colonial dynamic, at great costs to Jews and Palestinians in the region and even globally. Antisemitism, rising in the United States and elsewhere, undoubtedly poses a threat, though its most dangerous manifestations arise not from left-wing pro-Palestinian activism but from right-wing fanaticism. In 2018, Robert Gregory Bowers killed eleven and wounded six people at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburg. Numerous other shootings of Jewish people have occurred in the U.S.A. since then, all from right-wing perpetrators. Right-wing antisemitic conspiracy theories have multiplied and given rise to more scripted violence, especially since the rise of Trump, who has praised Nazis as "very fine people ."

I do not conflate Judaism and Zionism, nor do I conflate Hamas with Islam or Palestinians. Hamas is a totalitarian fundamentalist death cult and deserves no support, though its rise was a tragic yet predictable outcome of Israeli policy decisions. Rather than recount the history here, I direct readers to "The Story Behind the Rise of

Hamas" (Bolliger, et al 2023), which details how the Israeli government boosted Hamas as a counterweight to Fatah.

Post-Colonialism and Settlers

Post-colonial research explores how different groups – colonists, settlers, and indigenous people – relate to the colonial experience. Colonialism is the subjugation of people by colonizers from another land. Colonizers take direct control of the resources – natural and human – and substitute their own political machinery for that of the subjugated group. Some colonial regimes impose their languages and cultural habits on subjugated groups.

The difference between colonizers and settlers can be understood in terms of political systems, identities, and relations to the land and native inhabitants. Colonizers control the resources and politics of people in other lands. They identify primarily with the "mother country" and may intend to leave the colony. Settlers continue the process begun by colonizers of displacing and exploiting the resources and people in the lands they occupy. Settlers live in occupied lands and intend to stay. They hold more privileges than subjugated people but may have fewer privileges than colonizers. They tend to adopt some of the practices of native people, though they consider native people to be inferior.

British colonizers in the new world took resources and control from native inhabitants. Settlers fought against the colonial power but continued to take resources and control away from native inhabitants, though with even more extreme violence. Alicia Cox, summarizing the work of Lorenzo Veracini wrote:

> Whereas colonizers use a logic of commodification to demand that indigenous peoples 'work for' them, settler colonizers use a logic of evacuation to demand that indigenous peoples 'go away,' clearing the land for agriculture and resource extraction by imported laborers(Cox 2017).

Most colonizers' overt political control has ended (some countries do maintain a few colonies); but there remain vestiges of colonial control over subjugated people's resources and culture. As a result of the American Revolution, political power shifted from the British empire to settlers with English heritage who developed their own identity apart from England, though these settlers still spoke English and continued many of the same habits as the colonizers. The new settler regime continued to appropriate resources and control from native inhabitants while fighting against British colonial power.

The parallels between the U.S. and Israel are not exact. During British colonialism in North America, many of the settlers – Puritans, for example – left England for the

colonies to escape British control. Palestine was under a British mandate from 1920 to 1948, but Britain began settling Jewish people from a variety of European, Middle Eastern, and Central Asian areas to Palestine as early as the 1830s. Both Jews who settled in Palestine and Puritans who settled in the American colonies tied their identity to a narrative of persecution and their guiding ideology was a belief that they had a divine mandate to settle on the land.

The British encouraged Jewish migration to Palestine starting in the 1830s as a form of surrogate colonialism, which gave rights to settlers over indigenous people. The British had a variety of purposes which included weakening the power of Egypt and strengthening that of Turkey, increasing cotton production to profit the British, and fulfilling "the Prophesies" based in the doctrine of Christian Zionism, which is the idea that "Jews must be gathered and 'restored' to Palestine, where they will convert to Christianity and precipitate the second coming of Christ and usher in the Last Days" (Malm 2024). In opposition to these efforts were movements among many Arabs and Jews to form a state under shared governance (Britannica n.d.). But these efforts were persistently defeated by the British and by extremists among local groups.

Early Jewish settlers engaged in organized and vigilante violence against native inhabitants. Even some Zionists

were appalled at the actions of these Jewish settlers. In 1891, Zionist leader Ahad Ha'am wrote

> There is certainly one thing we could have learned from our *past and present* history: how careful we must be not to arouse the anger of other people against ourselves by reprehensible conduct. How much more, then, should we be careful, in our conduct toward a foreign people among whom we live once again, to walk together in love and respect, and needless to say in justice and righteousness. And what do our brethren in Eretz Israel do? Quite the opposite! They were slaves in their land of exile, and they suddenly find themselves with unlimited freedom, the kind of wild freedom to be found only in a country like Turkey. This sudden change has engendered in them an impulse to despotism, as always happens when "a slave becomes a king," and behold they walk with the Arabs in hostility and cruelty, unjustly encroaching on them, shamefully beating them for no good reason, and even bragging about what they do, and there is no one to stand in the breach and call a halt to this dangerous and despicable impulse. (Dowty et al, 2000)

To be clear, Ha'am was not calling for shared governance; his purpose was to find a more efficacious way to accomplish Zionist aims.

Settler colonialism is based upon deadly delusions, which include delusions of grandiosity – "in the fundamental-

ist milieu of the Afrikaners, there was a sense that they were a chosen people, that they were bringing civilization to the blacks" (Garner 1998), persecution (lesser people want to deny us our rightful place), and erotomania (we have a covenant with God, who loves and protects us), frequently combined with possession disorder. The criteria for possession disorder includes the following:

> (2) possession trance, a single or episodic alteration in the state of consciousness characterized by the replacement of customary sense of personal identity by a new identity. This is attributed to the influence of a spirit, power, deity, or other person, as evidenced by one (or more) of the following: (a) stereotyped and culturally determined behaviors or movements that are experienced as being controlled by the possession agent (b) full or partial amnesia for the event. (During et al 2011)

The possessing "spirit" of settler colonialism is a form of entitlement based on religious zealotry, ultra-nationalism, and cult-like abeyance to a leader. Its pervasiveness does not make it sane or morally acceptable. As Erich Fromm famously stated: "That millions of people share the same forms of mental pathology does not make these people sane" (Fromm 1955, 15). The settler mentality is a shared psychotic disorder. Drs. Elizabeth Pomeroy and Kathryn Wambach discuss shared psychotic disorder as one in which "a person who is closely associated with someone else with some Psy-

chotic Disorder 'buys into' the delusional system." The authors add,"Although this diagnosis is rarely made, it apparently is more likely when the individual with the original delusions exercises substantial power over the other person. For example, children growing up with a parent who is delusional may well 'buy into' that world-view, at least during their younger years" (Pomeroy and Wambach 2003, 119). The children of delusional settlers tend to adopt their parents' delusions of grandiosity, persecution, and erotomania, as well as their possession disorder.

Such mass delusions and states of possession create moral inversions, which flip the polarities of good and evil, causing people to perpetrate out of a perceived sense of victimhood. Guy Adams writes, "A moral inversion occurs when something evil or destructive has been successfully presented (repackaged) as something positive and worthwhile. Under the conditions of moral inversion, one can engage in evil acts while thinking that one is engaged in something constructive or positive" (Adams 2011, 277). Adams defines evil as "the actions of human beings that unjustly or needlessly inflict pain and suffering and even death on other human beings" (276) and proposes "that there is a continuum of evil and wrongdoing, with horrible, mass eruptions of evil, such as the Holocaust and other, lesser instances of mass murder, at one extreme, and the 'small' white lie, which is somewhat hurtful, at the other. Somewhere along this continuum, wrongdoing turns into evil" (276).

Settler colonialism constitutes "administrative evil": "The common characteristic of administrative evil is that people can engage in acts of evil without being aware that they are doing anything at all wrong" (Adams, 275). Adorno had stated: "It is part of the mechanism of domination to forbid recognition of the suffering it produces" (Adorno 2006, 63). Predictably, when people perpetrate evil without recognizing what they are doing or accepting responsibility, they continue perpetrating.

Gordimer's "Once Upon a Time"

> This formularization is sharp and important: *to penetrate the veil while retaining its hallucinatory quality* . . . The political and artistic problem is to engage with that, to maintain that hallucinatory quality while effectively turning it against itself. That would be the true catharsis, the great counter-discourse whose poetics we must ponder in the political terrain now urgently exposed today; the form wherein all that appeals and seduces in the iconography and sensuality of the underworld becomes its own force for self-subversion. (Taussig 1984, 471-472)

Gordimer's story enacts Michael Taussig's formulation: "*to penetrate the veil while retaining its hallucinatory quality.*" "Once Upon a Time" functions primarily as a fairy tale and not as critique, yet it turns the logic of the settler fairy tale against itself. "Once upon a Time" is a portrait of South Africa under apartheid, yet Gordimer never

identifies the country. (Gordimer includes a few words as clues to the setting – "tsotsis" [black street thugs], "baas" [boss], and mention of the Chopi and Tsonga peoples.) Why doesn't Gordimer name the country? Because the paranoia, racism, violence, and insecurity of the place is not unique to apartheid South Africa but can be found in many former colonies in which settlers displaced the native population. Gordimer doesn't name the family members in the story either; they are simply the man, the wife, and the little boy. They could be any settler family in any settler nation.

The story could be about the United States. Settlers displaced native populations and imported foreigners as slaves and indentured servants. They created a permanent underclass and left it to rot in destitute conditions for hundreds of years. The settler regime of the United States launched regional wars against its neighbors so it could plunder resources. American society is marked by race and class divisions, an increasing wealth gap, an obsession with security – gated suburbs and private guards, and police killing "undesirables" hundreds of times a year – and a vigilante gun culture that justifies homicide anytime white people feel threatened by a non-white kid with a bag of Skittles or who plays loud music in his car.

"Once Upon a Time" begins with an introduction that recounts the white narrator's terror upon hearing noises in her house and fearing an intruder. While these sounds

were caused by the house creaking and not by an intruder, we infer that the settler is the intruder. The narrator explains the noises by recalling that her house was built above a gold mine and that "when some face trembles, detaches and falls, three thousand feet below, the whole house shifts slightly, bringing uneasy strain to the balance and counterbalance of brick, cement, wood and glass that hold it as a structure around me" (1991, 24). The disruption caused by the moving earth is far more terrifying for the people who might be in the mine: "The misbeats of my heart tailed off like the last muffled flourishes on one of the wooden xylophones made by the Chopi and Tsonga migrant miners who might have been down there, under me in the earth at that moment. The stope where the fall was could have been disused, dripping water from its ruptured veins; or men might now be interred there in the most profound of tombs" (24). Gordimer's introduction presents the state of paranoia and dread gripping the settler. The world is un-safe, the dead and dying are invisible, and the psyche is haunted. This realization prompts the narrator to tell a story: "I couldn't find a position in which my mind would let go of my body – release me to sleep again. So I began to tell myself a story; a bedtime story" (25).

> In a house, in a suburb, in a city, there were a man and his wife who loved each other very much and were living happily ever after. They had a little boy, and they loved him very much. They had a cat and

> a dog that the little boy loved very much. They had a car and a caravan trailer for holidays, and a swimming-pool which was fenced so that the little boy and his playmates would not fall in and drown. They had a housemaid who was absolutely trustworthy and an itinerant gardener who was highly recommended by the neighbors. For when they began to live happily ever after they were warned, by that wise old witch, the husband's mother, not to take on anyone off the street. They were inscribed in a medical benefit society, their pet dog was licensed, they were insured against fire, flood damage and theft, and subscribed to the local Neighborhood Watch, which supplied them with a plaque for their gates lettered YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED over the silhouette of a would-be intruder. He was masked; it could not be said if he was black or white, and therefore proved the property owner was no racist. (26)

Why were the couple "living happily ever after?" This phrase appears at the end of fairy tales, not the beginning. The odd placement of the phrase here raises the question "after what?" After the "other" people have been displaced or forced into submission as servants. The fairy tale fantasy must begin with "after"; it is a timeless time, an eternal paradise for the "right" people, which would be spoiled by references to historical times – the times in which earlier inhabitants were forcibly displaced or future times in which the settler regime could unravel.

Space, like time, is likewise compartmentalized within this fairy tale bubble: "There were riots, but these were outside the city, where people of another color were quartered. These people were not allowed into the suburb except as reliable housemaids and gardeners, so there was nothing to fear, the husband told the wife" (25). The settlers realize how the fantasy bubble is maintained: "Yet she was afraid that some day such people might come up the street and tear off the plaque YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED and open the gates and stream in … Nonsense, my dear, said the husband, there are police and soldiers and tear-gas and guns to keep them away" (26). In settler colonialism, the bubble must be maintained at all costs: "But to please her—for he loved her very much and buses were being burned, cars stoned, and schoolchildren shot by the police in those quarters out of sight and hearing of the suburb—he had electronically controlled gates fitted" (26). Settlers share the burden of security with the state; they expect the state to perpetrate most of the violence, but if they feel the state is insufficiently violent, they will enact vigilante violence.

The settler's conscience, like their time and their space, is likewise compartmentalized. "The colonial world is a compartmentalized world" (Fanon 2014, 3). The family in "Once Upon a Time," like many Jewish settlers in Israel, believe that they adhere to high ethical standards

while they perpetrate institutional evil. They reassure themselves they are good people. For example, the wife acts as rescuer to impoverished native people: "The wife could never see anyone go hungry. She sent the trusted housemaid out with bread and tea" (27). Regretfully, the wife stops her charity efforts after advice from her "trusted servant" [who is native] and her husband, who says, "You only encourage them with your bread and tea. They are looking for their chance …" (28).

The fairy tale world constructed by the settler finds its analogue in the tale of "Sleeping Beauty" (aka "Briar Rose," "Sun, Moon, and Talia," and many others). In the Brothers Grimm version of the tale, the princess is protected in a deadly enclosure: "Then round about that place there grew a hedge of thorns thicker every year, until at last the whole castle was hidden from view, and nothing of it could be seen but the vane on the roof" (97). This enclosure kept out undesirables: "from time to time many Kings' sons came and tried to force their way through the hedge; but it was impossible for them to do so, for the thorns held fast together like strong hands, and the young men were caught by them, and not being able to get free, there died a lamentable death" (97-98). The family in "Once Upon a Time" builds a technological "thorn hedge" to protect them: "it consisted of a continuous coil of stiff and shining metal serrated into jagged blades, so that there would be no way of climbing over it and no way through its tunnel without getting

entangled in its fangs. There would be no way out, only a struggle getting bloodier and bloodier, a deeper and sharper hooking and tearing of flesh" (29).

In Gordimer's story, the line between fantasy and reality finally collapses: "One evening, the mother read the little boy to sleep with a fairy story from the book the wise old witch [the grandmother] had given him at Christmas. Next day he pretended to be the Prince who braves the terrible thicket of thorns to enter the palace and kiss the Sleeping Beauty back to life" (30). The little boy is not the chosen prince: "the bleeding mass of the little boy was hacked out of the security coil with saws, wire-cutters, choppers, and they carried it—the man, the wife, the hysterical trusted housemaid and the weeping gardener—into the house" (30).

The little boy had been rehearsing the life he was expected to live: a life in a fairy tale, one in which he would be the rescuer. The parallels of Gordimer's setting to Israel, with its walls and barbed wire to protect settlers against displaced people, is obvious. The Hamas attack on October 7, 2023, demonstrated that the extraordinary security measures the Israelis had put in place created only the illusion of security. Not only did the Israeli perimeter around Gaza prove useless, but its armaments were turned against Israelis. The New York Times wrote: "Israeli military and intelligence officials have concluded that a significant number of weapons used by Hamas

in the Oct. 7 attacks and in the war in Gaza came from an unlikely source: the Israeli military itself" (Abi-Habib 2024). The Times story continues: "Hamas has been able to build many of its rockets and anti-tank weaponry out of the thousands of munitions that failed to detonate when Israel lobbed them into Gaza. . . Hamas is also arming its fighters with weapons stolen from Israeli military bases."

The violence of the native population in Gordimer's story, and that of Hamas, fuels the circular logic of the settlers: it proves that natives are nonpersons and therefore further violence against them is necessary and justified. In "Once Upon a Time," the man's mother, a "wise old witch," encourages the family to invest in ever greater security. She is indeed wise, though in a rather narrow way, for in a situation in which insecurity keeps increasing, the narrowest logic dictates that one should take precautionary measures. But this logic intensifies the problem. The excluded become more desperate, more violent. The ruling minority, believing *they* are the persecuted ones, take ever more fanatical measures to hold off the poor and oppressed, thus perpetuating the cycle. The world becomes Manichean: good vs. evil. Franz Fanon wrote: "The colonial world is a Manichean world. It is not enough for the settler to delimit physically, that is to say with the help of the army and the police force, the place of the native. As if to show the totalitarian character of colonial exploitation the settler paints the

native as a sort of quintessence of evil" (Fanon 2014, 6). He continues, "The native is declared insensible to ethics; he represents not only the absence of values, but also the negation of values. He is, let us dare to admit, the enemy of values, and in this sense, he is the absolute evil" (6).

Karpman Triangle and Collective Mourning

> "You can't change a regime on the basis of compassion. There's got to be something harder. I'm not saying that compassion is not necessary in our lives but you can't change a regime that way" (Gordimer 1977, 157).

Stephen Karpman, a transactional analyst, published his first work on what became known as the "Karpman Drama Triangle" in 1968. In his work, Karpman details the roles of persecutor, victim, and rescuer within dysfunctional relationships. During conflict, participants switch roles, and they can play more than one role at a time. This drama triangle (below) has become a model for therapists working to fix broken family systems.

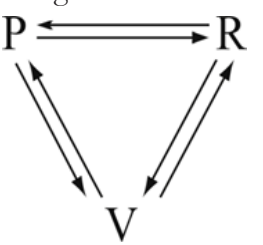

Fig. 1, Karpman, Stephen B. "Drama Triangle," 2007, in "The New Drama Triangles," USATAA/ ITAA Conference lecture worksheet. August 11, 2007

A person "living in a fairy tale" usually has a simplified view of the world with a minimum of dramatic characters. The role diagram provides a means of fixing this set number of key identities visually in therapy. When a person knows his "favorite fairy tale" the key roles can be listed in a circle and from there the life roles can be fit. . . (Karpman 1968, 1).

What Karpman identifies as "living in a fairy tale" is a form of depersonalization. Karpman offers a way out the destructive drama triangle through an alternate one he calls the "compassion triangle."

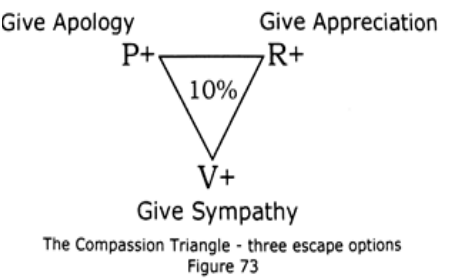

Fig. 2, Karpman, Stephen B. "Compassion Triangle," 2014, in A Game Free Life: The Definitive Book on the Drama Triangle and Compassion Triangle by the Originator and Author, 173

Compassion is not enough to change a regime, but it is a key component of a better society. Karpman's compassion triangle requires decision and action to promote the well-being of all players. Karpman poses three escape routes from the destructive game of the drama triangle. To escape the game, players need to accept at least 10% responsibility for playing destructive roles. To escape the perpetrator role, offer an apology. To escape the rescuer role, offer appreciation. To escape the victim role, offer sympathy. These actions are directed not only to other people but also to oneself; we acknowledge the harm that fairy tale roles have exacted on the self and seek to repair them. One only hopes that the family in "Once Upon a Time" begins that healing process after the death of the little boy.

Together the points on the compassion triangle constitute a form of mourning and reparations. Healing the conflict between Jews and Palestinians requires what Karpman calls "three essential steps."

First essential step: identify the games and invitations to the triangle.

Second step: Learn to offer quality relations without innuendo or secret agendas (conscious or unconscious Triangles).

Third step: We will learn an infallible, irresistible method for monitoring relationship contracts.

1. How can I bring up what I observe?
2. How can I bring it up truthfully and address something that is hard to say?
3. How can I make sure that the matter is settled after our exchange, and that the problem won't come up again? (Karpman 2914, 171-172)

To shift from the drama triangle to the compassion triangle, settlers face the most challenging tasks because they must build trust with colonized subjects over time through sustained trustworthy behavior. But the tasks for colonized subjects are also difficult. Gordimer wrote, "It is easier for the former masters to put aside the masks that hid their humanity than for the former slaves to recognise the faces underneath. Or to trust that this is not a new mask these are wearing" (Gordimer 2004, 12). Only by dismantling settler colonialism brick-by-brick can settlers begin to build trust with native people. To escape the drama triangle, Israelis and Palestinians must collectively mourn the loss of their personhood and that of the other, each taking responsibility (even if it's only 10%) for the calamity. The choice is mass mourning or mass murder.

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Reviving 'Desert Spirituality': Ecocritical Insights from Postcolonial Great Saharan Literature—A Case Study of al-Batoul Mahjoub's Mined Places (2016)

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Introduction

This study examines the postcolonial narratives of the Great Sahara with a particular focus on literary outputs from the Sahara of southern Morocco, using Moroccan writer al-Batoul Mahjoub's *āmākinu mlg̈wmā* (Mined Places 2016) as a pivotal text. This novel not only anchors the thematic discussions prevalent in the region's literature but also serves as a lens through which the enduring environmental impacts of historical legacies of imperialism are explored. By employing a comparative literary approach that juxtaposes Mahjoub's narrative with local Hassani writings and broader postcolonial literary

traditions of the Sahara, the analysis offers a profound understanding of how the novel contributes to both regional and global discussions on postcolonial ecocriticism and identity. This structured methodology allows for an in-depth examination of the novel's thematic resonance within the Saharan literary corpus, thereby setting a comprehensive stage for the nuanced engagement with themes of memory, identity, and trauma.

In particular, the study delves into the transformative effects of Spanish colonialism (1884-1975,) which catalyzed the urbanization of traditionally nomadic tribal societies in southern Morocco. This segment examines the dire consequences of such colonial urbanization policies, notably the devastating legacy of landmines that persistently mar the landscape and impact its communities. The analysis addresses how these policies not only disrupted but also dislocated the Sahrawi nomadic identity, as part of a broader Spanish colonial agenda aimed at fostering a more capital-efficient, productive modernity. This imposition starkly contrasts with the Sahara's traditional settle and nomadic lifestyle, highlighting a profound misalignment with the inherent social and economic structures of the region. As the analysis transitions into a focused literary dissection of *Mined Places*, it scrutinizes how Mahjoub's narrative articulates the dual impacts of environmental degradation and forced urbanization—both direct legacies of colonial intrusion. Furthermore, the text poignantly addresses the traumat-

ic scars borne by new generations of these tribal societies, scars that are continuously struggled with and are yet to be fully reconciled.

Through this exploration, the research defines Mahjoub's significant role in the literary field of the Great Sahara and highlights her narrative's critical engagement with postcolonial concerns of Sahrawi identity and environmental dislocation in the face of expanding global capitalism. This investigation not only highlights the significance of the narrative but also deepens our comprehension of the enduring influence that colonial legacies have on postcolonial conditions across the Great Sahara. This enhancement of understanding is pivotal, as it elucidates the specific ways in which colonial interventions have persistently molded social, cultural, and environmental realities in this expansive region.

Orientalist Depictions and Misrepresentations of Southern Moroccan Sahara in Western Literature

Historically, numerous narratives have characterized the Sahara of southern Morocco during the pre-colonial and early imperial colonial periods. A primary observation from this corpus is the frequent use of the term "captured," reflecting the experiences of Western explorers who ventured into the Sahara during these times. The second notable point is that as these narratives of captivity in the Sahara emerged in the West, they often

portrayed, in line with the tradition of Orientalization, images of barbarity and savagery. This not only cast the desert as a realm of cruelty but also depicted its inhabitants as barbaric and ruthless, thereby labeling them as "uncivil." Such representations, as post-colonial critiques would argue, played a critical role in the imperial agenda to dehumanize the 'other'—serving as a justification for conquest and domination. In this context, Aimé Césaire articulately observed that "{above all else,} we must study how colonization works to decivilize the colonizer, to brutalize him in the true sense of the word, to degrade him" (Césaire 1955).

Camille Douls, a French explorer, uniquely navigated the Sahara, captivated by its enigmatic allure, as documented in his 1888 work, *Cinq Mois Chez Les Maures Nomade Du Sahara Occidental*. Unlike typical narratives of the period, often penned by those enduring the Sahara's harsh conditions involuntarily, Douls' account offers an insightful perspective on his five-month stay and interactions with the local people. This narrative, among others, is crucial for scholarly analysis of Western travel accounts in the Sahara during the nineteenth century. There are essential academic studies of these narratives such as Mohamedou Ould Mohameden's *La Société Maure Au XIXème Siècle Vue Par les Voyageurs Français* (2001) and Maurice Barbier's *Voyageurs et explorateurs au Sahara Occidental au XIXème siècle* (2000). These works document the experiences of around twenty-one explorers and captives from

diverse backgrounds, highlighting the prevalent theme of 'captivity' that reinforces Orientalist depictions of the Sahara and its inhabitants as 'exotic,' 'savage,' and 'merciless.' Although rooted in some historical truths and personal experiences, these accounts often exaggerated aspects of the Sahara to appeal to a Western audience craving exotic travel tales, thereby shaping perceptions that supported colonial motives to 'civilize' the depicted 'Others.'

During the 19th century, narratives from the Sahara primarily focused on themes of survival, isolation, and endurance, painting a vivid picture of the severe human conditions within its vast emptiness. Central to these accounts is Robert Adams, an American/British seaman, whose story significantly shaped the Barbary Coastal Captivity Narratives. Western figures—merchants, seamen, travelers, and diplomats from nations including America, Britain, Spain, France, and Portugal—depicted the desert as a domain fraught with danger and disorder. Through an Orientalist lens, these narratives served a purpose beyond conveying exotic images of the Sahara; they underscored the perceived need for Western intervention to impose order on what was viewed as an inherently chaotic and ungovernable space. Noteworthy among these accounts are James Riley's *Authentic Narrative* and Archibald Robbins's *Memoir of Captivity*, while Alexander Scott described his experiences among the Sahara nomads as both enlightening and terrifying (Trail

1821). Together, these stories portrayed the Sahara not just as a land of mystery, but as a territory primed for exploration and intervention.

Following Ghislaine Lydon's (2005) critique of Sahara representations in colonial ethnographies, where the desert is depicted as an 'empty-quarter' only traversed by nomads on their camels and used to underscore the Sahara as a 'natural' boundary between North Africa and the rest of the continent, we confront the complexity of these portrayals. This question intertwines with various elements, especially those related to colonial dynamics, which will be further explored in subsequent sections. The discussion of these narratives necessitates acknowledging the historical misperception of the desert as a lifeless void, devoid of culture—an error perpetuated in both literature and philosophical discourse. Tynan offers a poignant analysis, referencing T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* to illustrate how the desert emerges not as an environmental caution or a spiritual diagnosis but as a profound aesthetic revelation. Tynan argues that in 20th-century thought, the desert transitions from a space imbued with historical theological and metaphysical meanings—termed "desert spirituality," which fostered a life apart from nature and created a paradoxical "world outside of the world"—to an "epiphany" stripped of these deeper connotations (Tynan, 112, 24). This shift highlights the evolving perceptions of the Sahara within contemporary discourse, where its spiritual and metaphysical heritage is often overshadowed by aesthetic interpretations.

Aidan Tynan elucidates the role of the desert in modern literary and philosophical contexts with his insightful analysis:

> If the desert has functioned for thousands of years as a space of theological yearning and ordeal, as a site more spiritual than geographic, in the twentieth century it comes into its own as an environment in which exhaustion seems to coexist with forms of abundance and plenitude unique to Western capitalist society. Writers from Yeats and Eliot to Baudrillard, Carter and DeLillo privilege the desert precisely because it seems the spatial correlate of twentieth-century capitalism (2022: 21).

Tynan connects the reimagining of the desert to reflections on modern capitalist experiences, emphasizing a transformative shift in how the desert is perceived and represented. He argues that the portrayal of the desert in literature and philosophy offers profound insights into the modern condition of our age. This is why he posits that the desert "can tell us some important things about the experience of being modern," highlighting a crucial connection between modernity and the desert that traditional ideas of nature and oikos (home) fail to capture. This is because modernity itself involves a significant redefinition of concepts like place and dwelling (Tynan, 2022: 8). Through this lens, Tynan underscores the intricate relationship between geographic and metaphorical interpretations of the desert, illustrating how modernity

reshapes our understanding of space and place, particularly through the lens of desert imagery.

Emergence and Evolution of Postcolonial Saharan Literature: Ecological Insights

While imperial colonialism and modernist portrayals have often romanticized the Sahara as a perilous landscape for heroic quests, reinforcing negative stereotypes of danger and hardship, this archetype is being actively challenged by post-colonial narratives. Emerging from the vast expanses of the Great Sahara Desert, a diverse array of writers including, but not limited to, Ibrahim al-Koni from Libya, Moussa Ag Assarid from Mali, and Hisham Matar from Libya, along with al-Batoul Mahjoub Lamding from Morocco—whose novel Mined Places serves as a pivotal case study in this discourse—have embarked on a literary mission to challenge entrenched perceptions about the Sahara and its peoples. Al-Koni, through works such as *The Bleeding of the Stone* (1990) and *Gold Dust* (1992), delves into the mystical and existential dimensions of Tuareg culture, revealing its spiritual and environmental facets. Moussa Ag Assarid articulates the experiences and adversities of the Tuareg people in Mali with meticulous detail. Hicham Matar, renowned for his novels *In the Country of Men* (2006) and *The Return* (2016), masterfully explores the emotional and political landscapes of post-colonial Libya. Mahjoub also adds a distinctive Saharan perspective from the South of

Morocco, enriching the discourse on Saharan identities across North Africa. Together, these authors contribute significantly to a literary movement that redefines Saharan identities in postcolonial contexts.

Al-Koni, often hailed as the godfather of contemporary Sahrawi literature written in Arabic, honed his literary skills at the Gorki Institute in Russia. Upon his return to the desert communities of Libya, al-Koni embarked on a mission to counter the colonial misrepresentations of his people and, in a manner reminiscent of postcolonial Anglophone writers, to imbue both the language and the medium of his writing with profound significance. His extensive body of work, which includes over 130 novels set in the Sahara, challenges György Lukács's assertion that the modern novel is inherently urban and relational (Lukács 1963). Contrary to this, for al-Koni, the novel should not merely echo the dynamics of urban settings but, since the human is at the heart of the narrative, it should encompass the human condition in its entirety, including experiences of nomadic Sahrawis in the Great Sahara which, until al-Koni began writing in the 1970s onwards, has never been given a chance to enter the scope of the novel genre.

Al-Koni, along with many Sahrawi writers, infuses his narratives with a "spirituality" identified by Tynan as lacking in modern literary and philosophical depictions of the desert (2020:21). This spirituality is deeply root-

ed in the socio-cultural fabric of Sahrawi society across the Great Sahara, where, despite the imposition of urbanization, there persists a profound longing for the nomadic, rural desert existence. This existence, framed in Byung Chul Han's ontological terminology, allows for an authentic dwelling within the space of the Sahara, contrasting sharply with our modern and urban "narcissistic achievement society" (2015). Here, the Sahrawi lifestyle promotes the abandonment of egocentric achievements for a life of existential inquiry and transcendence, fostering a deep ecological consciousness that recognizes the Earth not as a possession but as an experiential realm. This environmental awareness is pivotal in postcolonial Sahrawi literature, which not only critiques the forced urbanization of indigenous nomadic tribes but also challenges the purported benefits of such urbanization. By reinvigorating the image of the Sahara in their writings, these authors assert that what has long been mislabeled as 'savage' has, in reality, been attuned to ecological sensibilities for ages, thus breathing new life into the Sahara as a vital and conscious space within the literary canon.

In this manner, al-Koni introduces into the heart of Great Sahara postcolonial literature the perennial question of human culture and society. Nearly in every interview, al-Koni revisits the biblical story of Abel and Cain. He draws a metaphorical link between their narrative—particularly the aspect where God favors Abel's sacrifice over Cain's—to argue against the longstanding misrepresentations of the desert and the Great Sahara in

existing literature. To him, this issue is even more critical in philosophy, where the desert has not been adequately explored, neither as a space nor as an entity where nomadic culture also thrives. For al-Koni, Abel symbolizes the Sahrawi individual who is not confined to one place and does not claim ownership of land or a farm as Cain did. Because he views the entire universe as his home and is driven by a relentless desire to find life in the next mile, the Sahrawi has had to develop a nomadic lifestyle distinct from that of urban dwellers.

For al-Koni, human society is perennially divided into two tribes—the one that remains static and claims ownership, which he associates with the genesis of contemporary capitalism, and the one that is nomadic, constantly in search of not ownership, but a higher spiritual truth akin to the poet's truth. This perspective is evident in an interview he conducted with Bilqis Ansari.

> The desert liberates because it was liberated the day it denied its nature as nature itself, to transform into spirit; it's just that it is embodied. If the world is a letter that kills, then the desert is its spirit that gives life. Its message is to alert us to the treasures within us, as opposed to the false treasures that lure us, and we will not awaken from our coma unless we properly question ourselves. For this reason, the desert people are innately poets, because their transparency is borrowed from the transparency of the environmental reality that permeates them, settling within

> them from where they thought they were the ones who settle it (Al-Koni: 2022, my translation).

Al Koni's conceptualization of Sahrawi literature in postcolonial times—or, more precisely, literature that does justice to the Sahara and acknowledges its significance—is fundamentally rooted in recognizing the desert as a spiritual space where time and habitation are perceived differently than in the capitalist construct of the metropolis. In other words, postcolonial literature from the regions of the Great Sahara is characterized by a profound connection to the land as a space where human life is merely a component, and where humans are not in control but are perpetually engaged in survival. This form of survival, as al-Koni has noted in several interviews, elevates human life to a higher dimension, one that transcends the physical and material realms.

Furthermore, it is crucial to view this body of literature, as this paper argues, as an entrance to a canon that not only writes back against previous misrepresentations of the Great Sahara but also challenges the philosophical disregard of the desert as merely a void to be endured. More importantly, this literature serves as a reclamation of Sahrawi nomadic identity, which has been compromised by forced urbanization during imperial colonial times—such as the Spanish case in Morocco—and addresses environmental concerns, making it a vital site for ecocritical artistic exploration in the works of postcolonial Sahrawi writers.

Colonial Disruptions: Analyzing the Spanish Impact on Sahara's Socio-Ecological Framework

Contemporary views, which are typically informed by pre-colonial, colonial, and modern perspectives, frequently undervalue the Sahara of Southern Morocco's significant historical and cultural significance. Contrary to perceptions of it as a barren wilderness, the Sahara, as a desert-place everywhere in the world, has been a vital cradle of civilization, significantly shaping diverse cultural, religious, and philosophical developments. This section intends to rectify these misunderstandings by delving into the socio-historical significance of the Great Sahara, specifically within the Moroccan context, which is further explored through a case study later in this paper.

The Sahrawi region, located to the south of Morocco, has witnessed significant transformations since the arrival of Arab-Islamic expeditions in North Africa in 647 CE. Marked by the Spanish unearthing of substantial phosphate reserves in 1947, with an output of 2.6 million tonnes per year, the area's mystique was amplified. This mystique is often reflected in travel literature and termed by Nabil Matar (2000) as *corpus captivitis*. Historically perceived as barren and secluded, these portrayals delayed colonial engagement until 1884, when Spain, as part of its wider imperial ambitions, established colonial rule along the Sahara's coastline (Boubrik 2021:

128). The utilization of skewed, orientalist narratives by former captives served not only to misrepresent the region but also to justify the colonial exploitation of its resources and the harsh treatment of its people under the pretext of delivering "civilization" to the "uncivilized." The colonial portrayal of the Sahara's nomadic inhabitants in southern Morocco as chaotic significantly misrepresents the genuine character of those who live across the Great Sahara and their pastoral way of life, which is essentially dynamic. Rahal Boubrik, a Moroccan anthropologist from the Sahara region, warns against the uncritical acceptance of Western portrayals of the Sahara, noting that these accounts often simplify the complex interactions among Sahrawi tribes and between these tribes and outsiders. Boubrik contends that the portrayal of the Sahara as a zone of chaos serves a specific ideological purpose, supporting a colonial narrative that contrasts the 'civilized' against the 'uncivilized' and thus justifies colonial intervention as a means of reinstating an alleged natural order and discipline (Boubrik 2012: 349).

Contrary to portrayals of the Sahrawis as mere isolated survivalists, their society displays a sophisticated communal structure. Vibrant markets such as *Amhairich* and *Lamkhakh*, along with social gatherings like *Jma'a*, underscore the communal nature and societal complexity of the Sahrawis, challenging the colonial stereotype of them as solitary and savage. This misrecognition by co-

lonial powers of the diverse societal and cultural systems outside their domain highlights their failure to appreciate the Sahrawis' dynamic lifestyle, which necessitates constant movement in search of sustenance. In stark contrast to the colonial view that labels this nomadic behavior as barbaric, the Sahrawis' approach embraces heterogeneity, a stark deviation from the colonial desire for a homogenized world mirroring Western norms.

In the colonial landscape of Morocco, particularly in the Rif and Sahara regions where Spanish influence prevailed, authorities adeptly fostered divisions within local communities as a tactic to quell social or revolutionary solidarity. This approach, common in other parts of Africa, was designed to stabilize indigenous populations and suppress unplanned rebellions by managing them through orchestrated disruption. Colonial agents employed a combination of incentives and threats—known as "carrot-and-stick" strategies (Tirado & Correale 2020)—to co-opt tribal chiefs, transforming them into covert collaborators who ultimately betrayed their own communities. Although this practice remains underexplored, it marked a pivotal shift in distorting the nomadic lifestyles in the Sahara, initiating a process of forced urbanization.

One example of these colonial strategies in action is seen in the Beirouk family of Wed Noon, who skillfully navigated the complex political landscape dominated by

Spanish and French colonial powers alongside the Moroccan Sultans. Under the leadership of Cheikh Beirouk, the family epitomized Sahrawi Emara, employing strategic diplomacy to secure and maintain their influence. Despite their political savvy, their eventual downfall was hastened by internal strife and conspiracies, underscoring their precarious position within the colonial framework and illustrating the enduring impact of colonial divide-and-rule tactics on societal structures and relationships in the Sahara of southern Morocco.

The strategy of Spanish colonization toward the Sahara's nomads was marked by deceit and evasion. As the imposition of military control coincided with the nomads' coerced urbanization from their traditional tented living, urban centers emerged as symbols of survival amid extreme famine and water shortages during the 1950s. Promoted by Spanish colonial powers, these cities were portrayed as the sole refuge for tribes that had historically migrated across the Sahara. Spain's dominance over the phosphate-rich Bou Craa basin was framed as a humanitarian intervention, including efforts to transport large quantities of water from the Canary Islands to alleviate the nomads' thirst, ostensibly as benevolent aid. However, this apparent humanitarianism obscured a deeper colonial agenda that was consistent with Spain's strategies from the late 19th century through the mid-20th century (Enrique Bengochea Tirado & F. Correale, 2020; Jesús M. Martínez-Milán, 2017). These efforts not

only aimed at controlling the Sahrawi way of life but also exploited the region's natural resources under the guise of modernization and development, revealing a complex interplay of economic exploitation and cultural disruption.

Spanish colonialism in the Sahara encompassed more than territorial domination; it represented a profound threat to the indigenous populations through the extensive extraction of phosphate and the systematic erosion of the Sahrawi people's cultural identity. These actions were part of broader colonial strategies aimed at manipulating and controlling local communities through economic exploitation and cultural disruptions. Edward Said's (1978) analysis in *Orientalism* critiques this process, highlighting the neglect of non-Western perspectives in scholarly discourse, which contributes to significant gaps in the representation of less-explored regions such as the Sahara. Despite these challenges, Boubrik (2015) suggests that engaging critically yet receptively with Orientalist texts can yield invaluable statistical and observational insights into these complex dynamics. This is exemplified in *Sanmao's Stories of the Sahara* (1976), which, while primarily a travelogue, provides essential insights into the daily lives of the Sahrawi people during the height of phosphate mining in Laayoune.

Sanmao, better known by her chosen moniker, emerged as a pivotal figure during her sojourn in the Sahara in ear-

ly 1970s. Initially venturing alone before being joined by her Spanish husband on his assignment to the Spanish Sahara, Sanmao offered a singular external lens through which to view the evolving Sahrawi identity. This identity formation unfolded against the backdrop of Laayoune, the territory's capital. However, as Sanmao's observations reveal, Laayoune, despite its official status, lacked the hallmarks of a bustling metropolis. Instead, it bore a closer resemblance to a small, isolated settlement. She writes

> I found it hard to believe that this was a capital city. It was clearly just a small settlement in the middle of the great desert, with a handful of streets, a few banks and a couple of shops. The desolate scenery and atmosphere reminded me of the towns in Western films. The usual flourishes of a capital city were nowhere to be seen (1976: 1).

The abrupt removal of nomadic Sahrawi populations from their broad desert expanse and subsequent confinement within newly developed urban areas in the heart of the Sahara has had a dramatic impact on the socio-historical setting of southern Morocco's Sahara. Today, these forcibly urbanized communities grapple with a yearning for the ancestral Sahara, a way of life now inaccessible. This longing extends beyond a disrupted past; it encompasses the very essence of their selfhood and identity, rendered precarious by the imposed urban environment. While the injustices perpetrated by Span-

ish colonialism in the Sahara cannot be understated, the forced severing of a people's cultural roots and traditional way of life in favor of homogenization within manufactured urban spaces may well constitute a more egregious offense.

In his exploration of early 19th-century Sahara, American anthropologist Dean King documented a poignant tradition among the inhabitants of Sahrawi cities, a practice that reveals the deep-rooted connection between the Sahrawi people and their ancestral environment.

> Modern Sahrawis share this affinity with their ancestors. Some, now *forced to live in cities to earn a living*, fill their terraces with sand, on which they pitch tents and prepare tea at various times during the day. In a remote part of the Saguia el-Hamra, where I was camping during my research for this book, I saw other city-dwellers who had ventured out from Laayoune to spread blankets and have tea on the dunes. One of my guides told me that they did this because they missed the sand (2004: 332, my emphasis).

This nostalgic attachment to the desert landscapes is not limited to the older generation. Boubrik's studies highlight that this yearning spans generations, affecting even those who have never experienced nomadic or pastoral life directly

> Nostalgia is not exclusive to the parents' generation but extends to touch on the next ones, which have

> never had the chance to witness a nomadic and pastoral life. In weekends, some young people go back to the Badia/desert for the leisure of drinking camels' milk. In recent years, this ritual has become widely spread among families and friends groups to escape the city's boredom and routine. This short stay revives real or imaginary memories for most dwellers (2021: 235, my translation).

The rapid urbanization of the Sahara during the 1970s, often under coercive circumstances, further underscores the Sahrawi population's persistent nostalgia for a disappearing way of life. This longing for the past is a recurring theme in the writings and observations of several Sahrawi writers. Together, these narratives form a vivid tableau of a community caught between the pressures of modern urban life and the enduring call of their ancestral lands.

Narrative Longing and Identity Reclamation in Postcolonial Hassani Literature of the Sahara

The advent of urban centers in the Sahara of Southern Morocco has precipitated both physical and psychological suffering. This pain articulates a profound longing for a lifestyle and identity that were subsumed by the disruptive power structures of colonial influence. This theme is palpably expressed in various Hassani writings from southern Morocco, spanning folktales, short stories, and novels that predominantly explore themes

of death and the struggle in the post-colonial context. These narratives reveal a romantic yet intricate connection to the desert, a sentiment that transcends mere nostalgic yearning.

Laghla Bouzid's short story "Asmaimee Enda" is a poignant example, using symbols from the Sahara to highlight a deep connection to the past. Rich in transfiguration and metamorphosis, the narrative adds a layer of nostalgic mystery to the Sahara. Bouzid, alongside many African writers—not exclusively Sahrawi—contests the imperial narratives that have long marginalized Saharan people. "Asmaimee Enda" delves into complex familial relationships, tribal dynamics, and ecological issues within a rich nomadic setting. Bouzid's literary choices resonate with a return to mythological elements, indicative of a Sahara replete with cultural symbols that colonial urbanization has obscured. His characters seek tranquility by rivers and lakes, epitomizing an idyllic existence far from contemporary turmoil, yet some authors delve into realms where death and agony are pervasive, drawing a stark contrast to times devoid of colonial domination. Between depicting a past comfort and a present turmoil, Hassani literature expands on several dimensions.

Al-Batoul Mahjoub, another significant voice in this literary tradition, is explored through her novel *Mined Places*. Written in Arabic rather than the local Hassani dialect—a reflection of shifting linguistic trends in region-

al literature—Mahjoub's work confronts the lingering dangers in the Sahara, even in what Ben Okri describes as the "long after-years of sunlight" post-colonial period (Okri, 2012: 6). Her critique focuses on the threat of explosive mines, a grave risk to the Sahrawis, juxtaposing the extraction of life-giving phosphates with the deadly imposition of mines. Through this, Mahjoub presents the Sahara in a starkly different light from traditional portrayals, weaving life and death themes into a call for social and political change.

This body of Hassani literature, along with broader narratives from the Great Sahara region, seeks to reclaim and restore the essence of the Sahara narrative—distorted and altered by colonialism, modernity, and capitalism. It aims to depict the Sahara of Southern Morocco, particularly the tribal societies of *Rgaybat, Ait Oussa, Ait Moussa w Ali*, and *Azargaying*, not as inherently chaotic but as a region with a dynamic, organic social order. While these descriptions of tribal conflicts may hold some truth, they must be differentiated from the violence introduced by systematic colonial intervention, which not only disrupted traditional lifestyles but also alienated the Biddani society by transforming these nomads into urban dwellers. The destructive impact of such forced urbanization, including the embedding of hazardous practices like explosive mines, is a central theme in Sahrawi literary outputs, prominently featured in Mahjoub's *Mined Places*.

Continuing Colonial Impacts in Sahrawi Contexts: Exploring Landmines and Identity in Mahjoub's *Mined Places* **(2016)**

Structurally, Mahjoub's *Mined Places* diverges from traditional novelistic norms; it does not aim to develop an engaging plot but instead halts time to present multiple perspectives on the same theme simultaneously. The scene Mahjoub portrays is set in a postcolonial Saharan environment in Morocco. This paper argues that her choice is intentional to carve out space for a hybrid genre that merges memoir and novelistic elements, enabling the author to address a deeply personal experience unique to her community. This artistic strategy allows her to convey these experiences to readers. For instance, through her main character, Mariam—who serves as Mahjoub's alter ego—the author revisits childhood memories of the Sahara, exposing the trauma of growing up under the shadow of colonial injustices, persisting even in postcolonial times.

> I always listened to my mother's advice to avoid playing on roads that no human foot had ever trod..! Why, Mom..? *The roads that have no trace of them are mysterious and hide behind their mystery a landmine that lies in wait for children, my little one*.. If you find a piece of iron, avoid playing with it..? My mother's ten commandments, I memorize them at the moment of instruction in the morning.. And as soon as I leave the house, I forget them out of love for playing, *and I forget her fearful*

> *words always about something I don't know? It didn't occur to a small mind that can accommodate playing in a vast desert, and sandy dunes that we roll on its surface, that it hides death under its golden dunes.* (Mahjoub: 2016, 34, my translation & emphasis)

Originally deployed to suppress resistance movements against Spanish colonialism and to facilitate forced urbanization, landmines remain a lethal hazard, disrupting Sahrawi lives even today. Mahjoub gives the following description in her work to landmines,

> Generally, an anti-personnel mine consists of a plastic structure or a material that is resistant to corrosion. It has a wide top and a trigger underneath that is activated when stepped on by an individual, detonating the explosive charge. The effectiveness of the mine increases with age. It contains a filling of quick-burning gunpowder and toxic pellets. When the ground vibrates, the spring-loaded needles strike, igniting the fuse and leading to a rapid explosion, a process that takes just a moment. (2016: 21, my translation)

The novel portrays landmines as symbolic disruptors of the Sahrawi way of life, traditionally characterized by freedom, boundlessness, and safety—qualities compromised by man-made hazards. This disruption is vividly illustrated when Mahjoub laments, "How can you be well without an arm to lean on … without a leg that

yesterday raced the wind, a stray mare in a boundless desert, with no borders to confine it, no wires to fence it in, and no mined wall of distances lurking for the lives within" (2016: 35). This imagery of the Sahrawi as a free bird trapped within artificially urbanized confines recurs throughout the novel, serving as a critical archetype. This motif is prevalent in postcolonial Sahrawi literature from the Great Sahara, symbolizing the distorted state of nomadic tribes in contemporary times. Ultimately, the question arises: what forces keep this metaphorical caged bird confined in modern times? What prevents its escape? The answer is succinct: modern capitalism, particularly when viewed as a continuation of an imperial colonial legacy.

The disruptive impact of colonialism on the Sahara of Southern Morocco reaches far beyond the immediate physical dangers of landmines, profoundly affecting the cultural and spiritual fabric of its people. Forced migration from nomadic lifestyles to urban settlements not only represents a loss of physical freedom but also signifies deeper themes of cultural assimilation and environmental degradation. This transition, propelled by colonial agendas, is inherently tied to the broader mechanics of modern capitalism, which seeks to homogenize and exploit. Further elaborating on this historical continuum of exploitation, Neel Ahuja asserts, "environmental injustices must be understood as components of longer processes of colonialism and racial disposabil-

ity generated by extractive capital development" (Planetary Specter, 2021:11). Despite the extensive influence of capitalist exploitation, the desert preserves elements of resistance to total capitalist control. This resistance is primarily rooted in the enduring presence of nomadic cultures, both at the margins of the Sahara and in the collective memory of those displaced into urban spaces.

These nomadic cultures, as al-Koni (2022) notes, are distinguished by their indifference to rapid, tangible profit, promoting a deeper, metaphysical engagement with their environment. This connection surpasses the materialistic impulses of capitalism, embodying a spiritual and transcendent relationship with nature that defies complete commodification. This enduring resistance to capitalist values highlights a fundamental misalignment with Western perspectives, particularly during the colonial and industrial periods, when the spiritual significance of the desert was largely misunderstood or dismissed as incompatible with the emerging industrial mindset. This historical misunderstanding underscores the distinct and enduring essence of Saharan identity, which remains spiritually rich and profoundly connected to its natural surroundings, despite the ongoing challenges of postcolonial reality.

In *Mined Places*, Mahjoub succinctly summarized the interests of the capitalist system in keeping the Sahara in a fragmented state. For it serves the purposes of continu-

ing a long colonial legacy of abusing the land's natural resources at the expanse of keeping its people hostage to urbanized caves, unallowed to return to a lifestyle of nomadic dwelling in a space that knows and helped in the development of their genetics for thousands of years. If such a people were to return to their way of life, this would defy the already mentioned qualities of modern capitalism: on top of which is ownership of things, mainly a land in the case of the Sahara. The Sahrawi individual owns only their soul and the whole desert is his home. Not a single spot is his own property, but he belongs to the whole desert as a participant natural element there, showcasing a high consciousness of environmental concerns of our age and which, with huge finance, capitalism is trying to appear as a force which promotes them. If this is the case, why stand in the way of a people ready to implement these environmental ethics in the attempt of regaining their way of Being in the world? Why, indeed, having stopped these people from their own way in the first instance? On all these issues, Mahjoub writes both in a way similar to Gramsci's "pessimism of the intellect optimism of will".

> Mariam's homeland groans in pain. I remember Mariam's words and her veiled accusation against those who benefit from prolonging the fires in the desert. Mariam told me, with displeasure ... The earth is never free from brokers of wars and their traders. Just as it is never free from lovers of peace and those who fight mines as well. (2016: 49, my translation)

Mahjoub, drawing on prior analyses of the Sahara as an entity wounded by imperial colonialism and the rise of modern capitalism, captures the profound sense of loss that defines the postcolonial Moroccan Sahrawi identity. This loss is vividly personified through the character of Cheikh, the wise old man. Amidst a society plagued by landmines and widespread dissatisfaction with their disrupted lives, Mahjoub explores a deep longing that represents both a missing part of their identity and a significant force shaping their collective memory in modern times. Here, Cheikh responds to Mariam as she inquires why the connection to the Sahara remains vital despite the tragedies it inflicts on its people.

> Do you know, my daughter, that we are of this land? From its womb we were created, and to it we return. I have lost my support, my son, the delight of my heart, like all the sons of the dark earth, the desert. Since time immemorial, it has carried the history of its pain in its palm and walked on. This is our fate, my daughter. There is no escape from the fate of the desert. Even if mines pulverize our bodies, and the bodies of our children and our women, we will not leave *our land*. It is the mother. *Who leaves his mother and departs is punished by God, yes, punished by God in this life and the next, a wretch is he who leaves his land...* Mariam interrupts me.. But the cities are safer, how long will you fortify yourself in tents, my sheikh..? And the danger of the mine threatens your fate..? *My tent*

> *made of camel hair,* I prefer it to cement houses that block from my eyes the color of the sky, I am not the undutiful son, my daughter. The dutiful is in the warm embrace. When the embrace of strangers casts us out, the desert opens its arms welcoming, despite the mined places, along the expanse of our homeland that we accept no substitute for, my daughter..? *Neither the cities tempt me nor their peace, I want peace for the desert where the tent encampments are.* (2016: 99, my translation)

The Cheikh's expression of a desire for "peace for the desert" reflects his acute awareness of the identity crisis afflicting his community. Having endured the ravages of colonialism and witnessed its deliberate disruption of nomadic life through urbanization, the Cheikh understands the profound dislocation inflicted upon his people. His concerns are particularly poignant in the context of cultural homogenization, a recurring theme in our discussions. He cautions against accepting urban life as a permanent condition, imposed by external forces that render the desert—once home—dangerous and unreachable. Through his discourse with Mariam, the Cheikh strives to instill a yearning for their ancestral "mother" land while also justifying for himself why, despite all good reasons, he must stay, in essence, a son of the desert.

Mahjoub seems to focus heavily on the problem of landmines in the Sahara context and how it, alongside several

other issues, fragments the lived experiences of postcolonial Sahrawi society. Indeed, if one is to contemplate the title, Mined Places, it already is explicit about what type of environment is to be found inside the text. Still, Mahjoub's narrative transcends mere documentation of suffering, exploring the resilient and hopeful dimensions of the desert even amid turmoil. She writes

> Neither the father nor the mother nor you are well..? *Why*, doctor, do you embellish the *truth*? The daughter of the desert, despite her young age, is capable of *enduring*. The desert has taught her from a young age to remain *dignified despite the hardships*. Such is the nature of the harsh and dignified desert. *Those who know the desert refuse to be broken... and walk on thorns with their feet*. (2016: 35, emphasis added)

"Those who know the desert refuse to be broken." But who truly knows the desert? Do the contemporary Sahrawi generations, born into urban settings and engulfed in nostalgic longing and present melancholia, really know it? The answer, strikingly, is yes. Mahjoub's protagonist in *Mined Places* has never experienced the Sahara untouched by colonial or political strife, yet she is restless throughout the novel. Her unrest stems from belonging to a community deeply scarred by tragedy—a tragedy that, despite her resistance, is inherited. The protagonist's sole familiarity is with the urban environment, yet she carries the weight of her nomadic community's past sorrows. This pervasive dissatisfaction is also epit-

omized by Cheikh, who views urban living as an ill fit for Sahrawi life. Reflecting on this through the lens of environmental and social sustainability, and recalling al-Koni's theory of two tribal systems—nomadic and settled—raises a crucial question: What happens if the nomadic lifestyle, long cherished and mourned by the Sahrawi, suddenly vanishes? What are the consequences of enforcing a uniform urban existence on a diverse society? This scenario mirrors the flawed colonial mindset that labeled the 'other' as savage and reflects capitalism's tendency to overlook diversity for profit.

Mined Places eventually emerges as a seminal work within the canon of postcolonial Great Saharan literature, embodying both national and spatial dimensions. By "national," I refer to the text's deep engagement with the experiences of local Moroccan Sahrawi people, who navigate the enduring legacies of colonialism that markedly shape their current realities. Spatially, Mined Places transcends national boundaries, inviting a transnational and comparative analysis alongside other Saharan literatures. This approach positions the Sahara not merely as a setting but as a critical temporospatial dimension within the narrative. This paper posits that such dual readings highlight an underexplored facet of postcolonial Sahrawi literature: its ability to unify diverse narratives across varying nationalities, cultures, languages, and identities of the Sahrawi people throughout the Great Sahara. This unification is not driven by ideological or

political alignment but by a desire to bring back what Tynan (2022) identifies as the absent "desert spirituality" in contemporary literature. Furthermore, by delving into how Mined Places portrays the trauma and longing of the postcolonial Sahrawi, the text enables a broader, cross-national understanding of how the Sahara, despite historical injustices, continues to resonate and be reinvigorated through the literary expression of its people.

Concluding this analysis, while *Mined Places* distinctly embodies the unique ethos of its people, culture, and temporal milieu, it articulates a message that transcends its localized setting—the universal yearning for peace. This is powerfully encapsulated in Mahjoub's evocative plea: "I scream for life, a triumph over the obsession with mined places, and I dream of a homeland of peace. We want love, we want peace, enough with mines and wars, we want love and peace... Will peace prevail one day?" (Mahjoub 2016: 63, my translation). Her words do not merely lament a disrupted past; they call for a present where peace is not just a dream, but a palpable reality. As we reflect on the narrative's profound layers, we are reminded that literature not only mirrors societal conflicts but also serves as a beacon for potential reconciliation and understanding. In the echoes of Mahjoub's questioning—"Will peace prevail one day?"—we find not just a rhetorical query, but a challenge to the reader, an invitation to engage with the possibility of peace both within and beyond the pages of Saharan literature.

Conclusion

This article has shown that postcolonial literature from the Great Sahara, particularly Mahjoub's *Mined Places,* offers fresh perspectives on the desert as a historically overlooked and misrepresented space. Our analysis identifies both national and transnational dimensions. On a national level, Mahjoub's work delves into the societal impact of imperial colonialism on Sahrawi communities in Southern Morocco, examining the disruptions to traditional nomadic life due to urbanization and landmines. This investigation highlights the novel's exploration of identity and reconciliation within a postcolonial framework. On a transnational scale, the narrative connects these local experiences to wider debates about the spiritual and metaphysical significance of the desert, contesting its depiction as merely a scenic element and asserting its agency in global environmental conversations. Additionally, the narrative prompts a reassessment of the archetype of the Sahara, urging us to see it not only as a geographic area but as an active participant in the healing from colonial damage. This shift in perspective challenges old misconceptions and underscores the resilience and flexibility of the desert's communities. This is also why the article integrates the desert into broader postcolonial discussions, linking it to worldwide concerns of environmental justice and cultural preservation. By contrasting the Sahara's mythical resonance with present-day ecological and social challenges, it in-

vites readers to reconsider desert themes in contemporary discourses, enhancing our understanding of its role in global cultural and ecological debates.

In sum, the literature discussed in this article actively disputes established historical views and encourages a reevaluation of the desert's function in academic and artistic realms. It calls for a sophisticated appreciation of the desert not just as an obstacle, but as a bridge connecting various histories, cultures, and ecosystems. Finally, it emphasizes the desert's importance in the postcolonial Great Saharan literary canon for both regional and global frameworks of environmental consciousness. This canon implores us to reconceptualize the futures we envision, calling for intellectual and imaginative endeavors that perceive the desert not as a limit, but as a nexus of diverse narratives and life systems. Through this lens, it compels our consideration of the profound, universal themes resonant in Saharan literature—themes that alert us to the vital ecological and spiritual tasks before us, echoing and amplifying the Sahara's voices that stir and enlighten us all.

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Mapping Affective Geographies of the Indian Subcontinent: A Textual Materialist Reading of Pritika Chowdhry's Partition Anti-Memorial Project (2007-22)

Sneha Roy

Introduction

One of the foremost objectives of feminist political geography includes the exposure of the violence inherent in the making of political boundaries, the repercussions of which are often, undeniably gendered. While cartography thus assumes the high role of being an objective, scientifically grounded practice that provides a visual, two-dimensional relief of spatial terrain, the interrogation of the dominant discourses that majorly influence the cartographic process hardly finds a mention in everyday conversations. Of late, however, there has been a surge in appropriating the cartographic

practice in artistic and literary works to pose questions and subvert the authority of maps, both political and local, imagining newer ways of configuring and occupying space. In the world of art especially, there is no shortage of artists who have continued to be inspired especially by the politics of aesthetics and visual artistry that goes into map-making, and who experiment and thwart its assumed objectivity by several means and ways of revealing its textuality. From using the map itself as a material to transforming geographic data into visual art, what catches one's attention is the number of artists who make a wide range of socio-political statements through their experimental encounters with the practice of cartography. Surveying the contemporary global scene, maps as aesthetic and socio-political objects have permeated the consciousness of global artists in myriad ways. They use maps to explore themes of migration, displacement, and other geopolitical issues such as refugee crisis, as seen in Mona Hatoum's *Present Tense* (1996), Julie Mehretu's *Black City* (2007) and Tiffany Chung's *Reconstructing an Exodus History* (2020); critique state militarism and new forms of imperialism, exemplified by Joyce Kozloff's *Targets* (2000); engage in art-based activism for environmental causes and highlighting subjective biases inherent in map-making, such as Maya Lin's *52 Ways to See the Earth* (2008), and endorse social justice issues through collaborative art-based criticism as visible from Liz Mogel's *An Atlas of Radical Cartography* (2007). Closer to home, Pritika Chowdhry's *Partition Anti-Me-*

morial Project (2007-22) of the Partition of India catches one's attention, which attempts a radical mapping of the affective geography of the Indian subcontinent by emphasising the textuality of the political map, which thus opens it to interrogation, and activates possible routes of subversion. Highlighting the gendered violence that the Partition wrought, Chowdhry's work stands out for its use of experimental cartography as a means of healing and recuperation for the aggrieved. One of the major critical lenses one can use to put into relief the politics of Chowdhry's experimentations with the cartographic text is that of textual materialism, which in Bill Brown's words, is "…a mode of analytic objectification that focusses on the physical properties of an embodied text" (2010,25). As a method of critical analysis, textual materialism then reveals to us how the very constituent physical elements that create the very sensorial, embodied experience of the "text" as we access it, has a lot to reveal as well about the socio-cultural signifying systems that the text is a part of. Undertaking a reading of the exhibition in that strain, one sees that Chowdhry accomplishes her objectives in two ways: First, by the employment of intertextuality through the citation of South Asian literary works activating and making visible unexpected circuits of meaning-making; second, by utilising the map itself as a substrate along with the use or allusion to other corporeal, bodily objects or extensions such as skin, hair, pig guts and fabric, on which she plays out different counter-geographies of confronting

spatiality. This paper argues that in thus highlighting the textuality of the map using a materialist approach, Chowdhry carves an affective feminist geography which does away with the notion of the map as an intellectual "closed" textual product of the mind alone, subverting its monopoly of assumed governance and regulation of our bodies in space.

Outlining the most important rules in the cartographic process, J.B Harley in his famous article, "Deconstructing the Map" comments on the stress upon scientific rigour in producing a real and objective account of space, which assumes that the reality of objects in the real world "can be expressed in mathematical term; that systematic observation and measurement offer the only route to cartographic truth; and that this truth can be independently verified" (1989, 4). Such an emphasis on scientific neutrality and objectivity as channelled by those in positions of power to regulate space and how people navigate space have been important factors in ascribing a certain sense of sanctity and authority to the map, fortifying it beyond interrogation and distortion. Harley states that to demystify and de-neutralise the concept of the map, it is required that one approaches the map as a cartographic text, that is as a cultural product, instead of thinking of it as a mirror of nature, thus accepting its textuality, and opening it further to several interpretative possibilities. Approaching it as a text, Harley then demonstrates how employing deconstruction as a

method leads to important discoveries in understanding and decoding a specific intentionality and relationality, especially the influence of power-based social relations, in the map-making process. Exposing how science itself assumed the function of a metaphor in post-Enlightenment maps, Harley writes:

> Cartography inscribes this cultural model upon the paper and we can examine it in many scales and types of maps. Precision of instrument and technique merely serves to reinforce the image, with its encrustation of myth, as a selective perspective on the world. Thus maps of local estates in the European ancient regime, though derived from instrumental survey, were a metaphor for a social structure based on landed property…Maps of the European states, though constructed along arcs of the meridian, served still as a symbolic shorthand for a complex of nationalist ideas. And world maps, though increasingly drawn on mathematically defined projections, nevertheless gave a spiralling twist to the manifest destiny of European overseas conquest and colonization. In each of these examples we can trace the contours of metaphor in a scientific map. This in turn enhances our understanding of how the text works as an instrument operating on social reality. (1989, 10)

While Harley resorted to deconstruction to reflect upon the textuality of cartographic texts or maps by reading between the lines literally and figuratively to come to

important derivations from the tangentially apparent, the question that arises is how does one extract from such textuality what one finds amiss or what the text has intentionally been configured to eliminate? Among the many artists and writers who appropriated the cartographic text in several creative forms to impinge the same with their rhetoric, Pritika Chowdhry's installations which are a part of the *Partition Anti-Memorial Project* (2007-22) stand out for their simultaneous employment of the map as both metaphor and substrate, thus carving affective geographies of the Indian Subcontinent, with respect to the Partition. In focusing on the embodied and the affective, Chowdhry's work is thus more in line with what is outlined as the other major way of approaching maps which highlights the embodied, experiential nature of mapping practices. Emphasising its dynamic state of becoming, here one learns to approach "maps as not unified representations but as constellations, as ongoing processes" (Kitchin 2009, 16). Now while Jacque Micieli-Voutsinas in his paper titled "'Subaltern" Remembrances: Mapping Affective Approaches to Partition Memory" (2013), examines Chowdhry's exhibition to study subaltern memory-production engaging affect theory and subaltern studies as a framework, what remains to be examined is the politics of Chowdhry's artistic method, specifically the minute details and elements that materially and textually provide the exhibitions with its internal rhetoric. That is, while Chowdhry follows in the footsteps of Kitchin et. al

(2009) in emphasising the textuality of the map to puncture its fixity, she exposes the map's "state of becoming", its processual nature with a materially embodied twist, while consequently highlighting its latent dynamic, unstable and fluid qualities. Out of the ten experiential art installations that make up *The Partition Anti-Memorial Project* engaging with the geopolitics of South Asia from a counter-memory perspective, this paper takes a closer look at three specific installations to advance and situate the textual materialist strain that makes up for a significant part of the logic and rhetoric of these installations, namely *Cracking India* (2022), *Remembering the Crooked Line* (2009-10) and *The Masters' Tongues* (2009) which majorly address cartographic practice and textual realities of colonisation and decolonisation.

The Politics of Nomenclature and Cartography

Before moving on to closely reading the installations which make up the crux of this paper, what also requires one's attention is the obvious and the apparent: Chowdhry's strategic nomenclature of these select installations which firmly places them in a complex constellation of intertextuality. The art installation memorialising the historic Radcliffe Line, a boundary arbitrarily drawn in the year 1947 by Sir Cyril Radcliffe dividing India and Pakistan which led to horrific consequences on both sides of the border, is named by Chowdhry *Cracking India: The Line That Still Bleeds* (2022). The phrase

"Cracking India" is borrowed from Bapsi Sidhwa's 1988 novel titled Cracking India which traces the journey of a young girl witnessing the Partition, and provides an intimate portrait of the gendered havoc it wreaks on those around her. Similarly, the installation *Remembering the Crooked Line: The Skin of the Nation* (2009-10) is also strategically titled, which features an intensive, creative critique of maps and cartography as tools and technologies of colonisation and nation-building, memorialising specifically the partitions of the Indian subcontinent in the 20th century. As a project which puts together in a comparative framework the many partitions of the 20th century, the title of the exhibition aptly derives its inspiration from the feminist writer Ismat Chughtai's 1967 novel titled *Terhi Lakeer* (The Crooked Line) published in the aftermath of the Partition of India, which too is a coming-of-age novel of sorts of a Muslim woman in India. This conscious juxtaposition of political maps to fictional literary works narrativising the Partition strengthens the application of the textual metaphor to the cartographic text that Chowdhry aims to build up through the project. Through the practice of such citation, Chowdhry trains the audience to trace the complex network in which the cartographic text locates itself, in the process what becomes visible are the hitherto unexpected but latent circuits of meaning-production and circulation for cartographic knowledge.

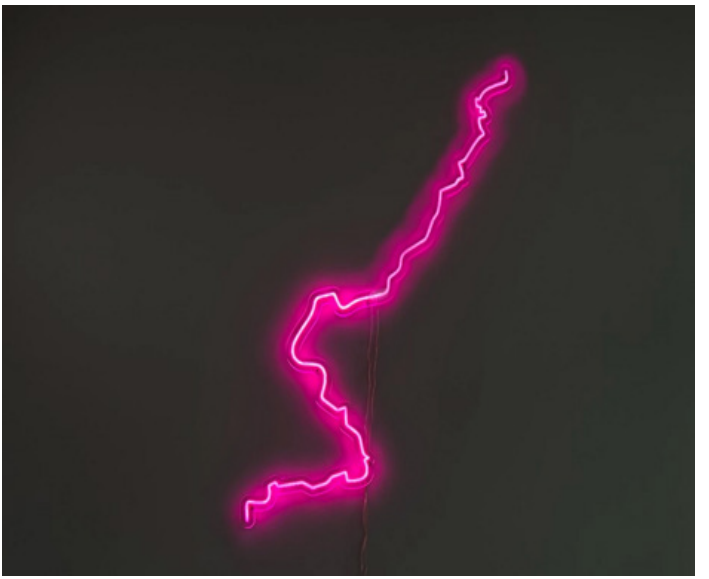

Figure 1. "Radcliffe Line West"Cracking India.
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One can illustrate the same by taking the example of the Cracking India installations, which through their material, three-dimensional manifestations of the Radcliffe Line emphasise the material, physical violence of what otherwise seems like a one-dimensional arbitrary boundary dividing the two countries (Fig.1). This affective, embodied dimension is further underscored by the invocation of Sidhwa's novel which provides an intimate, sensitive access to the horrors the Partition unleashed, especially on the women. A particular scene from the

novel, the one in which the girl-protagonist Lenny ruminates on the logic and material possibility of a Partition, is specifically helpful in comprehending the fullest potential of Chowdhry's use of intertextuality as a tool:

> India is going to be broken. Can one break a country? And what happens if they break it where our house is? Or crack it further up on Warris Road? How will I ever get to Godmother's then? (Sidhwa 1988, 54)

Chowdhry's art installation is thus the physically-manifest response to Lenny's thoughts, which in furthering the dimensionality of the Radcliffe Line provides visual cues to the rounded, material historical consequences of what otherwise appears to be a harmless, flat line on a page. The installation thus locates itself in the gap between the seemingly flat and harmless surface-level visuality of the cartographic text on the page and the overwhelming gendered experience of navigating space in real life, especially spaces partitioned and visited with brute violence in the wake of the partitioning. It also gestures at the material power of such textuality, whose effects do not remain limited to the medium on which it is inscribed. What is also important to be noticed is the type and nature of texts that Chowdhry draws reference to in pinning down certain important landmarks in the complex web of intertextuality in which every text locates itself. In consciously choosing fictional texts written by South Asian women, Chowdhry ensures that the

titles function as signposts, as landmarks, for initiating the audience into newer visual regimes around map-reading. The heralding in of newer, visual regimes around map-reading is important in ensuring that the change is not only at the level of the text itself but also in the socio-cultural network it locates itself in. Through the invocation of fictional texts for the naming of a cartographic text, she aims at the dissolution of the assumed hierarchisation of different texts, with cartographic texts assumed to be objective and scientific occupying a higher position of power over literary texts whose locus of influence is "merely cultural" and subjective in nature. Thus, through the politics of allusion-citation, the cartographic text and its "open-ended", dynamic and fluid nature are stressed, its malleable nature underscored further by the increase in dimensions. Now, while maps as cartographic intertexts have been well-discussed by both schools of critical cartography , deconstructive and embodied, the notion of "processual intertextuality" developed by David Cooper and Gary Priestnall (2011) helps further understand the gendered connotations of the exhibition's intertextual nature. Through processual intertextuality, one approaches maps and mapping practices as "systems of cultural signification which are inextricably embedded within the material world and which are brought-into-being with each embodied reading and use" (Cooper and Priestnall 2011, 250). This aspect of embodiment in a material world finds artistic visualisation in Chowdhry's gendering of the Radcliffe Line

through her appropriation of the colour pink which she uses to memorialise the gendered violence of the Partition and evoke subjective memories through the invocation of Sidhwa's 1988 novel which acts as an intimate witness to the horrors unleashed on women's lives. Similarly, recolouring the Radcliffe Line as pink, Chowdhry also attempts to rewrite such texts in an unconventional vein, where for once the substrate is not the body of a woman but the cartographic text itself. Here then the substrate signals towards symbolic access to an empowered textual condition through readerly access and engagement with the text, and an exit from the conventional tropes in artistic and literary work of treating the gendered body as the only available path to agency, signalling newer trajectories.

Figure 2. Remembering the Crooked Line.

Embodiment, Material Referentiality, and Cartography

How then this processual intertextuality is assembled, materially configured and "comes into being" plays an important role in understanding the aspect of embodiment which is the most important rhetoric that Chowdhry (2009-10) instils into the cartographic text. *Remembering the Crooked Line: The Skin of the Nation Anti-Memorial Project* is an "intensive investigation of maps and cartography as technologies of colonisation and border-making, nation-building, and ethnic divisions" ("Remembering the Crooked Line") (Fig.2). It is a sculptural installation in six parts, titled "Girls playing Ringa Ringa Roses", "Women playing Ringa Ringa Roses", "Kite flying", "Game of Parchisi/ Parcheesi", "Game of Chess", and "Soundscape". The very conscious selection of materials used to make and assemble these installations is important in undertaking a close reading of these select pieces which deal specifically with cartography. As Chowdhry's webpage dedicated to the installation enlists, the following materials have been used for "engag[ing] the viewers in a visceral way": Raw silk, Khaddar cotton dyed with tea, dupioni silk, handmade paper, hair, thread, turmeric, surgical sutures, and pig guts ("Remembering the Crooked Line"). Chowdhry mentions "material referentiality" as an approach to address the question of Chowdhry's choice of material, through the reference to Christina Mills' work on materiality:

> The artwork's physicality, those aspects that can be sensed and verified by viewers, is a first consideration; physicality impacts content and, subsequently, meaning…Another aspect of materiality as a theory is that art locates viewers within their corporeal selves by engaging the senses; such experiences are, naturally, unique and individual to each viewer. (2009, 1)

The importance of material referentiality seamlessly ties into the operations of processual intertextuality as well, through which one understands better how an embodied reading of the installation takes place. Going deeper into the role that the cartographic text plays in this specific installation which attempts an affective critique of the cartographic process, we need to examine the unexpected ways in which Chowdhry employs the map in these specific installations.

Figure 3. Ringa- Ringa- Roses I. Part of Remembering the Crooked Line ©Pritika Chowdhry, 2009-10

Figure 4. Ringa-Ringa-Roses II. Part of Remembering the Crooked Line©Pritika Chowdhry, 2009-10

In both the installations, "Girls Playing Ringa Ringa Roses" and "Women Playing Ringa Roses", one sees ethnic shirts around an imaginary circle suspended in the air, playing the popular game (Fig. 3 and 4). These shirts, interestingly made of raw silk, have map lines weaved into them with hair felted onto the surface to create the visual feel of a newly carved border between two partitioned countries. This reconfiguration of the map, changing its functionality to that of a fabric over a phantom body, inscribing a border onto its surface with a bodily extension such as hair, carves a sensuous, tactile geography on the

textual surface, which accomplishes the aim of achieving a "skin-like" effect as the artist intended. This effect is not simply experienced through touch, it is achieved through vision and affect as well; and the underlying logic is best understood if one revisits Sean Cubitt's theorisation of "The Materiality of The Text" (1998), an outtake digitally archived from his work on *Digital Aesthetics*, which provides us important directions for tracking the many ways in which a text occupies material shape and achieves circulation through networks of intertextuality. A specific paragraph is of particular importance:

> Texts long for materiality, but because they can never wholly and integrally inhabit an actual edition, they are no sooner embodied than they begin to disintegrate. No single edition of a text will ever exhaust the variations of which the text is formed. A certain scholarly mode of reading is an attempt to see through the material of the book to find the ideal text beyond it: a practice which takes as its premise that the text and its actually existing variants are not the same, and which tries, in a spirit of piety, to fix the unfeasible. (Cubitt 1998)

These lines find a newer meaning when seen from the perspective of these two installations by Chowdhry who strategically pins down the materiality of the cartographic text to that of a fabric covering a three-dimensional, bodily persona caught mid-air and mid-action. The materiality it acquires thus is very much in touch,

literally and figuratively with the aspect of embodiment, literally covering an imaginary body suspended in the air. Interestingly, even as it inhabits its current state, it cannot attain the state of complete occupation due to its "hollowed-out internal condition" covering a phantom being, thus implying that the search for an "ideal text" will always be incomplete as there exists no cartographic text yet which does not in any way resort to or lead to violence in its actual materialisation. Also, in wrapping the cartographic text around a phantom body in this manner, Chowdhry emphasises the violence of the "textual condition" (McGann 1991) with respect to how a Eurocentric and patriarchal hold on textuality affects and disrupts one's normal state of being and occupying space, more so for women and other minority groups. The same is shown to manifest and express itself visually and affectively on the "skin-like" surface of the cartographic text which is ruptured and wounded. While Micieli (2013) invokes the work of the sociologist Avery Gordon (1997) for locating his examination of affect and subaltern memory in Chowdhry's exhibition, a transplantation of the same reference here generates newer meaning concerning the context and argument of the paper. Micieli quotes Gordon to illustrate how "[b]eing haunted draws us affectively, sometimes against our will and always a bit magically, into a structure of feeling of a reality we come to experience, not as cold knowledge, but as a transformative recognition…To write ghost stories implies that ghosts are real, that is to say, that they produce material *affects*." (Gordon quoted

in Micieli 2013, 40). What is illuminating is in executing a textual materialist reading of the exhibition, the production of "material affect" literally exposes itself as the aim of Chowdhry's installations, where in evoking a textuality that feels like skin to the touch, one is reminded of the inextricable link that binds the human world to textuality, thus alerting us to the need to take into consideration the material consequences of seemingly non-consequential acts of textual engagement. This binding human connection to the realm of textuality reminds one of McGann's attempts at theorising the study of "materialist hermeneutics" in his introduction to the book *The Textual Condition* where it "considers texts as autopoietic mechanisms operating as self-generating feedback systems that cannot be separated from those who manipulate and use them" (1991,18).

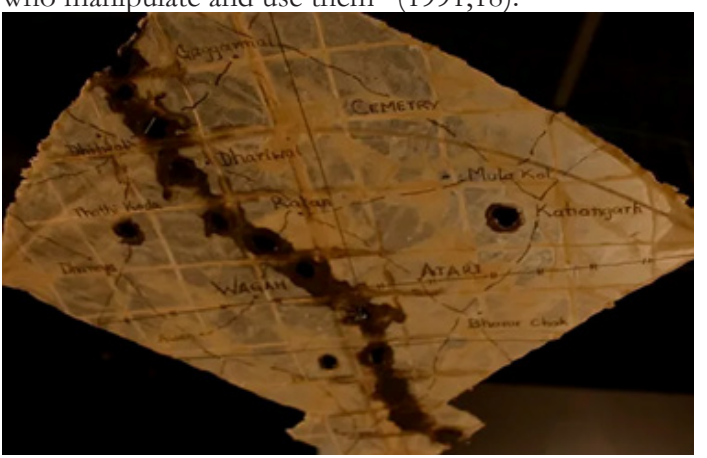

Figure 5. The Shadow Lines 1. Part of Remembering the Crooked Line.©Pritika Chowdhry, 2009-10

Figure 6. The Crooked Lines (on the top) and Figure 7. Lines of Control (on the bottom). Part of Remembering the Crooked Line. ©Pritika Chowdhry, 2009-10

Playing with the Cartographic Text

This inseparability is stressed through how Chowdhry ensures that cartographic relics become a part of every-

thing human beings are engaged and connected with, making sure that its imprint also does not leave out moments of leisure, play and pleasure— moments one believes to be transcendental and beyond the machinations of such politics, as is visible in the installations titled "Kite-Flying", "Game of Parcheesi" and "Game of Chess" (Fig 5,6 and 7 respectively) . If in "Kite-Flying", handmade kites onto which maps of partitioned countries of the twentieth century have been drawn, burnt and sewn onto its surface, are then hung from the ceiling, "Game of Parcheesi" and "Game of Chess" feature life-like game sets on which maps featuring partitioned countries have been sewn onto the surface. Floor cushions have been laid out inviting the viewer to come take a shot at the game. In doing so, there surfaces a double logic that further emphasises and punctures the authority of the cartographic text as a closed text - on the one hand, it exposes the casual sleight of hand and cold cruelty with which countries are partitioned by the dominant and the powerful treating the cartographic text with a sense of casualty and playfulness, and on the other hand, it also provides the aggrieved common people to transgress and play beyond the boundaries of the partitioned countries, a momentary act of agency and subversion simulated by playing with what should have been a symbolic text demanding obeisance and loyalty. Here Chowdhry directs its viewers towards a newer way of reading the map, one in which acknowledging its textuality also provides a gateway for agency and empowerment, if not in any other sense, at least in the symbolic

realm of making meaning and experience. One recalls Barthes' notion of "play" as invoked for defining a text in comparison to what we know as a piece of "work":

> In fact, reading, in the sense of consuming, is not playing with the text. "Playing" must be taken here in all the polysemy of the term: the text itself "plays" (like a door that "plays" back and forth on its hinges; like a fishing rod in which there is some "play"); and the reader plays twice over: he plays at the Text (ludic meaning), he seeks a practice which reproduces it; but, so that this practice is not reduced to a passive, interior mimesis (the Text being precisely what resists this reduction), he plays the Text." (Barthes 1977, 62)

In thus juxtaposing and superimposing the cartographic text onto the surface of game boards, the installation underscores the rhetoric of subverting the authority and grip that a cartographic text exercises in one's daily life, by providing the viewer with an outlet to be the one handling his or her fate for once; while for those holding power, it is both an exposure and a refusal at the same time to not comply with their authority or live in a state of passivity. This paradoxical nature of cartographic textuality is then analogous to the paradoxical relationship that women share with spatiality, as Gillian Rose, a prominent feminist geographer theorises in her work *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (1993). Rose demonstrates how women occupy the paradoxically simultaneous state of being both "prison-

ers and exiles" in the grip of masculinist territory and how this in-between state equips them with the ability to imagine and stage resistance. Elaborating further, Rose states how this space "allows the subject of feminism to occupy both the centre and the margin, the inside and the outside. It is a geography structured by the dynamic tension between the poles, and it is also a multidimensional geography structured by the simultaneous contradictory diversity of social relations" (1993, 155). The realisation of this analogous relationship provides feminist geography with newer ways of resisting the grip of hegemonic spatialities. That is, the realisation of the map and its textuality thus has double-edged implications and the installations are thus both a roadmap as well as a warning sign for those who deal with cartographic texts and practices in some way. Most importantly, it converts the "writerly, closed text" that Barthes mentions into a "readerly text" (1977) where the very act of engaging in an alternate reading of the cartographic text undoes its assumed power and authority. At the same time, it is also a reinforcement of the text's nature of being a self-generating feedback mechanism, where the very superimposition of the cartographic text onto the surface of game boards automatically opens several ways of engaging with the text, each way different from the other in its entry, exit and/or movement across the board that holds the text in place but also allows one to go beyond it through "an intellectual play of the hand". Even without the involvement of the viewer's

direct engagement, this very arrangement has its own internal logic in constant operation, with the placement of the cartographic text onto the game board's surface ensuring that the "text plays by itself" too in its very literal engagement with another text. The assumption of a map being a self-contained thing by itself is thus refused through its extremely involved engagement with other materials in a varying range of proximity and functionality, reminding one of Cubitt's (1998) remark on how "the whiteness of white sheets, has been a lure for doggerel, commentary, digression and refusal". Chowdhry thus envisions a radical way of claiming agency from hegemonic spatialities by attuning ourselves to the many ways in which the inextricable "textual condition" also ensures that the same textuality provides exit points and sites for play and transgression.

The "Thingness of the Cartographic Text"

Similarly, in considering texts as self-generating mechanisms, one also needs to consider the poetics of each major material choice in conferring something of significance to the installation. In evoking a skin-like texture not only does the installation create an affective space for the audience, but it also underscores the similar qualities that the texture of the skin in acting as a phantom substrate in this case shares with what is usually a page made of paper, thus emphasising on the importance of considering the affective and tactile aspects of textuality.

The same can be said of the usage of bodily line-like extension, that is, hair in all its many diverse existences used to create the political lines on the map. Weighing in then on the symbolic importance of the constituent elements of the installation, one anticipates a certain operational functionality that drives its constant state of "becoming". This state of becoming then ties in not just with the concept of processual intertextuality but also finds illuminating insights from Bill Brown's thing theory (2001) and textual materialism (2010) which urge the deeper study of constituent materials that convert a "thing" without function to an "object of value" . Like textual materialism, thing theory as a mode of critical analysis also emphasises the state of "physical materiality" in general but instead of focussing on how the constituent elements or physical properties contribute to the politics of signification, it zooms in on how the aspect of "functionality" of matter (which in this case, is the physical embodied text) changes or influences its value in human-object relations. Observing how objects are considered so by virtue of their productive value, thing theory studies representations and the process by which productive "objects of value" become "things" of affect and/or sentiment when they lose their functionality. In considering the commingling of thing theory with affect studies, Tania Rossetto, inspired by the likes of Bill Brown, and Graham Harman, (pioneering scholar of object-oriented ontology), approaches maps as objects in her work *Object-Oriented Cartography: Maps as Things* and

makes the following observations:

> We saw, Harman seemed to consider cartography as a form of knowledge. His object-oriented theory privileges aesthetic, metaphorical, indirect cognition as a wiser means to access the reality of things compared with literal knowledge. While the point of knowledge is to grasp the features of reality, the point of art is to 'experience the unknowable uniqueness of a real object' (Harman 2018, p. 170). Aesthetics, Harman noted, is not knowledge, but a form of cognition, an indirect allusion to the real: a type of counter-knowledge. I contend that cartographic objects are not only a matter of knowledge but may also be a matter of aesthetic experience, as configured by OOO [Object Oriented Ontology].As per Harman, there is no way to tell in literal terms the 'insideness' of objects, then I would add that there is no way to tell in literal term what a cartographic object is, hence the need for aesthetic counter methods to allude to the being of maps. (Rossetto 2019, 26)

In the light of Rossetto's observations, one realises that through this enhancement of the textuality and aesthetics of the cartographic text, Chowdhry resorts to a necessary defamiliarisation to be able to go beyond the spatial confines that also chain our approaches towards reading the map and viewing it as a textual object. What is furthermore important to note is that these cartographic texts in the installations are not "functional" in their conventional sense, as in their torn, blown-out,

ripped state one can only make out barely enough to simply register only the basics. So, though Chowdhry resorts to several tactics to underscore the textual nature of the map, the cartographic text and its state of fully operational textuality thus are always only alluded to, with the actual value it serves being visible in its materiality, its "thingness". So even as she highlights the several ways one can engage in a subversive encounter with the cartographic text, she also ensures that what is usually thought of as the "complete, self-enclosed map" is also beyond reach, as to evoke the conventional map in its entirety is to ensure the kickstarting of a usual network of intertexts, all reinforcing each other in their hegemonic domination of spatiality. Hence even though there is a memorialisation of history through the invocation of the partition through an emphasised border on the surface of the cartographic text, its defamiliarised presence ensures that what was hitherto unknown comes into being through the unknowable uniqueness of this current state.

One can take recourse to the installation titled *The Master's Tongues: Dialectics of Language* (2009) to testify to the fact that thing theory is truly capable of providing a deeper insight into the workings of textuality, even though thing theory deals more with the material substrate on which the text manifests itself upon, thus coupling thing theory and textual materialism. This exhibition is an investigation of the use of English as a tool for the expan-

sion of the colonial empire, reflecting on how the same also provided the colonised with an entry so as to speak back to the colonial masters.

Figure 8. The Masters' Tongues.
©Pritika Chowdhry, 2009

Seventy-nine tongues cast in iron make up the installation, representing the fifty-four Commonwealth countries that were once colonised by the British and the twenty- five territories that still happen to be under British governance, with the cast iron tongues being allowed to rust for over months. Chowdhry's choice of metal, as she states, has to do with the fact that iron played an important role in the Industrial Revolution of Britain, thus making it one of the major tools for exerting colonial power and influence over other countries. Here too then she resorts to finding value in what conventionally reduces an object's status to a mere thing owing to the loss of its usual functionality, as was the case with

the "deformed" or shall we say, improvised cartographic text in the other installations. In portraying language in all of its rich textual presence as the physically visible, material shape of cast-iron tongues allowed to rust, Chowdhry makes visible what is usually only grasped mentally: the "material" consequences of linguistic and textually engaged social acts which too in their shedding of certain functions and roles, play invisible roles that are intelligible only when approached with the right sensibility. In the same manner in which iron rusts with or without the "intelligible" interference of human action, we can gather that texts by themselves as self-generating feedback mechanisms, gain newer modes of being simply by their very existence, bolstered all the more by the material substrate's very active engagement with its surrounding environment. These realisations are important in how they also generate newer ways of comprehending our way of engaging and dealing with these very significant objects which though they gain some layer of meaning by human cognition, also contain an internal circuit of meaning which can help us better read things beyond our usual way of dealing with everything. While one might say that thing theory by itself provides no such insight into realistic cartographic processes and practice, it is a misplaced assumption in truth: for it is truly in finding a newer way of seeing and reading things that we can anticipate a diversion from the hegemonic dominion of current spatial realities. Through these diverse engagements with the cartographic text, Chow-

dhry stretches the limits of the current ways of viewing, reading and engaging with maps, each viewer's situated state of knowledge an embodiment generating newer permutations and combinations of meaning-making.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, what is visible is that the newer strands of post-representational and radical geographies have a lot to gain from considering maps and the cartographic process from alternative perspectives— take for example, textual materialism and thing theory— schools of thought that are not engaged with on an everyday level in critical cartographic thinking, owing to their apparently "non-political" and hence, non-anthropomorphic approach to the world of objects and their embeddedness in the material world. But that is far from the truth, as to truly attempt the 'radical' or "think radical" requires one to also renew and revisit the foundational core of our basis of thinking, which is what these schools of thought will be extremely helpful in, despite it being impossible to truly escape the clutches of correlationism. Chowdhry through her *Partition Anti-Memorial Project* achieves exactly that, providing one with an artistic model or a prototype for reintroducing affect to the cartographic text by reconfiguring its physical, material constitution, thus improvising and defamiliarising that which is vital to the cartographic process and its meaning-making, assuring that the message is not a throwaway or an addi-

tional layer that is dismissible or erasable from which one recovers the ur-text, but one that is constitutive of what holds the very text in place: that is, the humble, oft-ignored substrate.

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Food Trails of the Bengal Partition: Studying Gastro-Politics in Bhaswati Ghosh's Victory Colony 1950

Poulami Halder

The Partition of Bengal, a part of the great divide brought in through the larger Partition of India in 1947 along with the independence from the colonial British rule divided the land into two nation-states i.e., India and Pakistan. The province of Punjab in the west got bifurcated as roughly one half went to Pakistan and the other came to India on communal terms and similar interchange through the forced migration happened in the regions of Bengal, as the East Bengal became a part of Pakistan. It led to the influx of several prevalent notions

and divisions with mass migration that remain latent in the social consciousness and come out in varying ways. The bifurcation of the two territories that led to the divide of the shared spaces, histories and culture brought in waves of people with unfathomable experiences of people being killed, raped, mutilated and disposed off with the process of displacement. Again, a powerful blow came with another nationalist movement in 1971 when East Pakistan fought for its liberation from Pakistan on the grounds of differential cultural and linguistic identities that moved beyond the bounds of a shared religion. Following this, the amendment in the constitution of Bangladesh in 1977 to uphold a distinctive nationalism differing from the previous Bengali engagements further emphasized the breaking of any previous ties shared by the communities.

The sudden nationhood forced on the people hence created a phase of confusion and this uncertainty led to the crisis that the migrants or refugees felt with their existence and thus they tried to find several coping methods to stabilize their rootlessness. During this, the memories of regional delicacies along with the minimal belongings with which the people crossed the borders provided great comfort, and the influence of such food memories and seasonal rituals can still be found in the shared narratives. Food, for long, has been noted as an essential pillar for the building of habitual patterns and characteristics of a community as well as representing a compre-

hensive view towards the culture of a place along with its different movements. As the waves of people flooded into West Bengal from the borders, their culinary culture too migrated and got assimilated within the platter. Even though at a glance the food choices and cuisine seemed to be similar with the basic rice, dal, vegetable and fish, a deeper look into the ingredients and preparation methods presented the difference in the tastes as well as the identities infused with regionality and preferences. As social anthropologist Arjun Appadurai states, "food can be used to mark and create relations of equality, intimacy, solidarity or instead to uphold relations signalling rank, distance or segmentation" (Appadurai 1981).

The divide was noticed in the cultural sophistication presented by some elite sections of the natives as they looked down upon some of the ingredients preferred by the people from the eastern side. Kolkata then was a thriving port that imported all kinds of foreign ingredients and as Dhaka was comparatively less connected, the culinary choices were heavily influenced by the traditional and local ingredients that aided in the gastronomic habits and hence Kolkata's prevalent food culture aggravated the feeling of the immigrant's rootlessness even more. Though most of the condiments like certain greens and small fishes were almost a distant dream as they could not be found in the local markets even the taste of the familiar ingredients found here missed the freshness and the taste developed through the soil, water

and air which they once called their own. The hardships faced by these people in the various refugee camps such as food shortage or unsanitary living spaces, denial of the minimum necessities and further exploitation faced more severely by the people of lower classes made the longing for the homeland even more intense. The profound ways through which the trauma of displacement was experienced, moved beyond the class structures as every migrant of every economic stratum felt the loss of identity that the partition brought and was subtly channelled through the want of familiar food. The markets slowly started bringing in all kinds of ingredients, from *notay* (Amaranth), *kochu* (Taro), *paat* (Jute) *saag* (greens) to small fishes like *amodi* and *loita* (names of some fishes) along with *shutki maach* (sun-dried fermented fish), to meet the demands but the difference in the quality became a matter of bittersweet discontent.

Along with this, the women of the household tried to prepare items according to the traditional seasonal rites which they once followed and this adherence to the food customs presented a way of retaining their identity which they felt was going extinct. Hence, these differences brought in two different identities in the forced singular image of the Bengalis - the *Ghotis* (local people of West Bengal before Partition) and the *Bangals* (the East Bengali migrants). The difference between these two communities was stark, evident from several factors like dialect or even their preferred football teams, but

the taste preferences, condiments as well and preparations presented the direct picture. The *Ghotis* preferred lighter and more subtle tastes and ingredients like *posto* (poppy seeds) in their dishes which was appropriated through the colonial era at some points and even Vaishnavism which despised any pungency in their ingredients, with the kitchens being majorly under the control of the cooks. The Bangals on the other hand liked stronger and spicier dishes with a good amount of *morich baata* (chilli paste) which incorporated ingredients as varied as the multi-cultural population which stretched from Assam to Burma, involving different culinary styles. The distinction between the two communities also led to certain debates as in the earlier days the food choices of the Bangals were looked down upon by the Ghotis as noticed in the article "The Partitioning of Food": "West Bengal… was contemptuous on the unfamiliar East Bengali repertoire. How could turtle or pigeon meat be delicacies? Did civilized people eat snails heavy with garlic and mustard oil or eel roasted in bamboo stems?" (Sen, 2018). Similarly, the *Bangals* mocked the subtle taste preference of *Ghotis* as being stuck in the bygone era, of their colonial hangover.

The staunchness regarding the individuality of the culinary rituals by the *Bangals* increased even more after the Liberation War and the formation of Bangladesh to present a new identity to the landmass dominated by the Bengali Muslims and; the first thing to be discarded

was the previous food images as seen when the earlier *Dhakai Pulao* and the different fish preparations got replaced with the rise of the simple *Bhorta* and *Panta Bhaat* and the emergence of beef as the popular meat preference, thus almost erasing the shared culture of a community which was once its native. Hence, the debates over *Ilish Bhapa* (Steamed Hilsa fish with spices and oil) and *Chingri Malaikari* (Jumbo prawns in coconut gravy) marked not only the bittersweet rivalry among the Bangals and Ghotis, but it was also a desire for a community without an exclusive geographical territory which now existed only in their memories and was lived through their everyday practices. Thus, also presenting the politics of food in the simplistic art of consuming as noted in Arundhati Roy's words in her article "Food Prints of Partition": "…for it's the everyday nature of food that makes it so powerful in creating and nurturing a community's identity." (Roy, 2017)

The current paper will mainly focus on the different methods to equate food and identity and try to look at the bond between food and partition in different time spheres of colonial and post-colonial/post-partition phases. The shock of forced migration and later alienation based on unfamiliarity on foreign land and culture led to the core problems in representation to find one's place in the new home-land. The influx of people across the borders led to the introduction of several new ingredients to the existing cuisine and food culture. But

this influx of people and ingredients was not welcomed and was met with angst and disgust from the 'bhadralok' natives of the land. Thus, the politics of food in addition to the struggle to preserve a culture going through forced erasure during the post-independence developments through the culinary inheritance is investigated in this paper.

How does food provide a sense of belonging to a community of refugees by locating one to their region through nostalgia and through the longing for the native space of past existence? How does the material existence of food help to give life to an imaginary space? How does food act politically to help maintain one's subjective identity even after drastic changes and movements in livelihood, belonging and national identity and thus also empower the resistance against generalization? These are some of the major questions this study aims to engage with. This paper hypothesizes that culinary habits act as an active force through its changes and adaptations to create a cultural space through the assimilation of the past within the present hence creating a community based on the roots living through their shared memories. Thus, this study aims to analyse the impact on the food culture of the Bengal region after Partition and the several actions associated with the changes in these everyday practices by critically approaching the novel *Victory Colony 1950* (2020) by Bhaswati Ghosh. Through the various modes of exploration, the exceptionality and the theoretical

engagement of food studies along with its concepts of communication and consumption will also be highlighted to bring in new dimensions and trajectories for approaching various themes.

Bhaswati Ghosh's debut novel *Victory Colony 1950* (2020) weaves a narrative in post-Partition Bengal drawing upon different themes addressing issues of communal riots, community faith, dividing class structures, gender politics, and nostalgia while keeping the displacement trauma felt at intra and interpersonal levels by the refugees along with the subtle images implying the *Bangal-Ghoti* divide. The story centres around an east Bengali migrant Amala Manna who survived the post-independence communal riots in 1949 and crosses the border with her brother Karthik, the only family member left to her. Soon after arriving on the platforms of Sealdah station, she finds her brother missing as she comes back empty-handed unable to find anything to feed him. Her bewilderment creates a ruckus for which the local policemen try to threaten her along with their crude advances but she is saved by Manas Dutta, a volunteer from the Gariahat Refugee Camp. Ghosh in her novel quite consciously presents the situations surrounding the refugee plight with a bit toned down extremity but, in her way, quite meticulously curates their life of deprivation along with disenfranchisement through the reference to food. The writer's self-acclaimed love for native food along with the thought of connecting with the roots is alluded to in

her interview with Madhushree Ghosh:

> You know, as I was growing up in Delhi as a second-generation East Bengali refugee, I saw how food constituted the very grammar of displacement. It seemed to be the one tenuous link one could hold on to, albeit with compromises, to one's past. I remember the love with which my grandmother tried to recreate the flavours of her Barisal kitchen. When I wrote this book, food naturally became a marker, primarily of one's *desh* (native village) but also of the new palate to which the refugees had to adjust their taste buds to. (Ghosh 2021)

Earlier criticisms regarding the food connotations in the postcolonial narratives had often focused on the role of food as a signifier in constructing the composite national identity. As Sharmila Sen, in *Eating India: Literary and Cultural Consumptions of the Subcontinent* says, that most of such texts 'concerned with representing the culinary culture of a particular group to establish racial, ethnic, linguistic and national specificity' (Sen 2000); Similarly Mita Banerjee when addressing the 'chutney' metaphor in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, stresses mostly on elaborating the blend of postmodern and postcolonial concepts as it expresses both the postcolonial cultural identity as well as the postmodern otherness as she warns against the notion of reduction of a culture to certain food items. But such readings often limit the multifaceted connotations regarding the food images as

noted in Henriette Heise's doctoral work titled *Food & Words* in 2012. Hence the current paper would attempt to read the various food references in the text with an attempt to analyse them for bringing in thoughts from multiple perspectives. The action of this novel is very much initiated with the food references as the novel almost begins with the core necessity of the survival struggle as the image of Karthik collapsing due to dire hunger and Amala meeting the absolute scathing face of the capitalistic metropolis, her new home as she collected a 'heap of scorn for daring to ask food without showing any money first' (Ghosh 2020, 3). The description of the surroundings is presented with food metaphors in an articulate way with the author stating that the station area looked like a 'fish market' to Amala or how the influx of the refugees in West Bengal was like 'pouring of sugar from torn sacks' where the refugees were often labelled as 'pests' (Ghosh 2020, 5) by the authorities as according to them the migrants infested the lands and brought in a certain kind of disruption to a set pattern hence creating a kind of turbulence in the body of the nation. The conversations here mostly get initiated with the sharing of food as at some point it acts as an icebreaker like the first friendly interaction which Manas had with Amala was through a packet of *muri* or puffed rice where she shared some information about her past or through the *kucho nimki* (fried flour snacks) at Chitra *massi*'s house, or later it was over *muri makha* (puffed rice mixed roasted chick-peas, chopped coconut, green chillies, finely diced

onions, cucumber pieces and other condiments varying with individual choices). The references around food here again alluded to the cultures of urban and countryside spaces whereas on the other it brought in the class distinction which will be discussed later. Even when the incident about Minoti's rape was noted in Manas's diary the metaphor used in the description, 'A woman is the best piece of meat for all hungry men- rioters, criminals, political leaders' (Ghosh 2020, 58), the reduction of a woman's body to a food item with the site of consumption to bring out the violence and ravenousness of the situation not only presents the gender politics but also a sense of disgust.

The terrible living conditions and the psychological trauma that the refugees are subjected to, get even more critical in the text as the characters go through phases of eating disorders which have been noted to be one of the core symptoms in individuals who use it as a kind of coping mechanism to deal with their trauma as they may feel powerless after facing such an event and through such methods they try to conceal their emotions linked to desperation and fear. It is interesting to note how actions around Urmila and Moyna portray various techniques of modern therapy in simpler forms. First Urmila's situation was stabilized by comforting her through certain warm memories of food, for example, the *soru chakli* (thin rice-lentil crepes) making episode at Moyna's house (Ghosh 2020, 173). The nature of the different

relationships in the narrative is presented through the food references – the calming and loving feeling which Manas felt with his grandfather with a cup of tea, the sweet fights over various snacks or pieces of fish between the siblings Amala and Karthik or even the ease which Manas felt having a simple meal at Chitra Maasi's home which had the warmth he longed for but could not find in his mother's extravagant spread. The food item that has very much been associated with the refugees at the beginning of the novel is *Khichuri* or 'watery rice-lentil porridge'. The characteristics of this dish represent and at the same time defy certain notions. Khichuri in the very word holds the "bengaliness" as it stands different from 'Khichdi' in the other parts of India or porridge in the sense that dish mirrors the singular existence of the refugees and the hotchpotch situation due to the sudden mass migration. The adaptability of the refugees due to the changed circumstances very much resonated with this dish as it was easy to cook up with minimal ingredients. Such ingredients in this hotchpotch were almost the representation of the many various indigenous presences which were forced into a singular identity of being a Bengali of the Indian nation-state and to uphold the accumulated nationhood.

On the other hand, it also acted as a tool to present the 'othering' that these refugees faced of being reduced to mere burdened existences lacking any depth of identity or belonging as they are seen without any definition,

shape, structure or being formative like the bland *Khichuri*. But this fluid texture of *khichuri* also foretells some other ideas that are seen to be consolidated later with time. Nationalism stands to be the uniting force and the political principle propagated through ideologies and practices that supports the nation. Yet the measures that were taken in order to unify and balance the whole situation often presented a generalized narrative of the historical movement. This homogenisation excludes the nuances like that of the minute variations in details from the different groups of people within the communities of the refugees which might actually present a different understanding of unity when such differences are read. The refugees slightly deviated from the linear flow of thoughts associated to nationalism as in the process of reclamation of identity and the unity of these people stood on the concept of "ethnocultural distinctiveness" as marked by Rogers Brubaker in *Nationalism Reframed: Nationhood and National Question in the New Europe* (1996) and the anxieties related to such thoughts are well explained in Sumallya Mukhopadhyay's thesis *From Rupture to Resilience: Memory and Identity in Oral Narratives of Refugees Arriving from the East Pakistan to West Bengal (1947-1970).* As he states: "…the host nation is tormented by the presence of unknown persons. It brings about an 'anxiety of incompleteness' among the ruling elite of the country, and this feeling of incompleteness, does in turn, influence decisions concerning governance that can have detrimental effects on social, economic and po-

litical constitution of nation." (Mukhopadhyay 2022, 17-18). Much like *Midnight's Children*'s 'chutney, the khichuri here is also very hard to contain and prone to leakage. Heise describes Rushdie's 'chutney' in the following way:

> Saleem's idea of chutney – and by the parallel of the narrative – as representing completeness and as a possible container of the world is juxtaposed with postmodern imagery of leakage, spillage, of the pouring of emotions and memories into and out of people, of the continuing transformation even of chutney in jars" (Heise 2012, 157).

Likewise, Khichuri is known to be very adaptable. Owing to the compulsion of finding one's own space and identity the refugees spilt from the camps and with their former undefinable character and versatility newer hybrid identities were formed much like the *bhuna khichuri* (a variant of the porridge famous in the eastern region) later in *Victory Colony*. Hence, food here acts as a site of resistance as noted in the introductory chapter 'Food Matters' by Anita Mannur in her book *Culinary Fictions* (2009), while commenting on the role of food within the South Asian diasporic communities as being a medium for making certain aspects of these communities 'palatable' and how these foodways move through the lapse in the images of multiculturalism while questioning the extent of inclusivity:

> "the 'culinary' most typically occupies a seemingly paradoxical space – at once a site of affirmation and

> resistance. Affirmation, because food often serves to mark defining moments in marking the ethnicity of communities that live through and against the vagaries of diasporized realities, marred by racism and xenophobia. Resistance, insofar as the vocation of a culinary register can deliberately and strategically disrupt the notion that cultural identity is always readily available for consumption and commodification and always already conjoined to culinary practices." (Mannur 2009, 8).

The resistance here is not to negate a consolidated Bengali identity but is against the various notions which sidelined the different variables that function within the structure and also the different layered identities which were yet to get recognition. The idea gets further explored as the simple yet elaborate meal prepared by Malati consisting of 'mashed pumpkin served with a dash of oil, fried pumpkin peels and khesari dal, grass peas cooked in a thin, runny soup, and thick grains of rice malodorous with age' (Ghosh 2020, 93) is presented as embodying the *Bangal* essence alongside the mention of the various *Ghoti* dishes like Manas's favourite *luchi* with *alu-phulkopi chenchki* or 'deep fried flour bread and potato-cauliflower stir-fry' (Ghosh, 2020, p. 47) with a little tempering of *paanch phoron* or a kind of five spices. While many of the dishes are common in both the communities yet the difference in the preparation and taste preferences present the ambiguities and cracks that remain as the different strands of the New Bengali identity and food culture get intertwined.

Such differences in food dishes as well as their preparation further leads us to think about Bourdieu's theory of class distinction in this context. The notion is powered through the everyday action of food culture which acts mostly through the nature of taste and oral consumption. In the materialistic outlook towards society, Bourdieu views culture 'as capital, as social asset' (Moore, 2008) as it acts as the medium for construction as well as reproduction of social class. Therefore, taste, though being natural to human nature, in Bourdieu's view, it 'is an arbitrary construct and language of power' as 'meaning is assigned to specific choices of taste and opposed with meanings assigned to contrasting choices' (Heise 2012, 27). This factor of taste acts in the structure of one's thought process as it gets constructed under the influence of certain societal groups rather than being natural. Bourdieu's words elaborate this concept even more as he says:

> One touches on the principle of the opposition between all rising classes, the bourgeoisie in an earlier period, now petite bourgeoisie, and the established classes, the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie. On the one hand, thrift, acquisition, accumulation, an appetite for possession inseparable from permanent anxiety about property, especially about women, the object of tyrannical jealousy which is the effect of insecurity; on the other, not only the ostentation, big spending and generosity which are some of the conditions for the reproduction of social capital, but

> also self-assurance which is manifested, in particular, in aristocratic gallantry and elegant liberalism, forbidding the jealousy which treats the loved object as a possession – as if essential privilege conferred on the possessors of inherited wealth were freedom from the insecurity which haunts self-made men". (Bourdieu 2010, 174-175)

This concept can be noticed in the episode describing Niranjan Chowdhury's (a local zamindar whose land was acquired by the refugees and later developed to *Victory Colony*) way of spending the Kali puja evening where he and his coterie remains engrossed in card games, fine Scotch whiskey, hookah and Nautch girls while the womenfolk are focused on managing the actual puja. This was again accompanied by *bhog* (food offered to the Goddess) prepared by a special batch of *thakurs* (upper-caste cooks) without any trace of the succulent biriyani and goat curry by the *khansamah* (Muslim cooks) in a different kitchen (VC 1950, p. 84). The power politics behind the food behaviour here gets much more interesting through the dualism behind the thoughts as the patterns arising from a certain section stand in stark contrast to the food behaviour of another section. The financially uplifting ideals of liberalism attached to the zamindar can also be seen in the bringing together of food items which would be of great trouble if practised in the household of a lower-class family in the society. The zamindar's food habits, conditioned through eco-

nomic and social lenses, frame his choice of freedom which is far distant from the ones which rise from the dire need associated with the simple yet functional meal prepared by Malati as it foregrounds the complex relationship between the dominant and the dominated, luxury and necessity.

The class complexities further get tangled through the episodes of sharing meals between the people of two social groups. When the idea of marriage between Amala and Manas got consolidated, the celebration took place in the form of Manas giving a pack of his beloved macaroons to Amala hence officially giving her a taste of the world he belonged to. But the kind of reaction Amala received from Mrinmoyee, her mother-in-law, evidently highlighted that Amala was not welcome to this elite social group. Mrinmoyee forced this exclusion very much by restricting Amala's entry to the kitchen or sharing a table with the family or later even denying her the same meals the other family members had and hence politicised the choice of food.

The metaphor gets further problematized through the purity-pollution politics as Amala's identity gets reduced several times through her economic class then through her caste origin (Namasudra) and finally through her refugee background. Here, Mrinmoyee is constructed as the relatively less modern orthodox Bhadramahila further presenting the power politics prevailing in the inner

workings of the household. Taking much pride in the aristocratic aura of the Dutta family, she mainly works her authority by retaining the domestic control with the kitchen being the main site of action and control. As she judges Amala's existence in the family, she declares to Haraprasad, her father-in-law, "I have no problem with that shudra girl staying in this house. Can't believe I'm being this kind. But Baba, with all due respect to you, I won't have that ugly Bangaal girl show up before people as Maanu's wedded wife" (Ghosh 2020, 229). She considered Amala to be a liability to the family's image and prestige and thus consolidated the kind of 'othering' Amala felt through rigid stares in both public and private spheres. The kind of insecurity Mrinmoyee felt with Amala's intrusion into the space she had wholeheartedly preserved is marked by Sarbani Banerjee in her thesis through the following assertion: "It is only by this 'motherly role' that a woman can at least temporarily tame the brash macho figure into a submissive son, through the promise of tender emotional dependence" (Banerjee 2015, 202). But this staunchness further made Manas decide to move out of the house marking a new journey where they made their own home with the first gifts from Chitra – a stove and kerosene to cook up newer tales – as the story ended with a fairy-tale ending involving Amala's reconciliation with her brother.

The novel revolves around the protagonist's struggle to reclaim identity with the complexity of rootlessness

in an unknown city, majorly focusing on the development of a community *Bijoy Nagar* or Victory Colony too. Along with Amala's tale, the presence of the narratives of the different refugee characters sharing common agonies and a sense of loss is the factor that provides a greater dimension for analysing the ideals of memory here. The community that gradually developed on the land through *jobordakhal* (forced accumulation) initially to survive in the alien land with dignity, almost attained a structure that followed an imaginary model of a land of their belonging which now remained solely in their memories. The food items grown in the surroundings of the colony, and the culinary patterns followed, almost trying to recreate the comforts they missed. The strangers in the camp gained a certain kind of control over their life finding a subjective identity as a sense of belonging grew along with the familial bonds after coming to the colony. The food here visibly remained as one of the most prominent forces that tied together the members through the acts of everyday sharing or communal cooking, social celebrations or seasonal rituals. But it is these food instances that again prove the notions around memory as argued by Santos mentioned earlier. The food here is often used to narrate the feelings that the refugees felt and their desire to be transported back to the times they longed for while sharing *muri-makha* (puffed rice mixture) or even the new restrictions associated with food items which the newly married Amala faced in contrast to the simple comforts around her

mother's fermented rice gruel or 'panta-bhaat with a few fritters or small fried fish'(Ghosh 2020, 229) in front of which the best meat and fish and other arrays of dishes at Manas's mansion seemed too sweet and unpalatable (Ghosh 2020, 252). Yet in the continued process of consumption, there is transformation and even if the sensory tool leads to remembrance of the experiences, the reproduction of the exact moments can never be possible as the identities formed have eventually gone through the process of hybridization. Heise emphasises the idea of "the impossibility of stability of meaning and narrative control: the nature of language already in process" (Heise 2012, 176) hinting at the impossibility around the recreation of experiences. Hence, the community here formed ultimately presents the experience of the past land even though cannot be brought back and concretized yet the process of formation of a new identity is hinted and it is this appetite that helps the community in its binding. Such a community stood as a part of the larger *Bangal* group with its layered hierarchies further complicated again by the taste as noted in the intra-communal politics hence presenting the dual nature of food which both divides as well unites in the broader context of a nation.

Through the gastronomic culture the difference between two communities, with now a common shared identity, tells a greater narrative with sensations as the culinary memories very much try to tell shared histories

of the struggle for the 'becoming' of this nation in its sumptuousness. In the critical study of the above text, food emerges as a subject that needs study beyond convention and the mere view of a literary device. It, in its organic form, moves around the stark realities of life which often stand in contrast to its nature. The object often looked forward to as the medium to curb hunger, in its multidimensional approach, triggers a kind of hunger that can never be satiated and is not even intended to do so. As such, ordinary everyday performances of food practices relatively bring forward a plethora of transdisciplinary questions which demand greater critical engagements and discussions.

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Local, National or/and Global? Rethinking Identity through The Silent Minaret

Manali Kohli

My paper will look at *The Silent Minaret* (2005) by Ishtiyaq Shukri, a South African writer of Indian origin. Set in a period when narrow ethnic and religious nationalisms seem to be in the ascendant in the wake of 9/11 attack and the subsequent "War on Terror," the novel offers the idea and ideals of cosmopolitanism as an alternative, portraying characters whose commitments go beyond their primary affiliations to a racial, ethnic or religious group. It also probes the meaning of cosmopolitanism with reference to specific sites, especially the city of London, whose status as a cosmopolitan place is shown to be dubious. The contemporary relevance of these questions is attested to by recent developments, such as, the hardening of the British state's stance on

immigration, evident in its now defunct proposal to deport illegal migrants to Rwanda, and receive 120 million pounds as a part of the deal. Britain also had plans to electronically tag other asylum seekers in order to keep track of their movements.

Whether seen primarily as "a political project" or "an ethical orientation of individuals," cosmopolitanism describes a certain way of inhabiting the world, particularly with respect to the several others with whom one shares it (Calhoun 2008, 107). It is a relation to both place and people, based on a recognition of diversity and a sense of responsibility towards the diverse others. Cosmopolitanism involves going beyond one's primary allegiances rooted in ethnicity, nationality etc. towards broader commitments, which is not to deny the significance of the former in an individual's life or their role as a support system for many; instead, it is to acknowledge the co-existence of plural allegiances none of which should be treated as exclusive. In fact, Kwame Anthony Appiah supports the idea of a cosmopolitanism that is "rooted," that builds upon one's ties to a particular place or a particular group of people, which are regarded as "circles among the many circles that are narrower than the human horizon," each of these circles being an object of one's "moral concern" (1997, 624). The relevance of cosmopolitanism in the contemporary world is explained by several factors, the foremost among these being the intertwined nature of our political, economic

and cultural lives in a globalized space whose complex nature and concerns cannot be fully addressed through a framework based solely on the nation-state.

While the idea of nation and the discourse on nationalism are omnipresent in different spheres of our everyday life, from educational institutions to different forms of media, claiming us as members of an imagined community, the idea and ideals of cosmopolitanism receive relatively less attention in our collective life. The attempt to address this discrepancy is reflected in calls for "fostering" of cosmopolitanism with the help of "a number of intermediary institutions in public space," including the media that constitute "obvious sites for stimulating cosmopolitan awareness and highlighting cosmopolitan practices" (Vertovec 2002, 21). Martha Nussbaum's model of "education for world citizenship" can be seen as one such project (Nussbaum 2002, 15). Its central concern is the "expansion of our ethical horizons" through a "vivid imagining of the different," that is, those who are not a part of our immediate national/religious/ethnic communities (Nussbaum xiii-xiv, 9). This act of imagination, rooted in facts, is essential to know the other in all its complexity, with respect to its irreducible specificity as well as the underlying commonalities of needs and aspirations. It can also help one realize the limits of one's own culture and the need to transcend them, which can then form the basis of a compassionate and nuanced response to the other. Literature and art,

in general, can also play an important role in nurturing a cosmopolitan consciousness. The following section of my paper looks at how the novel uses cosmopolitan worldview to reimagine the ensembles that are given, that is, to which one belongs by virtue of birth, such as, family, ethnic/religious groups and nation, especially with reference to the figure of the outsider/immigrant.

Set against the backdrop of the 9/11 attack, *The Silent Minaret* looks at the responses it triggers, the assumptions on which these responses are based and their fallout on the lives of ordinary people. Interestingly, it presents these concerns from the perspective of a group of characters who, except Frances, are South African, and thus belong to a state that is neither the aggressor nor the victim, though two of them, Issa and Katinka, are living in London which plays a key role in the "War on Terror". Yet these characters, particularly Issa, are profoundly affected by the subsequent developments; in fact, his disappearance is clearly linked to his sense of shock and his mounting frustration with the injustice of the situation. The writer's choice in terms of focalization makes the readers reflect upon ideas that are central to the novel, such as, the relation between events and people that are distant in time or/and place and the "simultaneous existence of local, national and global identities" (Kurusawa 2004, 239). Thus, the event - the 9/11 attack - may seem remote with seemingly little bearing on their lives as South African nationals, but as "global" citizens, Issa and Katinka are involved, especially as members of the

global South, a group of which Issa considers himself a part. He declares his affiliation in response to his neighbour, Frances's observation that despite being young, he takes the world very seriously, "We southerners have to …. The only quality of life most of us dare to hope for is after death" (Shukri 2005, 9-10). This community is defined by Issa on the basis of a common history of oppression and dispossession and includes "the Khoi of southern Africa, the aboriginals of Australia, the natives of North America …" and their descendants (Shukri 2005, 46). Here, South Africa's past and, by implication, its present, are not seen as separate or exceptional but as part of a larger pattern and intertwined with experiences of other places and people.

In her discussion of *The Silent Minaret* Ronit Frenkel (2011, 120) points out that the protagonists' commitments at the global level build upon the sense of self and community forged at the local and national level. Born to a Hindu mother and a Muslim father who abandons his wife before the son is born, Issa grows up in a family which, besides him and his mother, consists of an adoptive mother and brother, Gloria and Kagiso, who are black; it is an arrangement that defies the apartheid state's diktat forbidding intermixing of different racial groups. Religion does not seem to be a major factor in their family life: the boys attend a private Christian school and a festival like Diwali is associated less with the beliefs of a particular religious group than with an

annual ritual of cleaning the house together. As Issa's mother says, "our family is of diverse faiths. Diversity is our normality …. It's what we nurtured … home was always, still is, a secular place" (Shukri 2005, 119). Thus, his identity as a part-Muslim remains marginal to Issa's sense of self. Growing up in South Africa in the 1970s and 80s, it is race rather than religion which dominates the boys' sense of themselves and their world. However, although both Issa and Kagiso are keenly aware of the way state sponsored racism distorts their lives and, more so, of those placed more precariously in economic terms, it is Issa whose awareness takes the form of activism and shapes the choices he makes, whether it is his questioning of the one-sided history taught in his school, which erases the contribution of blacks, or joining a protest against the brutal killing of children by the state police. Later, Issa goes on to join the armed wing of the anti-apartheid movement, a fact which his family discovers only after his disappearance.

The anti-apartheid struggle, with its vision of a non-racial South Africa, also provides Katinka an alternative to rethink her identity beyond the confines of the narrow ethnic nationalism supported by her family and propagated by the apartheid state through its institutions, including schools and universities. For instance, Katinka's school uses excursions to historical monuments and other sites of "national" significance to re-present the history of South Africa as the history of one communi-

ty and its achievements and victories. Even the visit to "the site of the first concentration camp … designed by Lord Kitchener during the Anglo-Boer War" is selective in its remembrance of the victims: while the "sacrifice" of the Boer women and children who perished in these camps is recalled, there is no mention of the black lives lost in the camps (Shukri 2005, 173). Disturbed by the aggressive nationalism on display on most such occasions and therefore avoiding them, Katinka makes an exception for the visit to the camp, drawn to it by her recent reading of The Diary of Anne Frank. She expects to find some recognition of what connects the site to the concentration camps that would be set up in Europe later as a part of the Nazis' "Final Solution," but finds none. She is appalled by what she sees as the Afrikaner obsession with their singularity, by the insularity which refuses to acknowledge any commonality of suffering and pain.

Though the formal end of apartheid meant a setback for Afrikaner nationalism, the novel shows how ethnic and religious nationalisms continue to thrive in other places and through other means, post 9/11 London being one such site. In this regard, the writer emphasizes the role played by the state as well as the everyday acts of ordinary citizens. The former invests in and uses symbols such as the national flag and the anthem to promote a certain image of the nation and its destiny among the citizens, to set it apart from and above other nations and

people. Through the characters of Katinka and Frances, who as an Irish Catholic, has been in the position of an outsider herself, the novel draws attention to the divisive potential of such symbols and the unthinking reverence they command. It explains why Katinka wishes to hold on to what she describes as the "stateless moment," that is, the fleeting interval between coming down of the apartheid state's flag and hoisting of that of post-apartheid South Africa: "no flag to wave, no anthem to echo, … no God-chosen nation for which to die in gory glory" (Shukri 2005, 175). The unthinking loyalty towards one's nation partly depends on what Issa describes as "chronic amnesia," a failure to engage with or acknowledge certain aspects of the nation's past which, in Britain's case, implies its past as a colonial power and its brutal exploitation of the resources of its colonies (Shukri 2005, 111). The country's enormous material wealth, its hegemony in world affairs, in short, the attributes that supposedly make it great, have their roots in this (in)glorious past. However, for a majority of the citizens, neither the past nor the form in which it resurfaces in the present, affects their relation to their country, which is defined by a sense of unwavering loyalty and belief in Britain's "exceptionalism". It is reflected in the passionate singing of "Rule Britannia" – a song with a supremacist, imperialist undertext - by a "bellicose" crowd in London's Hyde Park (Shukri 2005, 175). These ordinary citizens seem to be utterly oblivious to the unjust war being currently waged overseas by their country, their indifference

to the fate of those affected exposing their complicity. However, some of these distant "others" now share the city and the country with the "natives," though certainly not as equals. These immigrants perform the menial jobs the latter do not wish to do themselves; while their labor makes life easier, as individuals, they remain invisible, even undesirable. Many of them work in places like the Baghdad Café which Issa and Katinka often visit and, through images flashed on huge screens, witness the bombing of their hometowns in shock and horror as Britain declares its support for the "War on Terror".

The idea of Britain that emerges through an anthem like "Rule Britannia" is juxtaposed in the novel to the way the country and the city of London, in particular, are perceived and experienced by outsiders like Issa, Katinka as well as Frances, who occupies an in-between space. Even before he is "forced into a new consciousness of himself" by the 9/11 attack and what follows, Issa observes and reflects upon the position of religious and ethnic minorities and immigrants in London (Shukri 2005, 53). One of the things that strikes Issa about his neighbourhood is the silent minaret. As he tells Frances, a silent minaret is like a "blacked-out lighthouse" as its essential function is compromised (Shukri 2005, 57). It reminds him of home and the difference between home and London. The mosque down their road in Johannesburg would call the faithful to prayer five times a day, its sound one among the many sounds that were a part of

their daily life. But in London that sound, its religious and cultural associations, and the difference they signify, are apparently not welcome. The silent minaret may be seen as a forewarning of the events to follow in the wake of 9/11 as mosques in London are barricaded and sealed on the pretext that they are being used to shelter unwanted people. Ironically, it also includes those who have been displaced from their own countries by Britain's overseas misadventures and forced to seek refuge elsewhere. The silence of the minaret thus comes to symbolize the marginalization of a particular religious community on account of its association with those held guilty of the 9/11 bombings. It also stands in stark contrast to the frenzied singing of "Rule Britannia" by the crowd in London's Hyde Park.

In contrast to the increasing hostility with which difference of a certain kind is viewed outside, Frances and Issa together create a space where difference is respected and, if need be, transcended to acknowledge shared ideas and traditions, especially in the realm of faith, a space defined by syncretism in thought and practice. It is in this spirit that Issa offers the gift of tasbeeh to Frances who keeps it in the same pouch as her rosary beads. She does not mind the entanglement of the two strings, which shows that her faith is not defined by the maintenance of boundaries between it and other religions. Both Frances and Issa also cherish the possibilities suggested by the image of the mosque in Durban

which "stands so close to the Catholic cathedral that from certain angles the two buildings almost seem one," the possibility, for instance, of "a sky that echoes simultaneously with azaan and the Angelus" (Shukri 2005, 58). However, Frances admits the impossibility of the realization of such a dream in contemporary London, a dream which "need[s] to be nurtured with love and respect and not battering rams and riot gear" (Shukri 2005, 58). Here, it may be pointed out that the novel runs the risk of presenting South Africa as more receptive to and tolerant of religious difference than London or the West in general. Though overt demonization of a certain religion may not be noticeable in post-apartheid South Africa, other fault lines do exist. The city of Durban, for instance, was the site of bloody riots in 1948 that targeted the heterogeneous Indian community and there have been other incidents since where other groups have been targeted on account of their ethnicity, nationality etc. but this dimension remains largely unexplored in the novel.

Like Issa, Katinka also tries to engage with people and cultures beyond her own. Estranged from her conservative Afrikaner family, she moves to London where, despite having the "right" credentials in terms of race and language, she does not feel "at home" (Shukri 2005, 190). She is drawn to Karim, a young man from Palestine under whose tutelage she begins to learn Arabic. As a native speaker of English, a world hegemonic lan-

guage, and of Afrikaans, which enjoys a similar status in South Africa, Katinka does not need to know Arabic that is associated with a religious and cultural tradition very different from her own. Yet she makes a serious attempt not only to learn it but also to read the world around her through it, ignoring the familiar signs in English. Learning Arabic also becomes a way of knowing another culture and way of life, and of realizing the limits of one's own. Above all, the act constitutes a rejection of the linguistic nationalism of the Afrikaners, whose embodiment is "Die Taalmonument (the world's only monument to a language)" (Shukri 2005, 173).

Through both these characters the novel articulates what Ronit Frenkel (2011, 120) has described as "a South African produced cosmopolitanism," which is shaped by their life and experiences in South Africa, particularly the struggle against apartheid, wherein they discover the ideals and values to which they commit themselves. These ideals also inform the later actions and choices of the two characters, such as, Katinka's decision to join Karim in Palestine. The experience of his family living in the West Bank under Israel's occupation resonates with her as she had been witness to similar bigotry in South Africa under the apartheid regime. The commonalities between the two contexts are foregrounded through the symbols used to portray them. For instance, Karim's reference to the wall erected by the state of Israel, not only to confine his people, but also to make them "feel small,"

recalls how the racist ideology of the apartheid state was manifested in and through its control of space (Shukri 2005, 146). Similarly, the sight of children growing up in the shadow of war, adept at drawing "helicopter gunships with their eyes closed," points to the ubiquity of violence that infiltrates all aspects of life, including the innocent games of children; once again, the parallel with the brutalization of children in South Africa's townships during apartheid is hard to miss (Shukri 2005, 189).

Although the protagonists seek to forge and be part of a wider community, beyond the limits of race and religion, the reality of class and class-based disparities interferes with their aspiration. Issa, in particular, is conscious of the privileges bestowed upon him by his class and education, providing him opportunities which were not available to a majority of South Africa's non-white population, thus, separating him from those he wishes to make common cause with. For instance, his family's economic and cultural capital, which enables him to pursue research in London, sets him apart from those he describes as "Europe's untouchables," (Shukri 2005, 92) the immigrants who live and work under very different circumstances, not of their own choice, in a city which is, at best, indifferent to their existence. For Issa, their presence is a reminder of the inequalities which persist, in his own country and globally, underlining the fact that the struggle's not over. It also makes him doubt the value of his research: writing about the past when that past is

still around seems like an indulgence, which is why later, he abandons the manuscript of his thesis on a table in the Baghdad Café`. Two incidents, in particular, capture for Issa this sense of the persistence of past and its inequities in the present. The first is the image of suspects arrested in the aftermath of 9/11 attack, "heavily shackled men … their arms chained behind their backs to their feet," which recalls a scene from South Africa's distant past, the arrival of a group of slaves at the Cape Colony in 1694, who also happened to be "shackled in chains …" (Shukri 2005, 50-51). What links these two sets of men, otherwise distant in time and space is their common status as victims of the European/Western colonial-imperial project, its latest manifestation being the US led aggression after 9/11. The second incident has a more personal resonance for Issa: the sight of police helicopters hovering over the mosque near his flat in London brings back memories of a similar offensive launched by the South African state to flush out anti-apartheid student-activists from Issa's university.

Both the novel and Issa's research can be read as attempts to assert the "reality of global cross-pollination and intermingling" that have played a crucial role in the evolution of nations and societies, political and religious communities, but have been systematically erased by states in their pursuit of an "inviolable national identity" and by religious heads who dismiss evidence of overlap between faiths in their obsession with points of differ-

ence (Shukri 2005, 47). The suppression of this "hybrid dynamic" results in histories of nations being written as histories of single communities with the latter's debt to other groups and their relations of interdependence finding little or no mention (Shukri 2005, 47). In this context, one may also think of the work of Achille Mbembe (2017,104) who argues that it is the phenomenon of "worlds in movement" that has defined life in Africa. It refers to the movement of diverse groups of people into the continent at different points of time, such as the Afrikaners who settled in South Africa or the indentured labour brought in from India, as well as those who left or were displaced like the large number of enslaved blacks. It also takes cognizance of the internal dispersal of populations in pre-colonial Africa as people left their place of origin to settle elsewhere for reasons as varied as wars, marriage etc. Mbembe (2017, 104-105) argues that these multiple histories of "itinerancy, displacement and mobility" have produced a "blending, mixing and superimposing" of cultures in Africa. The contexts in which these histories unfolded, and the relations between different groups, were often unequal, and marred by violence, which meant that the experience of "interweaving" was a more painful and torturous one for some of them than for the others (Mbembe 2017, 105).

Issa's research focuses on this aspect of early seventeenth-century European settlement in Southern Afri-

ca, drawing attention to the transnational and transcultural exchanges that shaped the subsequent history of the place and its people (Frenkel 2011). One of these was the movement of slaves from different parts of the Dutch empire in South and Southeast Asia to the Cape. Most of these slaves were Muslims and came to be known as Cape Malays (Shukri 2005, 51). Later, the Cape was also used as a penal colony where political prisoners and dissenters from the Dutch empire were held. Among these was Sheikh Yusuf of Macassar, deported to the Cape around 1694-95, who is supposed to have been instrumental in organizing resistance to the Dutch colonizers, besides establishing the presence of Islam in the region. Thus, the history of South Africa, especially the history of the struggle against colonial rule, is presented as having been built upon the contribution and sacrifices of various groups, including the Cape Malays. Moreover, by foregrounding events and figures from the past that are little known outside a certain community, Issa's research and the novel try to give them their due place in the nation's history, and make that history more inclusive and representative: thus, 1994 ought to be remembered not only as the year of South Africa's first democratic elections but also as "the tri-centenary of Islam in the country" (Shukri 2005, 53). These narratives about South African Muslims, serve to counter demonization of Islam, as Ronit Frenkel also points out in her discussion of the novel. However, it is important to note that Issa, the protagonist, does not self-identify

(primarily) as a Muslim. If verses from the Quran are kept in his room in London, so are quotations from diverse secular writings, the pride of place being reserved for the five-volume Truth and Reconciliation Commission report, all of them equally important for his moral growth, for shaping his convictions. In fact, his sense of community is defined first and foremost in terms of the struggle against apartheid and evolves in response to recognition of wider solidarities at the global scale. Thus, his response to the "War on Terror" is not determined by the religious identity of the victims, which he happens to share. (There is little evidence in the novel to support the idea that Issa's disappearance is linked to his radicalization. For one, none of the figures who inspired him, including Mandela and Che Guevara, saw the world through the prism of religion and religious difference). But in post 9/11 London, Issa's identity becomes synonymous with his religion, at least in the eyes of the British state, which explains his detention at Heathrow. His initial reaction is one of shock and disbelief that such a thing could be happening to him. In response to a fellow detainee's comment on his name, "In here we all have such names," Issa wants to protest that he is "different" (Shukri 2005, 126). The difference lies in his sense of his identity as plural, not reducible to any of the narrow labels/categories through which the state sees and judges people. Till this point, Issa's class had afforded him some measure of protection against the worst forms of discrimination, in South Africa under the apartheid re-

gime as well as London, but in a post 9/11 world divided sharply along lines of religion, it is rendered irrelevant as Issa and all other followers of Islam are lumped together, and treated as a homogeneous entity, which is supposedly susceptible to extremism and intolerant of the liberal values of the global North. Ironically, among the first casualties of the "War on Terror" are these same liberal values, including the ideals of cosmopolitanism, embodied by the novel's protagonists.

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Examining Identity, Nationality, and Resistance Among Israel's Palestinian Minority in khulud khamis' Haifa Fragments

Sofia Hossain

Introduction

Most representations and journalistic reports on Palestine are often limited to the discussion of those Palestinians who underwent geographic displacement and currently are confined to the West Bank and Gaza, and those who have been forced to seek refugee status in neighbouring countries. The lives of Palestinians who fell under Israel's control in 1948 (colloquially referred to as the '48 Palestinians) also merit critical attention. The collective identity of the Palestinian minority within the nation-state of Israel is shaped by multiple social

forces deeply rooted in historical, political, and social contexts. Despite being legal citizens of the State of Israel, systemic discrimination and racial marginalisation create a conflict between their cultural identification as Palestinian and their Israeli citizenship.

khulud khamis' novel *Haifa Fragments* (2015) highlights the unique situation of Palestinians inside Israel. It revolves around the life of Maisoon, a young, queer, Christian, Palestinian woman who resides in Haifa, and who feels burdened by an ever-increasing sense of non-belonging to her own homeland. She feels alienated not only by the Zionist/Colonial discourse, but also by the discursive formulations of mainstream Palestinian nationalism. This paper examines the contradictions within the collective identity of Palestinian nationalism creating fragments around ethnicity, sexuality, gender, and class. Partha Chatterjee's idea of the 'fragment' as theorised in *The Nation and Its Fragments* (1993) has been employed as a primary analytical tool as it emphasises how anticolonial nationalism too often subordinates marginalised experiences to a dominant and homogenous nationalist discourse.

khamis' narrative also highlights the paradoxical situation of Israeli Palestinians, as their desire to gain political rights involves their participation in the Israeli political system which is also a source of their subordination to the Israeli State. Thus, this paper also explores

the unique strategies adopted by Israeli Palestinians in khamis' novel to counter Zionist and nationalist hegemonies, as a means of personal and collective preservation. Ultimately, this paper argues that khamis' characters, by navigating between many forms of alliances and divisions, hold up a 'fragmented' lived reality that cannot be adequately expressed through totalising discourses.

Historical Context

One of the dominant public discourses surrounding the nation-state of Israel is that it is the sole country which guarantees "democracy" to its citizens, supposedly in a region where neighbouring nation-states have failed to grant their inhabitants the same. However, the constant identification of Israel as a Jewish state by its leaders, and the implementation of laws which privilege Jewish citizens over non-Jewish people, deeply contradict this myth (White 2012, 80-85). Makkawi (2008) characterises the condition of Israel's Palestinian minority within the framework of a colonial-apartheid regime. While addressing the commonly drawn parallels between the Israeli regime and South Africa's apartheid system, he emphasises the unique aspect of Palestinian displacement, contrasting it with the native population of South Africa who remained in their homeland. Furthermore, he highlights the absence of a comprehensive constitution in Israel that adequately addresses the rights and relationships of both Jewish and non-Jewish citizens,

including Palestinian refugees seeking repatriation (23-24). Another dominant myth propagated by the Israeli national(ist) discourse, which augments the legitimation of the Zionist nation-state, is that Israel is "a land without a people for a people without a land" (Nasser 2005, 38-39). In *Haifa Fragments*, Maisoon finds the state's attempts to erase any past traces of her people, her own "personal permanent deletion by rewriting history" to be "kafkaesque" (khamis 2015, 65)— "it terrified her. She's filled with a desolate feeling that they want to delete her permanently- delete all signs of her memory, of her ever being here" (65).

Depoliticising the 'Everyday'

At the beginning of the novel, Maisoon, a jewellery designer, makes an anxious trip to the Israeli border checkpoint, to pick up a sick Palestinian child from the West Bank, to reach a hospital inside Israel. Though he had already attained a special permit for the visit, the child was still denied entry inside Israel by the border security, on the pretext that he had "the wrong permit" (15). This proves to be one of the episodes in the novel when Maisoon registers the vast chasm that exists between the lives of Palestinians on either side of "the green line" (22), i.e. the border between Israel and the West Bank. Maisoon could see the child "on the other side of the fence. The whole time—three hours—he was just looking at our side of the world." (16)

When Maisoon relates the incident at the checkpoint to her partner, a Muslim Palestinian, Ziyad, the latter refuses to partake in any discussion relating to politics: "he doesn't want anything to do with the other side of his world" (22). In a study which had as its subject the everyday lives of Palestinian refugees in a Jordanian refugee camp, Luigi Achilli (2014) addresses the "puzzling absence of political participation" (234) among the Palestinian camp dwellers. Achilli sees this dissociation from nationalist politics on the part of the refugees as the result of the tension between "the effort of living an ordinary life" and the "nationalistic struggles of an exiled and marginalized community" (242).

For members of a nation-state whose cultural identity is in conflict with their national identity, participation in political action may entail a question of alliance and produce "adversarial positions" (Achilli 2014, 242). Such a question always threatens to exacerbate the conditions which limit access to resources and opportunities for Palestinians— "any assertion of Palestinianness is perceived… as a manifestation of disloyalty… political dissent is often seen as an expression of Palestinianness" (242). Within this framework of understanding, Ziyad's staunch desire to keep politics out of his everyday life, to avoid "anything that had to do with checkpoints and little sick kids" (khamis 2015, 33), assumes a political character, as it develops in response to Israeli State politics. His non-political identity may be understood as "an inherently political act of depoliticization of a given po-

litical reality" (Achilli 2014, 244). Rejecting involvement in anything generally regarded as political allows him to constitute a "new space of subjectivity and agency" (244) which lies outside of the dichotomy of choices between refusing any form of integration in the public life of the country, and abandoning his Palestinianness. This space allows him the possibility of safety, comfort, and an escape from traumatic memories.

However, Ziyad's everyday is deeply marred by racist encounters in the workplace and the public space, along with the presence of armed personnel in 'ordinary' spaces like public transport—all these serve as reminders of his "other" status within the Zionist regime. Armed personnel also serve as symbols of State violence— a very potent threat constantly looming over the lives of Palestinian citizens. In the professional sphere, Ziyad's life has made little progress despite his qualifications because "most Jewish companies didn't want an Arab employee" (khamis 2015, 34). On the other hand, he also fails to find any recourse within the Arab community, where success depended on kinship ties and personal friendships: "you had to have the right connections, the right family name and, sometimes even the right religion" (34).

Media, Customs, and Split Loyalties

Like Ziyad, Maisoon's father, Majid, also displays an eagerness to distance himself from politics. Majid belongs

to a generation "today called the subservient. Those who never dared raise their heads. Those who grew up under military rule; fear becoming an inseparable part of their very essence" (40). Like Ziyad, Majid tries to fill his life with 'ordinariness'. However, try as he might to settle into the fabric of everyday life, memories keep gnawing "at [his] mind . . . [His] sanity" (165-166). On top of that, he knows his ability to participate in the public life of his country is restricted, "[b]ecause his name was Majid" (40). Maisoon has always derided her father's meekness. To her, he had always been an:

> obedient citizen, making an effort to be as inconspicuous as he could be with his choice of clothes, behaviour, the radio stations he listened to in the car. Or the way he lowered his voice when pronouncing his name. Very rarely, when he felt extra brave, he'd put on Fairouz but he would turn it off when they neared a public space with security guards. (40)

However, Maisoon discovers that this was not always the case. In his youth, Majid had been an active participant in the resistance movement against Zionist colonisation and had even served time in prison. Back then, he exclusively wrote poetry about land and rootedness, infused with "Images of the ancient olive tree in an ancient land. Refusal to leave. Resistance" (44). Repeated defeats, imprisonment, internal strife, and fear of collaborators

caused him to become greatly disillusioned with the Palestinian Nationalist Movement. His painful experiences crushed all his idealism, turning him into a thoroughly resigned and docile citizen.

Much has been written on the influence of religion in shaping individual and collective political identities of Palestinians. As the struggle of Palestinians was against political Zionism— the idea that geographical Palestine belongs exclusively to Jewish people— and because the majority of Palestinians identify as Muslims, it was inevitable that religion would become inextricably tied with the anti-Occupation movement. Over time, several nationalist factions began drawing on a range of symbols and concepts pertaining to the Islamic tradition, particularly the notion of "Jihad" to define the anti-Occupation struggle. Failure of secular nationalist factions to secure statehood rights also resulted in the rising popularity of factions which aligned Palestinian nationalism with Islam (Lybarger 2007, 5). This not only resulted in the marginalisation of Christians and other non-Muslim groups within the nationalist discourse but also lent a religious character to the Palestinian national identity in the global context. Jihad— a highly contentious term that may be variously interpreted to mean struggle against both external (military) threats or internal (moral) conflicts against temptations— has been used in multiple contexts in the Middle East to self-characterise coups, recoups, and anti-colonial movements. In Western me-

dia, the term is increasingly used synonymously with "terrorism" (Shaw 2023, 397-399). Thus, the use of the notion of "Jihad" on the part of Palestinian Fedayeen to describe their struggle against Zionist encroachment backfired as it allowed Western media to appropriate the term and portray the Palestinian freedom struggle as terrorism (i.e. illegitimate military action as opposed to the legitimate military action of the nation-state of Israel) and to situate them as part of the global threat of 'Islamic terrorism' (398).

Majid acknowledges to himself that the Palestinian resistance "is a struggle over home. Religion has nothing to do with it" (khamis 2015, 88). However, the splintering of loyalties over religion has penetrated his everyday life as well: he cannot accept his daughter's relationship with a Muslim Palestinian. Through Majid's character, khamis addresses the many cultural intersections which shape the process of personal and collective identity formations among the '48 Palestinians'. Emphasising the competing social forces that might be inherent in one's cultural identity, Calhoun (1994) writes:

> ... every collective identity is open to both internal subdivision and calls for its incorporation into some larger category of primary identity. This is not only an issue for alternative collective identities, but for individuals who are commonly treated in this discourse as though they were unitary and internally homogenous. The capacity for an internal dialogicality is erased. (27)

Majid's disdain for Ziyad's religion persists despite his allegiance to the Palestinian anticolonial movement. This not only dismantles a homogenous conception of social identity but also brings into focus how cultural hegemony within anticolonial nationalist movements gives rise to hostilities among social groups, creating 'fragments'. According to Partha Chatterjee (1993), a 'fragment' may be any form of expression which provides "resistances to [the] normalizing project" of hegemonic anticolonial movements which seek to create a homogenous national identity and culture (13). Majid's attitude towards Ziyad invokes the contradictions within the collective Palestinian national identity which emerge as a result of the attempt to impose an essentialist and dominant 'national culture'.

Gender and the Nation

As a queer woman, Maisoon too experiences these contradictory social forces. She is hostile to those aspects of her culture which is dominated by a hetero-patriarchal ideology. She views marriage as a "shackle" (khamis 2015, 45) much to Ziyad's chagrin, and cannot accept that the lives of women in the villages of West Bank are often dependent on the whims of men. As with the geographic landscape of urban Israel, she experiences even the domestic home-space as one which demands "careful navigation": "There are moulds already made for her;

their clearly defined boundaries are not to be crossed under any circumstances. For those who do—the price is always too high to pay"(21).

When Maisoon expresses her desire to visit a nargila place frequented by Ziyad and other Palestinians, she is told that it is "closed" to women (50), but she is adamant about going. Inside the club, she is made to feel like an "invader" (51) by the men but she decides to stay on. One of the men begins to narrate stories from his time in prison, when "all of a sudden [it] turned into a tale of women and sexual journeys" (51).

One recurring motif in Palestinian literature is the theme of returning. Traditionally, this return to the lost homeland has been portrayed as an exclusively male endeavour in fiction produced by male writers. The land that was lost is often personalised as a mother or a lover yearning for her beloved, leading to a symbolic association between land and woman, casting Palestinian national subjectivity in exclusively male terms (Zalman 2002, 17-19).

Maisoon finds this practice of excluding women from both cultural narratives and physical spaces appalling. However, her desire for cultural transformation within her community co-exists with her identification with Palestinian culture. She experiences her subjectivity both as a colonised subject of the Israeli nation-state as well

as a Palestinian woman who operates within these interconnected social paradigms of ethnicity, class, and gender. She cannot relate to the confusion of her father's generation "about everything: loyalties, identities, politics, forced detachment from the rest of our people" (khamis 2015, 74).

Maisoon longs for a sense of cultural belonging predicated upon the unity and inclusion of all Palestinians, geographically divided they may be. She believes people on "both sides of the green line" are the same people separated by an "artificial division" (79). However, the episode at the checkpoint and subsequent encounters with people from the West Bank alter her outlook.

United by Culture, Separated by Occupation

At a Palestinian wedding, Maisoon meets Shahd, a young woman from the West Bank whose special permit expired before she could return. Taking Shahd in her car, Maisoon dangerously navigates around the checkpoints and finds herself "on the other side" (22). At the wedding, Shahd and Maisoon were simply fellow Palestinians, united by the same customs and traditions, but once inside the West Bank, their realities began to sink in. Maisoon realises:

> I'm not welcome in this part of the world. I'm not one of them. I'm a citizen of the state that occupies

> their land. I have a blue ID in my wallet. I'm a traitor. I have running water and I don't need to worry that my home could be demolished at any moment, or that soldiers could raid my house in ungodly hours of the night. (22-23)

Walking into a Palestinian home for the first time, she wonders if they would accuse her of "betraying our people? Our land?" (23). Until this point her interactions with Palestinians outside of Israel have been quite remote, primarily involving communication through checkpoints or occasional community celebrations. All such encounters retrospectively appear to her to have been tainted by an inherent power imbalance. She realises that all this time she might have been perceived as the privileged individual extending aid to the "helpless" (23). Shahd's family greets her with stiff politeness and she is informed about how the restrictions placed on West Bank residents seeking employment in Israel have economically jeopardised their lives. Shahd talks about her friend Qais, who, like Maisoon and Ziyad, is a resident of the 'Triangle'- an area in the central part of Israel predominantly populated by Arab citizens. While Qais has the privilege of moving to Europe to pursue higher education, Shahd has to put her dreams on hold till the socioeconomic condition of her family improves.

Maisoon's anxieties about her identity are reiterated when Majid reminds her that there is no longer a "col-

lective we" (79). His speech succinctly presents the unique challenges encountered by Palestinians like Maisoon, and the grounds on which Shahd and Maisoon will always be divided:

> To live in a country that doesn't have your name on its flag. To keep having to spell out your name to clerks. To be looked at with hatred whenever you say something in a language that is not yours. To read signs in a language you didn't read at home. To be reminded that this land, the land your family tilled for hundreds of years, is not yours any more. To feel exiled in your own land. Not wanted. These are our struggles. (79)

Deeply impacted by the things her father tells her, Maisoon increasingly begins to ponder over her own identity. The battle of her family was for a "normal existence" (80). But in a country where her identity has been highly politicised, where one has to be cautious about what one wears, what language one speaks in the public space, where the public space is populated with "kids with machine guns"(84), and when images of violence still saturate one's memory, any assimilation into the normal fabric of life seems impossible.

Construction of Individual and Collective Identities

Writing on the nature of collective identities, Chantal Mouffe (2005) emphasises that identities are always a

result of identification processes which in turn are always in flux. The 'we/they' opposition which grounds identity formation processes does not represent fixed, essentialist entities. What is represented by the "they" provides the conditions upon which the construction of the "we" depends "We" represents the "constitutive outside" of the "they" (18-19). The essentialist 'We/They' discourse of the Israeli State, coupled with the traumatic memories of her parents, colour Maisoon's encounters with Jewish Israeli citizens. In most of her encounters with them, Maisoon is made to feel "[the] wall between their worlds" (khamis 2015, 38). Her meetings with her Jewish employer, Amalia, are all tacitly underscored by their conscious perception of each other as members of two ethnically distinct groups whose identities are highly politicised in the context of their country's history.

The contradictory desire to subvert and maintain difference is displayed by Maisoon's decision to pick an attire that wouldn't look "too Arab", nor something which would make her appear as someone who was "trying to shed her identity" (29). As Chatterjee (1993) points out, any display of essential difference in the political domain on the part of the colonised serves to reinforce colonial discourse which is predicated on that difference, yet paradoxically, contestation of that discourse also entails the invoking of an essential or 'cultural' difference by the colonised, so as to proclaim sovereignty over the "private" domain (10).

However, khamis never fails to remind us that Palestinians are subordinated not merely within a discursive framework but also by the threat of violent State repression. For Maisoon, the simple act of picking the colour of her scarf becomes one which demands careful attention: "in this place… every colour was weighed down with history and meaning" (29); blue and green connote politicised associations. She laments how her favourite, the black and white Keffiyeh— a globally recognised symbol of the Palestinian liberation movement— was "forbidden" to her; she can only wear it when she's alone and taking it off feels like she is leaving behind "part of her identity" at home (29). While returning home from work one evening, she sees graffiti in Hebrew which says "DEATH TO ARABS"- "She is used to seeing such hate filled graffiti but never in her own neighbourhood" (60). These everyday encounters with hegemonic violence, which remind her of her 'outsider' status, force Maisoon to reflect on her social identity. She did not always feel "wholly Falasteeniya" but "vehemently refused the adjective 'Israeli' that was forced upon her" (108). Despite her distaste for patriarchal customs, she feels a deep love for the material aspects of her culture: objects, music, and gestures that "make her feel part of something warm, ancient" (58). The smell of Kahwa, her mother's finjan, and music that is distinctly Palestinian, all offer her with subversive potential. They symbolise her refusal to be integrated into the Israeli or the "Arab Israeli" identity. Adorning herself with kohl,

and embracing Palestinian music and dance, all represent Maisoon's "greater need to preserve the distinctness of one's spiritual culture" (Chatterjee 1993, 6). While dancing, Maisoon years to find—

> her roots in the liquid music that has become her body. Landless. Language-less. Reaching out for something to hold on to—anything to keep her from shrinking into a crumpled piece of a discarded history book. (khamis 2015, 65)

Shahd echoes Maisoon's desire to immerse her life with aspects of Palestinian culture. She is unhappy with the limited role prescribed to women in her village but feels a deep attachment to her customs and traditions- "It doesn't matter how much we've become modern, how much we've changed, or how much of our oppressive traditions we've shed on the way; there are things we just refuse to let go of" (123). For both Shahd and Maisoon, resistance consists of developing an identity that stands up to Israeli models of development, or 'Westernization'. For them, the latter does not represent a liberatory model but symbolises an encroachment of land, rights, and identity. Maisoon's queerness, her gender identity, and her 'Palestinianness'- all encompass elements of her identity. She refuses to affirm one aspect of her identity while shedding another.

Modalities of Resistance in Contemporary Times Among the Palestinian Minority

The paradoxical situation of Palestinians in Israel is pointed out by Majid who believes that Maisoon's involvement in social activities, which provide aid to Palestinians in the West Bank, actually "strengthens the occupation" (88). Applying for permits and cooperating with border security personnel suggest willing participation in the Israeli state apparatus. These acts contribute to the legitimisation of Israeli State regulations, which discriminate between the Jewish and the non-Jewish populaces. It provides an illusion of helping Palestinians while reinforcing Israel-Palestine state relations on Israel's terms, obfuscating the roots of the problem. Majid resents that Maisoon is "patching up individual bruises" (88). It is antithetical to the armed struggle Palestinians of Majid's generation once pinned their hopes on.

Maisoon's position, however, is significantly different from Majid's. The relationship between the Israeli state apparatus and the Palestinian minority has undergone vast transformations in the last couple of decades. As a result, Maisoon has to devise new modes of resistance.

In his essay, 'An Ideology of Difference', Edward Said (1985) underlined the futility on the part of Palestinians to wish to return to a former past untainted by Zionist politics. He sees community with Israeli Jews as the only

possible choice left to Palestinians; he emphasises the need to develop new logics which would not be bound by "either unacceptable stagnation or annihilation" (57). Elsewhere, Said (1995) remarks on the need for Palestinians to develop their own sense of cultural and political individuality to enter into real "dialogue" with Israel or Western discourses. He sees both the rejectionist attitude and servility to the West as "a reproduction of the colonial relationship between a weaker and a stronger culture" (98).

The idea that Said essentially articulates is that the presence of Jews— both Zionist and non-Zionist— in Palestine/Israel is a reality that Palestinians must come to terms with. For Maisoon and her family, weddings, festivals, and harvests, take the shape of counter-spaces to 'official' public spaces in the Israeli nation-state which are dominated by ethnically exclusivist discourse. Therefore, Maisoon's decision to invite Amalia to one of her family's Christmas gatherings naturally provokes scepticism and discomfort. But her invitation represents an attempt on her part to enter into critical dialogue with hegemonic narratives and to counter them with her own; it symbolises an attempt to diffuse the assumption that there exists between her and Amalia any "essential" difference that assigns them to groups with supposedly opposing interests. Through her interactions with Maisoon, Amalia learns that there are "other narratives of history" (khamis 2015, 156). The interrelation between

the identities of the Jewish and non-Jewish citizens of the State is emphasised when Amalia confesses to Maisoon, "you have changed my history by telling me yours" (156). Their interaction also challenges the belief that any "essential" difference must be maintained for anticolonial nationalism to be fruitful.

Furthermore, khamis brings to light the dependence of the Israeli national identity on the construction of the "Israeli Arab" identity. One way of constructing the Zionist narrative is to omit any reference to historical Palestine in official or academic documents. The Israeli school curriculum aimed to cultivate a distinct "de-Palestinized" ethnic identity of the 'Israeli-Arab'. The history of 'Israeli-Arabs' was presented as consonant with the history of Israel. It integrated teachings of the Koran, the New Testament, the Hebrew Bible, and Hebrew literature, fostering a bilingual, bicultural populace, who would constitute an obedient subject of "Israeli democracy". Despite this, Arab citizens faced systematic deprivation of land, welfare, jobs, and housing, undermining their socio-economic opportunities (Kimmerling 2001, 134). Israelis like Amalia are brought up to believe that "those who remained in Israel after 1948 were Israeli Arabs. Not Palestinians" (khamis 2015, 156). khamis does not portray every Jewish character as callous or chauvinist; Amalia's indifference to the plight of Palestinians is shown to be a product of state indoctrination. Mutual dialogue leads to the liberatory possibilities of alliances

between Palestinians and Jewish citizens. It represents the potential to subvert myths perpetrated by Zionist as well as hegemonic nationalist discourses.

Alliance with the 'Enemy'

Towards the end of the narrative, Maisoon is faced with the difficult choice of accepting a partnership offer with Amalia. While this presents an opportunity to fulfil a life-long personal goal for her, her decision is complicated by apprehensions over how news of her working with "a Yahuddiya"- a Jewish person- would be received by members of Shahd's village (158). Personal choices are not personal but a result of negotiations between politics of inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, Maisoon decides she does not have to "compromise her art" (160). She comes to a realization about the distance between her world and Shahd's— "United by tradition, history, language, heritage. Divided by Occupation. There was always this pull, this tension between the here and the there. But she belonged here, in Haifa. And there was a reality here" (159).

For Maisoon, art has always served as a vessel for self-assertion. As a jewellery designer, her inspiration comes from Palestinian art and architecture, preferring pieces which looked like they "held a secret story", over the more modern abstract ones (30). Designing this particular style of jewellery— whose meaning is known only

to her— provides her with a sense of assurance "that she wasn't betraying herself, whatever the consequences" (30).

Her decision to accept the business partnership offer with Amalia is accompanied by a resolve to continue to make jewellery designs "with Palestinian history" (160). Given the restrictions imposed on her by the Zionist State, this is the only means to counter the erasure of her people's history and culture. She finds a means to assert her presence in the public life of the State, without undergoing forced social integration.

Conclusion

Haifa Fragments revolves around two interconnected issues: the alienation felt by Palestinians towards their national identity (not only as a result of the State's implementation of racist policies, but also on account of the ever-present antagonism between the Jewish citizens and the non-Jewish Arabs), and the enduring impact of Israeli state formation on the lives of Palestinians on either side of Israel's borders, resulting in insurmountable social differences between the two groups. The identities of millennial and post-millennial Israeli-Palestinians are shaped by a constant tension between a desire to find greater opportunities to participate in the public life of their country and the demand imposed upon them to

de-Palestinize themselves. The struggle for greater political rights in the Israeli system is tied to the demand for social assimilation. The purported freedom offered by urban life in Israel is coloured by racist power relations. Moreover, Palestinians marginalised across religion, gender, sexuality, race, and class, have to grapple against the subordination of their voices by the mainstream nationalist discourse. In the space of their hyphenated existence, young Palestinians like Maisoon and Ziyad attempt to construct personal models of resistance and self-affirmation. While Ziyad asserts his agency through political disengagement, Maisoon channels her yearning for a culture to call her own into her art. Both struggle against the stifling feeling of being exiled in their own homes, but both arrive at an understanding that looking towards the future need not happen at the expense of forgetting the past—

> We want to live. And in order to live, we can't afford to wallow in the dust of history. We have to get busy and build something tangible. No, we haven't forgotten history but we go on (145).

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Review of *The Space of Latin American Women Modernists.* **Camilla Sutherland. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2024. 264 pages. $ 95.00 cloth. $ 90.25, ebook.**

Java Singh

By the 1920s, most Latin American nations had held centennial celebrations marking the end of colonial rule. However, even after a hundred years of independence, the debate on the countries' cultural identities had not been settled. As a Eurocentric trend, modernism (distinct from the autochthonous Azulian modernimso) was an especially polemical aspect of the debate. Camilla Sutherland's book, *The Space of Latin American Women Modernists* (LAWM) is informed by the discussions that sought to decipher Latin America's positionality in the literary and cultural trend of modernism. Sutherland spotlights eight women creators who, as pioneers

of modernism, were influential players in crafting their country's cultural landscape during the first half of the twentieth century.

While critics have formed a broad consensus on demarcating the post-modernist phase in Latin American literature and culture, the periodization of modernism has been heavily contested. However, when the views of scholars such as Donald Shaw, Mary Lee Bretz, and Enrique Pupo-Walker on modernism are coalesced, one can settle upon the period of 1920-50 as the years when modernist creators were at helm of the cultural imaginary in the Latin American continent. Sutherland's decision to select the works of modernist women creators from this period for commentary redresses the acute deficit of attention received by them from canonical critics.

Until recently, the male writers of Azulian modernismo of the 1890s to 1910s – Rubén Darío, Leopoldo Lugones, and José Enrique Rodó – have attracted the bulk of critical attention, crowding out women modernists who succeeded them. In Latin America, all named literary movements from neo-classicism of the early-nineteenth century to Boom Literature of the mid-twentieth century, exclude women from the canon. Sutherland's book examines and corrects the marginalization of women creators.

LAWM's selected writers and artists fall into two broad groups. The first group, which interpreted the world through images is comprised of the painters Frida Kahlo and Remedios Varo, printmaker, Norah Borges, and sculptor, Marina Núñez del Prado. The second group, which used the written word to represent their worldview includes Gabriela Mistral, Victoria Ocampo, Norah Lange, and María Luisa Bombal. Of these eight women, three creators are from Argentina – Ocampo, Lange, and Borges, two each from Mexico – Kahlo and Varo and Chile – Mistral and Bombal, and one - Nuñez del Prado, from Bolivia. Thus, the book is ambitious in its regional and generic scope.

Camilla Sutherland declares at the start: "This book revolves around three key terms: space, gender and modernism linked through the element of time." She consistently teases out all three strands in the chapters of the book. Each chapter utilizes a distinct view point to examine the women creators' spatial praxis, which became tactically important in their feminist literary-cultural strategy. The introductory chapter provides biographic information about the women and the personal bonds that they shared with one another. In some instances, such as Mistral-Ocampo's, the enduring intellectual bond has been documented in letters that they exchanged over thirty years; in other instances such as Lange-Bombal's, the relationship was characterised by personal affinity that extended to the professional arena – Lange au-

thored the prologue to the first edition of Bombal's first novel. Thus, Sutherland locates the women in a network of shared consciousness of their personal struggles in machista societies instead of examining their lives and work in disconnected silos.

The four thematic chapters titled "Upon the Threshold: Reconsidering the Modernist Home", "Mother Earth Remapped", "Cosmopolitan Promises: Travel, Exile and Alterity", and " 'On the margins of the fray': Situating Modernist Women in Print Media" demonstrate the continuous spatial negotiation between public and private spheres that these women undertook to protect their cultural artefacts from oblivion. The first three chapters deal with the sub-themes of domesticity, fertility, cultivation, sexualization of nature, and self-exoticization.

In Chapter 1, Sutherland's attention to micro threshold spaces – window, doorframe, stair, entryway – deterritorializes these spatial elements from an ambience of private inconsequence to arenas of public prominence. Chapter 2 delves into the nature-culture question. The second chapter contrasts Vicente Huidobro's disparaging creationist gaze on nature's 'feminine' charms with the shared vulnerability with which the women creators viewed nature. Sutherland shows that for the women creators, the relationship between nature, nation and natality was crucial to articulating Latin America's literary-cultural positionality. The third chapter argues that

the women created a transnational reach for their work by their frequent travels. For example, Gabriela Mistral never returned to her native Chile once she left when she was thirty-seven years old to join the Institute for Intellectual Cooperation in Paris. She spent the latter half of her life in France, Mexico, and the United States of America. The other women also used travel to draw international acclaim for their work.

In the last chapter, Sutherland presents hard data that proves the multi-faceted marginalization of women in the print media. They were allocated only 7-10% space in literary journals. The journal *Sur*, which was founded and edited by Victoria Ocampo, one of the women creators studied in the book, was also complicit in their marginalization. Sutherland contrasts reviews of male and female writers' works to show that men often used patronizing and derisive tones while commenting on women's texts. Even when a review was not patently sexist, it would typically relegate the woman's work into relative obscurity by pointing out the 'smallness' of her vision or by including personal anecdotes that distracted attention away from the text under review. Mistral's poetry and Kahlo's paintings received backhanded praise as outcomes of excessive emotion that spilled into their art. Sutherland demonstrates that the woman creator was relegated to a confining interiority, whereas the male reviewer acted as a gatekeeper to the larger exterior that he was privileged to see.

There are a few lacunae in the book that the author could have addressed, given the ambitious scope of the work. Uruguay and its legendary modernist poets Delmira Agustini and Juana de Ibarbourou, and the iconic Uruguayan author Armonía Somers are conspicuous by their absence. Any discussion on Latin American women modernists is incomplete without some reference to the Uruguayan triad that has left a deep imprint on the Latin American literary landscape. Some aspects of analytic significance are mentioned only in passing. The thirty-year long correspondence between Gabriela Mistral and Victoria Ocampo merits spatial analysis, especially in view of the different social classes that the women came from. In one of her letters from 1939, Mistral, pointing out the class divide between the two writes:

> Maybe what I miss in you is nothing but a share of common experience. The experience of poverty, of fighting, in blood and mud, with life. There's no remedy for it in this life's journey. In me there's hardness, fanaticism, ugliness, that you can't be aware of, being unaware as you are of what it's like to chew bare stones for thirty years with a woman's gums, amid hard people.

The metaphor of chewing stones with a woman's gums resonated so strongly with Ocampo that she used it almost three decades later, when she accepted the Vaccaro Prize in 1965. She was awarded the prize for dedicating

her life to promoting literature and music. In her acceptance speech, she claimed that she too had chewed stones with a woman's gums. At this point in her life, Ocampo had spent three weeks as a political prisoner in a Buenos Aires jail. The same city where presidents and famous intellectuals had sat down at her family dinner table every week also held the prison where she shared a cell with other women inmates. The fission of privilege that separated Mistral and Ocampo did not become an insurmountable frontier because they acknowledged it and built bridges over it. A spatial analysis of these cross-over journeys would have brought out a significant aspect of these women's alterities, which were anchored not only in their gender but also in their social classes.

Camilla Sutherland's *The Space of Latin American Women Modernists* is an important contribution to spatial literary and cultural criticism. The book also greatly aids a clear understanding of Latin American modernism as a critical evolutionary phase in trans-national gender consciousness.

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